The Islamist Ideology of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb

A Comparative Analysis

Tommy Larsson

Master's Thesis in History

Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History

Faculty of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

AUTUMN 2017

The Islamist Ideology of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb

A Comparative Analysis

Tommy Larsson

© Tommy Larsson

2017

The Islamist Ideology of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. A Comparative Analysis

Tommy Larsson

http://www.duo.uio.no/

Print: Reprosentralen, University of Oslo

Abstract

This thesis is a presentation and comparative analysis of certain major Islamist ideas and beliefs found in both Hassan al-Banna's and Sayyid Qutb's political and religious worldview. For al-Banna and Qutb – both prominent members of The Muslim Brotherhood - politics and religion merged through the message of the Quran, and they both wanted to create a new Islamic order – an *ummah* for the entire world. In this thesis, I present five characteristics of Islamism found in both al-Banna's and Qutb's ideological framework. Specifically, I will present and analyze what constitutes these five main parts of their Islamist ideology, then see both ideologues in relation to each other with these specific elements in mind.

Hassan al-Banna founded The Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1920s, and throughout the 1930s managed to maintain what would become a mass movement, consolidating Islam with politics, as a response to Egypt's shift away from the Islamic tradition. Sayyid Qutb joined the organization after al-Banna's death, and - to an extent - developed al-Banna's worldview further in a more worldwide and uncompromising direction, claiming that every society was steeped in non-Islamic barbarism - *jahiliyyah*. By presenting and analyzing major parts of both al-Banna's and Qutb's ideological system, this thesis seeks to examine some corners of comparative Islamism that has not been explored sufficiently in historical research.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, professor Øystein Sørensen, for the invaluable feedback you have provided me throughout the year. You always steered me in the right direction when it was necessary, and the door to your office was always open. Your constant input has been much appreciated. Thank you.

I would also like to thank professor Brynjar Lia for answering questions regarding The Muslim Brotherhood and Hassan al-Banna by e-mail. The same goes to political theorist Andrea Mura, whose encouragement and correspondence via e-mail (and discount on your book!) has been most vital for the trajectory of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner, companion and proofreader Hedvig for the encouragement throughout the last year – and to my family – for always supporting me and my choices.

Tommy Larsson

Oslo, November 3rd, 2017.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction 1
1.1 Thesis Question 2
1.2 Methodology and Theory 4
1.3 Historiography 7
1.4 Literature 9
1.5 Outline 10
2 Islamism 12
2.1 Islamism: Concept and Phenomenon 12
2.1.1 What is Islamism? Critique and Definition 13
2.1.2 Definitions: Islamism, Salafism, and Wahhabism 15
2.2 The Roots of Islamism and the Muslim Brotherhood 17
2.2.1 The Influence of Islamic Modernism 18
3 Hassan al-Banna – The General Guide 23
3.2 The Birth of the Muslim Brotherhood 25
3.2.1 The Politicization of Religion 28
3.3 The Islamist Ideology of Hassan al-Banna 30
3.3.1 Goals and Final Objective 31
3.3.2 Means and Strategies – Jihad as example 40
3.3.3 The Enemy of the Ideology: The West as the Antithesis 44
4 Sayyid Qutb – The Rector Spiritus 48
4.2 From Poet to Preacher 50
4.2.1 The Development of Radical Islamism 53
4.3 The Islamist Ideology of Sayyid Qutb 55
4.3.1 Goals and Final Objective 56
4.3.2 Means and Strategies – Jihad as example 64
4.3.3 The Enemy of the Ideology: The Concept of Jahiliyyah 68
5 Discussion 74
5.1 A Comparative Analysis 75
6 Concluding Remarks 82
Literature 84

1 Introduction

Generally, historians attribute the birth of Islamism to the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928. The founder of the Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), was by no means a political thinker or a theologian, but an activist who merely made Islam intelligible and useful to the public, and educated the lower middle classes. He was a school teacher who advocated for the abolition of the West's dominance in Egypt, and a turn back to the foundations of "true" Islam. In contrast, Sayyid Qutb (1906-1949) is commonly remembered as one of the major Islamist thinkers of the 20th century. Qutb was a poet, a thinker, a teacher, an author, and – most important of all – a highly influential Islamist theoretician. This thesis will first present, then study the differences and similarities found in both al-Banna's and Qutb's religious and political worldview, as they have rarely been compared directly in historical research.

Frustrated with the repressive colonial powers at the time, Hassan al-Banna brought The Brotherhood forward as a response to what he perceived as a degenerate immoral state in his homeland of Egypt. Encountering Cairo as a newly educated young man, al-Banna felt the people had lost contact with their origins and roots. The Brothers' founder was not a prolific writer, nor a political visionary. His successor took another route. Sayyid Qutb went to the United States in 1948, and developed his Islamist worldview shortly after his experience overseas. Confronting what he grasped as a capitalist society, engulfed with racism and greed, Qutb returned home two years later and signed up for The Brotherhoods' membership. "I was born in 1951", he wrote later, referring to the epiphany of becoming affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.[1] While al-Banna was a pragmatist and an activist, Qutb was a rigid idealist, who indulged in Islamist theory and literature throughout the rest of his life, from his Brotherhood inauguration to his death in 1966. Unlike al-Banna, who according to historian Bassam Tibi was merely a "simpleminded practitioner", Qutb was his own spiritual leader, and acted as his own "intellectual authority in the philosophical foundation of Islamism."[2]

[1] Qutb, Sayyid. *Milepæler*. L.S.P. Forlag, 2004, p. X (Introduction).

[2] Tibi, Bassam. *Islamism and Islam.* Yale University Press, 2012, p. 251.

The divergent nature of the two Islamists' background, base and methods are apparent, and most vital are their distinctive approaches. While al-Banna addressed and preached to the middle-class in local coffee-shops and in the streets of Cairo, Qutb was an intellectual - an "*adib*"- "a man of letters"[3] - and a radical visionary who wrote over 20 books in his lifetime, with the primary focus towards an academic audience. Al-Banna was willing to accept compromises for the construction of the new Islamic order, and wanted to slowly build up the Islamic society – an *ummah* - from the bottom up. Qutb had no interest in bargains, and with his pen as his sword, he spent most of his political active life behind prison bars, constantly accentuating the need for Islam to finally become the all-encompassing divine order of life, and through all means if necessary. As Qutb joined the Brotherhood two years after al-Banna's death, they never had any professional or political encounter. While they both are key figures in early Islamism, their traits and means of arriving at the perfect Islamic society are generally considered to be far from each other, and so they have rarely been compared directly. However, I would argue that they are not as different as often presupposed - or at least explored – and so a discussion on this matter is necessary to highlight this issue.

1.1 Thesis Question

With this in mind, I propose the following research topic question:

1. When presenting and analyzing certain major Islamist elements, in what way are al-Banna and Qutb's ideologies similar, and in what way are they different?

This paper will present main elements of the Islamist worldview held by al-Banna and Qutb, followed by a discussion comparing their ideas about these concepts. As is obvious from above, several divergent aspects are present in the political and religious worldview of al-Banna and Qutb. In this paper, I will mainly elaborate on their ideas about the world, but I will not analyze every Islamist element inherent in their worldview. This is important to acknowledge. Certain elements, like their views on Jews and Zionism, are not represented here. Instead of presenting and analyzing every Islamist element inherent in their thought, I have picked out some crucial elements which I deem highly important to Islamists - what I consider key Islamist traits.

[3] Kepel, Gilles. *The Roots of Radical Islam.* SAQI, 2005, p. 38.

Essentially, this paper deals with their perspective on the world and the role of Muslims and non-Muslims in it - undeniably central to the core to their worldview and ideology.[4]

An all-comprehensible study of the two ideologues' entire political and religious thought is something that would require further research and a very precise systematization of their ideology. This thesis does neither include the entire history of their relationship with a specific Islamist concept. For instance, when talking about Qutb's relation to *jihad*, I will mainly elaborate on what he wrote and thought about the Islamist notion in his later years. I will not thoroughly discuss his perception of an Islamic state before his attachment to the Muslim Brotherhood or any particular time before the 1950s. This applies to everything in the forthcoming section dealing with the Islamist ideology of both al-Banna and Qutb. In other words, I will analyze a handful of fundamental Islamist notions which I deem imperative to the image of Islamism, and scrutinize al-Banna and Qutb's ideas about these concepts, at the highlight at the end of their careers and lives. Apart from being a stricter ideologue than al-Banna, how should one view the political and religious traits of Qutb's thought? How should al-Banna be viewed, as he might not be considered an ideologue at all? Regarding similarities and differences - does there exist a continuation or a break between their ideologies, "passing" from al-Banna to Qutb? What Islamist ideas continues in Qutb's thought from al-Banna?

Before presenting and analyzing their perspectives on the world, I will discuss Islamism in greater detail. Then, considering this wide topic question, several supplementary questions arise, and will be highlighted throughout this thesis. How important was the West's dominance in the Middle East for al-Banna to establish the Brotherhood? How did Qutb relate to the West, decades after the imperialists left Egypt? All these, and several other questions – all intertwined and connected to ideology – will be examined throughout this paper. This thesis will not highly emphasize a biographical or historiographical report of al-Banna's and Qutb's lives and the subsequent development of their ideology as a backdrop. While I will certainly include a brief introduction with biographical facts, the main part of this thesis is the analysis of the main themes which embodies their political and religious views, respectively.

[4] With "Islamism", I mean the various political and religious ideologies based on the religion of Islam. Subsequently, an "Islamist" is an adherent of an interpretation of this view. The definition and nature of Islamism – including different interpretations - is discussed further in Chapter 2 in this thesis, p. 15.

1.2 Methodology and Theory

Since my analysis seeks out to locate the differences and similarities between al-Banna's and Qutb's ideology, I subscribe to the method of comparative historical research for my examination – comparing different historical entities (al-Banna and Qutb) of the same kind or type (Islamists). A comparative study of the two ideologues is almost non-existent in modern historical research, while the few mentions of their ideology in relation to each other barely scratch the surface. Maybe deemed as too divergent because of their unique background and basis, a comprehensive presentation of some of their core worldviews followed by a comparative examination would surely cast some new light on this issue – sufficiently demonstrating their most distinct similarities as well as their shared basic features. Thus, with this comparative approach, I do not seek to explore what could be considered as general or universal in Islamism – known as nomothetic research – based on al-Banna and Qutb. Rather, a comparative view of the two ideologues' respective worldviews is convenient to highlight some lesser explored sides of the relationship between al-Banna and Qutb, and their differences and similarities in relation to their Islamist worldview.[5]

However, an analysis of the ideologies of al-Banna's and Qutb's worldview, with a comparative perspective, does not come without its methodological issues. As mentioned, while al-Banna is often considered an activist, Qutb is regarded as a political thinker. This alone makes it problematic to analyze their ideas in relation to each other. First, it is apparent that both al-Banna and Qutb are interconnected to their own time, place, and context. Al-Banna lived under the British imperialist rule in Egypt, and Qutb suffered in prison under Gamal Abdel Nasser's harsh environments after al-Banna's death and the Brits' withdrawal. As a reader and interpreter of both al-Banna's and Qutb's texts, I naturally find myself outside of both their religious and cultural background and context. Trying to understand their message, contextualizing their ideology, message and thought is necessary, trying to come as close as possible to the authors' minds. With respect to this, I subscribe to a contextual-analytical approach which corresponds with the Gadamerian hermeneutic tradition. This means that I regard both al-Banna's and Qutb's ideology and written ideological work as results of their own specific time and place in

[5] For more on the methodology of comparative historical research, see Kjelstadli, Knut. *Fortida er ikke hva den en gang var: en innføring I historiefaget.* Universitetsforlaget, 1992, p. 255-57.

history, and adhere to the thought that I must understand both ideologues with those specific circumstances in mind.[6]

Not satisfied with the academically oriented Islamic revivalists of the late 1800s, Hassan al-Banna wanted to make Islam more accessible to all people. In short terms, this is the basis for why he is hardly considered a theorist in the same vein as Qutb. For this reason, his ideology, and their different elements, were wrapped in pamphlets, sermons and messages that, ultimately, were more pragmatic in nature than Qutb's more philosophically oriented work. Largely, this is because al-Banna's wish to actually transform Egypt itself, was more important than any other ideological component in itself, and therefore more grounded in – at least compared to Qutb – more realistic ideas. Therefore, al-Banna's ideology must be seen in the context of the Brotherhood's founder as a practical activist, rather than a rigid idealist like his successor. Al-Banna's main concern - imperialism, colonialism, the West, and the repressive Egypt regime - remains one of the main reasons for the emergence of Islamism and The Brotherhood, then. Naturally, this must be taken into consideration when analyzing his ideology, as this is vastly important.

Qutb, on the other hand, building on the blocks of al-Banna, lived most of his activist life in prison. Qutb is entirely idiosyncratic in his own historical context. Not only is a worldwide Islamic revolution absolutely necessary, but to him, *jihad* is justice itself, and no compromises are possible. In contrast to al-Banna, the freedom of the holy law and God is the most important issue – and so it is impossible to meet ends or compromise to actually initialize an Islamic society. In Qutb's written works, the apocalyptic dimensions of the world's downfall are described thoroughly. All social order and righteous moral will disintegrate, Qutb meant, if every Muslim does not strive for the implementation of Islamic values in all societal institutions. The sociologist and political scientist Olivier Carré deems him as ultimately as aggressive, all-encompassing, uncompromising, and global. However, Qutb is not only idiosyncratic when it comes to his cosmic *jihad* agenda at the time. Naturally, his "fire and

[6] Prejudice in the sense of pre-judgements (in the Gadamerian tradition) is inevitable when studying both al-Banna's and Qutb's worldview. Never being able to step outside of my own cultural context and tradition, I am only able to try to understand their texts on my own terms, rooted in my own tradition. A contextual approach is necessary to study the two ideologues' ideas, and to interpret their written works as a product of its environment and time. See Krogh, Thomas. *Hermeneutikk: Om å forstå og fortolke* and the article on Hans-Georg Gadamer: Philosophical Hermeneutics: The Positivity of 'Prejudice' on https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gadamer/.

brimstone"-approach must be seen in the light of him spending countless years in confinement, shaping his worldview even further. This methodological aspect is important. Qutb had written on the case of Islam and the West earlier, with *Social Justice in Islam - Al-'Adala al-Ijtima'iyya fi al-Islam* in Arabic - released in the late 1940s. Nevertheless, most of his prominent pro-Islamist works were written from behind prison bars, and his Islamist worldview escalated and became more relentless as time went on. Undoubtedly, his ideology was developed further as he was continuously repressed and incarcerated by the authorities, before he ultimately was executed. This means that whereas al-Banna's ideology mainly must be seen in relation to Egypt at the time, permeated by the foreign powers, Qutb's ideology must be seen, at least to some degree, in relation to his prison years and the harsh realities of the Nasser regime. Simply reading and analyzing their ideological traits without even considering these two very different backgrounds and motivations would be dangerous, since it would remove all contextualization and build upon erroneous propositions.

This methodological approach and difference between al-Banna and Qutb raises another issue. The dichotomy and dualistic nature between the two, when analyzing their ideology, is itself problematic. Considering these divergent backgrounds, for instance, does al-Banna and Qutb mean the same when they talk about *jihad*, or *shari'a*? I have established that their background is essential to the emergence of their worldview. But, fundamentally, how important is their contextual background when analyzing the different ideological elements? As this is difficult to answer, this issue is something I am aware of throughout this entire paper. Since this analysis is purely a presentation and an analysis comparing key elements inherent in their different worldviews, the exact nature of how their worldview emerged regarding their different ideological elements is something that requires further research.

A critical point to make, however, is what historical viewpoint I adhere to when discussing and analyzing the texts of al-Banna and Qutb in general. Mainly, since their world perspective have rarely been compared directly, there is not much to spring from. In general, however, it seems like they are seen as sufficiently different, besides the fact that they are both regarded as Islamists by historians. However, I would argue that my analysis is partly a continuation of the work by Ana Belen Soage and to an extent Andrea Mura, who both have compared the two Islamists and changed the course in the later years.[7] Apart from this, I do not follow any specific

[7] More on this in the historiography chapter below, p. 7.

tradition or historical research claimed in relation to al-Banna or Qutb. For example: some scholars like political scientist Leonard Binder addresses Qutb as a "non-scripturalist fundamentalist", because Qutb incorporates modern terminology in his works, in contrast to other scripturalists who renounce modern analytical methods because the texts "speak for themselves". Simply put, as Qutb's thought is all-encompassing, I believe all concepts used by him must be understood as incorporated into his system. As Shahrough Akhavi believes, Qutb's use of "modern methodology" should not be seen as any embrace of secular means of research. Rather, as with everything else, Qutb incorporates all concepts into his belief, and this must be understood as the devitalization of the terminology, with Qutb disemboweling it of any secular means, and applying it exclusively to his religious discourse.[8]

Finally, it is paramount to underline that my theoretical approach to al-Banna's and Qutb's ideologies will highly emphasize the materialization of Islamism as closer connected to religio-cultural aspects in Egypt, rather than scrutinizing Islam in a totalitarian perspective, as some scholars have done. In my opinion, several researchers too heavily accentuate the comparative relationship between the dawn of Islamism with the acceleration of Mussolini and Hitler's National Socialist fascist ideology in Europe. That is not to say the relationship between the two latter are non-existent. Similarities and connections between al-Banna and the European fascist movement occurred, such as the emphasis on militarism, with The Brotherhood's Special Apparatus and *Jawwala* - Rover Scouts, but this is not something that this thesis will heavily underline throughout this paper.[9]

1.3 Historiography

Sayyid Qutb has earned much more interest in the academic discourse than Hassan al-Banna. There exists no extensive biography or complete analyzation of al-Banna's life, work or thought. The only work dedicated fully to al-Banna is Gudrun Krämer's 120-page long *Hasan al-Banna*. On the other hand, Qutb's legacy has launched countless books, biographies, collections and articles, with over 300-page long works by researchers such as John Calvert and

[8] Akhavi, Shahrough. 2013. "Sayyid Qutb", Esposito & El-Din Shahin (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*. Oxford Handbooks Online, p. 6

[9] For more on both The Rovers and Special Apparatus, see Krämer, Gudrun. *Hasan al-Banna*. Oneworld Publications, 2010, p. 54-57 and 70-75.

James Toth, concerning the life and times of the Islamist. The reason for this is naturally because of the voluminous work by Qutb's works itself, with him being a much more prolific writer and thinker. In this regard, al-Banna has not summoned many biographies because he is so interconnected to the birth of the Muslim Brotherhood itself, and the pilot stages of the organization. On the Brotherhood, Richard P. Mitchell's *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* from the 1960s is considered essential, as well as Brynjar Lia's latter work *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement (1928-1942)* which appeared in the late 1990s. Both heavily relying on interviews, primary sources and research visits in Egypt, these works are regarded as groundworks on the Brotherhood, and especially the pre-Qutb era of the organization. Still, a thorough analyzation of al-Banna's ideological worldview is lacking, which is of course is partly why this thesis highlight this topic in such high regard.

Naturally, with al-Banna and Qutb having such different backdrops for their ideology, few comparative studies regarding their ideology exists, as mentioned. This is probably in part due to some of the methodological problems above. Since the 2000s, this has partly changed. Political theorist Andrea Mura's book *The Symbolic Scenarios of Islamism: A Study in Islamic Political Thought* examines both al-Banna's and Qutb's ideological framework, but also inspects Osama bin Laden's worldview. Having published widely in both psychoanalysis and political philosophy, Mura's approach is quite different from the examination of their respective ideologies in this paper. Mura scrutinizes the Islamist ideology thoroughly, but with his book highly emphasizing such concepts as modernity, tradition and transmodernity, Mura's approach is more of a philosopher than a historian, applying ideas from thinkers such as Sartre, Foucault, Lacan, Laclau and Žižek into his analysis of Islamism.[10] Furthermore, Middle East historian Ana Belen Soage has published various articles on both al-Banna and Qutb, with especially one even discussing continuity or rupture in the two ideologues' body of work. Soage has addressed al-Banna's and Qutb's shared ideological traits as paramount, highlighting elements such as Islamic governance and *shari'a*, and the notion that Islam must be viewed as a total system of life. While both Mura and Soage touch upon some of the same issues as I do in this paper, no comprehensive presentation or analysis of their ideologies exists.

A substantial amount has been written on Islamism in general. I have not had trouble locating satisfactory literature when discussing general Islamist traits and elements in this thesis.

[10] See Mura, Andrea. *The Symbolic Scenarios of Islamism*, p. 13-30 for detailed information.

Anthologies such as Esposito and Shahin's *The Oxford Handbook for Islam and Politics* and Euben and Zaman's *Princeton Readings in Islamic Thought* thoroughly examine various aspects and elements through the timeline of Islam and Islamism. Other authors and researchers such as Bassam Tibi, Gilles Kepel, Nikki R. Keddie, Malcolm H. Kerr, William E. Shepard, Ziad Munson, Mehdi Mozafarri, Øystein Sørensen, Brynjar Lia and Bjørn Olav Utvik, have all been very useful to specifics dealing with Islamism on a general level.

1.4 Literature

To get to the core of al-Banna's and Qutb's work, I have considered several literary works written by them both. While al-Banna has mostly left behind pamphlets, tractates, epistles, essays, and smaller written works, Qutb's authorship is immense, from his vast theological work *In the Shade of the Quran* to his political manifesto *Milestones*, arguably his most important work when it comes to Islamism. Can an analysis of al-Banna's thought through his own small essays and pamphlets bring about the same value as an analysis of Qutb's ideology through his massive and much more systematized work? It is essential to acknowledge that al-Banna's works are much more limited and fragmented. Despite this, al-Banna's ideas and aspirations are not hard to grasp in themselves, and so they are easily comparable to Qutb's more organized theory of Islamism.

I have acquired al-Banna's fragmented texts from two main sources. First, Charles Wendell's collection of al-Banna's works - *Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna* - has been invaluable. One of the few collections of al-Banna's works translated into English, Wendell's collection remains important to any non-Arabic fluent student of Islamism almost forty years after its release. The collection includes *Toward the Light* - in which al-Banna most thoroughly discusses Islam as all-encompassing – as well as other works such as *Between Yesterday and Today, Our Mission, To What Do We Summon Mankind?* (also translated as *To What Do We Invite Humanity?*), and *On Jihad*. My second source of al-Banna's written work has been the Internet site The Quran Blog, which contains several translated texts by the Muslim Brotherhood founder. Works such as *The Message of the Teachings, Peace in Islam, Our Message, Our Message in a New Phase, Islamic Creed, Oh Youth* and *Letter to A Muslim Student*, all which have been helpful, has survived and are printed in English on the website www.thequranblog.wordpress.com.

When it comes to Qutb, his Islamist magnum opus *Milestones* has of course been my primary work of literature regarding his Islamist worldview, as he clearly presents his all-comprehensive ideology here. His earlier book *Social Justice in Islam* has been useful to examine some of his earlier thought, but is not excessively featured in this thesis. Besides that, his texts *The America I Have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values* and *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics* have both been advantageous to inspect his ideological framework. With Qutb's ideology both being more accessible analytically due to its explicit nature through his work as an ideologue and thinker, and generally also being more compressed, systematized and collected than with his predecessor, fewer individual sources has been needed here.

1.5 Outline

The structure of my thesis is simple. Chapter 2 – on Islamism – is split in two parts. The first section is a theoretical part, followed by a more historical segment. First, I will discuss Islamism in accordance with my analysis, i.e. the ideas and ideology of al-Banna and Qutb. What is Islamism, and what do I mean when I talk about Islamism in my thesis? Secondly, I will clarify the concepts 'Salafi movement' and 'Wahhabism' – two concepts which are often used synonymous with Islamism, but which ultimately are more grounded in the religious than the political, and originate from much older historical roots. In the second part, I will shed light upon the concept of Islamic modernism in the late 1800s, which I argue is the phenomenon that preceded Islamism with most impact, and serve as a backdrop for the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1920s.

Chapter 3 will serve as the section where I present five Islamist traits in Hassan al-Banna's ideology, packed into three sections. First, I will deal with the goals and final objectives of the ideology – what is the perfect society for Islamists? This is the largest section of the analysis of al-Banna. Here, I will talk about Islam as a total and all-comprehending system, the idea of an Islamic state, and the Islamic *shari'a* as the form of governmental foundation. The next section regarding methods and strategies to achieve the goal will exclusively deal with the concept of *jihad*, as this is one of the most identifiable Islamist traits. What does al-Banna write on *jihad* – the struggle – both in the form of violent and non-violent? How does *jihad* fit into his worldview? In the last part of the chapter, I will emphasize al-Banna's particular historical epoch as essential for the development of Islamism. This part will highlight the West's presence

and the colonialism in the Egypt and neighboring Middle Eastern countries as imperative for the rise of Islamism and the emanation of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Chapter 4 will serve as the platform for a similar presentation with Sayyid Qutb's ideology. After an introductory part where I highlight Qutb's turn from a secular intellectual to an Islamist, the same four Islamist notions will be used for studying his ideas and thoughts: Islam as an all-encompassing system, Islamic state, *shari'a* and *jihad*. In the last section, I will highlight the fifth element: Qutb's theory of *jahiliyyah*, mirroring the last section in the preceding chapter on al-Banna. The word *jahiliyyah* is synonymous with the pre-Islamic period in present day Arabia, or simply "ignorance" for a divine order. Qutb meant that if a society was ruled by non-other than Allah, it was *jahiliyyah* and barbaric.[11] Like with al-Banna's Brotherhood emerging largely due to the crumbling of Islamic virtues in light of foreign intervention in his homeland, Qutb's *jahiliyyah* is his main ideological feature, similarly painting an "us and them" image with Islam on one side, and all other human thought on the other. Qutb's intransigent view that all societies not governed by the Quran and its tradition are morally primitive dominated his entire worldview.

In the last chapter, I will examine and summarize the differences and similarities between al-Banna's and Qutb's ideologies. Is it really impossible to compare them, because of their distinctive approach and basis to and for Islamism? Does there exist a form of break or continuity between their respective ideological worldviews? These are some of the major problems that will be dealt with in the last section.

[11] See Qutb, Sayyid. *Milestones,* p. 10-13, 19-22; Kepel, Gilles. *The Roots of Radical Islam,* p. 50.

2 Islamism

2.1 Islamism: Concept and Phenomenon

Islamism is a complex and varied phenomenon. Historically, the word "Islamism" has exclusively been used synonymously with "Islam", the religion itself.[12] One of the earliest sources points to Voltaire, who used "Islamism" when referring to the religion in the 1700s. Towards the beginning of the 1900s, Western orientalists and scholars of the Middle East often used the term. Around the time of the First World War, "Islam" became the default phrase for describing the religion.[13] Prior to Khomeini's establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, "Islamism" was not used – neither in news reports or literature - to describe a more radical or politicized version of Islam. Even though Islamism as a phenomenon was born with the Brotherhood's origins in the 1930s, the concept came to the media's attention with Khomeini. The rise of the new Iranian order demanded a definition of the new concept put into practice: a nation based solely on religious laws and doctrines, in the modern age. Terms such as "radical Islam", "political Islam" or "Islamic fundamentalism" became prominent in several books and articles following the Islamic revolution.

Islamism became a world-wide phenomenon with the September 11th 2001 attacks in New York City. When Osama Bin Laden's men from al-Qaeda crashed into the World Trade Center in the heart of the city, "Islamic fundamentalism" and other related terms became common among politicians, journalists and news reporters.[14] With the subsequent Islamist motivated attacks in London and Madrid following 9/11, both the media and researchers began focusing significantly on Islamism in the West. Islamism is now everywhere, in all kinds of forms and shapes, from the Prophet's Ummah in Norway to the most prominent organization, as of now, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or simply Islamic State (IS). With Islamism dominating both the public eye and the academic discourse, the importance of immediate understanding grows stronger every day.

---

[12] Mozafarri, Mehdi. "What is Islamism?" *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*: Vol. 8. Routledge (2007), p. 17

[13] Kramer, Martin. "Coming to Terms: Islamists or fundamentalists?" *Middle East Quarterly*: Vol 10 (2003), p. 65-77.

[14] Mozafarri, Mehdi, "What is Islamism?", p. 18.

2.1.1 What is Islamism? Critique and Definition

Political scientist Bassam Tibi argues that Islamism is the cultural and political response to the failed post-colonial project to develop the Islamic societies in the globalized era.[15] Very broadly speaking, this is correct. However, the term "Islamism" refers to different organizations, parties, groups, and various phenomenon. Thus, it is paramount to have a clear definition of what Islamism is. However, the term must be contextualized. There is a clear and obvious difference between groups such as Islamic State (IS) and for example Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey. In other words, it is crucial to distinguish violent jihadists from other non-violent ultra-conservative reformists. Both organizations, however, builds on the same tradition of Islamism, and thus, share basic common principles. Basically, for Islamists, the religion of Islam shall be the building blocks for the political order, and this is the essential point. As Tibi argues, one of the main differences between Islam and Islamism, is that the latter has the "interpretation of Islam as *nizam Islami*" – "state order" in Arabic.[16]

How should one define the phenomenon of Islamism most appropriately for my analysis? In short, Islamism is a political ideology based on Islam.[17] Even though al-Banna believed that the Muslim Brothers only tried to continue the Quran's message it is elementary to see both the founder al-Banna's and Qutb's Islamism as a branch of Islam, and not Islam itself.[18] Islamism is politicized religion which try to legitimize political goals through their religion.[19] Islam, on the other hand, is simply a monotheistic Abrahamic religion. First, I suggest a broad definition authored by historian Bjørn Olav Utvik, to cover the main lines. According to him, Islamism is:

> An ideological orientation which highlights that the religion of Islam does not only affect faith of the individual, but also contain God-given guidelines that should govern social, legal and political conditions in Muslim societies. For most Islamists, this view implies that sharia, the Islamic law based on the Qur'an and the Prophet's sunnah, must be the basis for legislation.[20]

---

[15] Tibi, *Islamism and Islam*, p. 2-3.

[16] Ibid., p. 6.

[17] Sørensen, Hagtvet, Brandal. *Islamisme: ideologi og trussel*. Dreyers forlag, 2016, p. 15.

[18] Al-Banna, Hassan. *To What Do We Summon Mankind?* Translated by Charles Wendell. *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*. University of California Press, 1978, p. 74.

[19] Tibi, *Islam and Islamism*, p. Preface (VII).

[20] Utvik, Bjørn Olav. *Islamismen*. Unipub, 2011, p. 25. My translation from Norwegian.

This definition is characterized by its inclusion of many different currents within Islamism: embracing both individuals, groups and organizations, this definition seems very wide. Both militant and non-militant Islamists are contained in this definition, from the members of Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda to – relatively – democratic, moderate Islamic parties, such as The Ennahdha Party in Tunisia. This definition is good, because it includes several important aspects of Islamism, and presents them in a straightforward matter. However, it does not describe accurately or precisely the Islamism found in the mind of al-Banna or Qutb. As historian Øystein Sørensen points out, Utvik's definition includes the Islamic thinker Mahmoud Taha – the man who was executed for his active political engagement and commitment against *shari'a* law and colonialism. Taha wanted a socialist republic in his native country Sudan – but still a state completely anchored in Islamic principles.[21] Utvik's definition is initially legitimate for describing the phenomenon, but for my study of al-Banna and Qutb, it is desirable to raise a definition of the term which more specifically refers to the ideological mindset held by these two ideologists. Sørensen's own summary of Islamism seems to be more precise:

> It [Islamism] discards Western secular values, […] defeats all forms of what it perceives as disbelief, especially Western influence over and in the Muslim world, […] is hostile to Muslims with a different interpretation of Islam, […] has as its overall goal a pure Islamic state, ruled by (a rigid and all-encompassing interpretation) of Sharia.[22]

Sørensen's interpretation is in a sense a modified version of Utvik's definition. In short, the latter's definition works because it contains specific details about the anti-liberal and anti-democratic guidelines which permeates militant Islamism. Utvik speaks too broadly about the concept, and his definition does not set strict guidelines regarding the issue of militant Islamism. The Iranian political scientist Mehdi Mozafarri, now in exile in Denmark, defines Islamism as "a religion-based ideology, which holds a totalitarian interpretation of Islam, whose aim is the conquest of the world by all means".[23] Mozafarri adds a crucial element in his definition: the resurrection of the caliphate itself – *khilafa* – and the "conquest of the world". Both al-Banna and Qutb prioritized the resurrection of the Islamic state in their own lifetime. In this way, Mozafarri's definition seems right. On the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood as a group has taken an active stance against several violent episodes and organizations – such as the actions of Islamic State (IS). Historically, the Brothers are generally known to use democracy to

[21] Sørensen, Hagtvet, Brandal, *Islamisme: ideologi og trussel*, p. 452.

[22] Sørensen, Hagtvet, Brandal, *Islamisme: ideologi og trussel*, p.18. My translation from Norwegian.

[23] Mozafarri, Mehdi, *Islamisme: en oriental totalitarisme?* Informations Forlag, 2013, p. 25.

achieve their goals as an organization. To say that they use "all means" to reach their goals would be wrong. The Islamism of the Brothers, in this case, primarily al-Banna and Qutb, can therefore not be understood and defined as too wide (Utvik), nor as a violent totalitarian organization that uses all means (Mozafarri). Sørensen's characterization covers the basis of militant Islamism in accordance with al-Banna's and Qutb's ideology, and will therefore be kept in mind when I refer to the term. Utvik and Mozafarri provides definitions on opposite sides that are possible to characterize Islamism with, but they also indirectly show us how wide Islamism is understood as concept, as well as several problematic aspects when defining the phenomenon.

2.1.2 Definitions: Islamism, Salafism, and Wahhabism

Several authors and journalists use words such as "Islamic fundamentalism", "political Islam", "Salafi movement", "Wahhabism" and other related terms interchangeably. For academic clarity and conciseness, I propose a breakdown and explanation of the concepts. First, I will refrain from labels such as "radical Islam", "fundamental Islam", "political Islam", and so on, as synonyms for Islamism. By definition, these are actually referring to Islam – not Islamism – and so they lose their value analytically. Being used as synonyms of Islamism, these phrases appear misleading and non-fruitful. Using "moderate Islam" or "radical Islam" to display each side of the Islamist spectrum is misleading also, because Islamism is about much more than orthodox, politically motivated religion, as shown above.[24] On the other hand, we have concepts such as "Salafism" and "Wahhabism", which are neither equivalent to Islamism.

The Salafist movement (from *al-salaf al-salih*) is the name of the Sunni-Islamic branch that wishes to restore and live by the traditions of the "godly and pious ancestors" which followed right after the life of Prophet Muhammad. According to the Salafists, the ancestors exemplify the perfect virtuous life. The Salafists are followers of the strict demand of Allah as a unified God – the concept of *tawhid* – and claim that Islam is the only proper monotheistic religion. For the Salafists, Muhammad's word and the Quran are the only foundation for norms and how one's life is to be lived.[25] Modern Islamism then, is a repercussion of Salafist ideology - a reimagined modern political variation of the idea – but not the same. Wahhabism is not a

[24] Tibi, *Islamism and Islam*, p. 2.

[25] Euben, Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*. Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 19-20.

modern phenomenon like Islamism either, but a Salafi, orthodox and reformist Sunni-Islamic revolutionary movement that wishes to promote the unity of Allah as the rule of law.[26] Clearly an embodiment and practice of Salafism itself, "Wahhabism" refers to Muhammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who in the mid-1700s entered a covenant with the emir Muhamad bin Saud and laid the ideological and theological foundation for the first Saudi dynasty. The Wahhabis stood in the opposition to the cultivation of idols instead of God, and looked at both Sufis and Shia Muslims as opponents.[27] Wahhabism builds on the concepts from the Islamic thinkers Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855) and Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328), but it is nevertheless the foundational religious texts which primarily lays the groundwork for the Wahhabis.[28]

How should one differ these two integrated concepts from each other, and from Islamism? Why does it matter? Mehdi Mozafarri writes that Wahhabism, more than anything else, is an expression of Saudi national identity, with its almost non-existent political Islamic trajectory.[29] It would be wrong to juxtapose this with Islamism – considering the national state for example - such as the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. Both the Wahhabi movement and Salafism itself have undoubtedly influenced later Islamic purists, and laid the groundwork for what would eventually become Islamism, with the birth of the Muslim Brotherhood. The idealist stance of the Salafists and Wahhabi are precursors to Islamism, and several Islamists are advocates of today's Salafist movement and/or Wahhabi followers. Professor of International Relations, Fawaz A. Gerges, states that "Bin Laden and Modern Saudi *jihad* are the product of this recent marriage between evangelical Salafism-Wahhabism and transnational Islamism represented by the late Sayyid Qutb".[30]

The distinction between Salafism and Wahhabism – and Islamism on the other hand – is a necessary one: despite the fundamental connection between the phenomena, the content and history of modern Islamism must be understood as a largely separate phenomenon from the other two. As Islamists, Salafists are naturally concerned with the fundamentals of Islam: the Quran and prophet Muhammad's life appears to be the most principal factor. Salafists and

---

[26] Utvik, *Islamismen*, p. 68.

[27] Ibid., p. 22-23.

[28] Euben, Zaman. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, p. 21.

[29] Sørensen, Hagtvet, Brandal. *Islamisme: ideologi og trussel*, p. 45.

[30] Gerges, Fawaz A. *The Far Enemy. Why Jihad Went Global*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Wahhabis have nevertheless been more concerned with the faith and its teachings, rather than establishing a modern global caliphate. While the roots of Salafism and Wahhabism are primarily religious, Islamism is politically motivated religion, mainly developed in the wake of European colonialism and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Despite the fact that Islamism clearly follows many of the Salafist tendencies in the centuries following the life of Muhammad, its birth can however be much closer linked to the phenomenon of Islamic modernism: a form of modernist Salafism from the late 1800s and an Islamic revolutionary movement against the Western powers at the time.

2.2 The Roots of Islamism and The Muslim Brotherhood

The concept labelled "Islamic modernism" was fronted and shaped primarily by the reformists Sayyid al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida. At the turn of the 19th century, these reformists' idea of modernizing Islam – in line with what happened in the West - became one of the most prominent topics in the Islamic intellectual discourse. The modernists believed a new orientation of the basis texts in Islam was necessary to adapt and justify Islam's turning, encountering with the West's influence.[31] They wanted to reform the religion in line with the problems of their time, turning back and bringing Islam back to the right track. Even though they are referred to as modernists, they are nevertheless a kind of *salafiyya* – Salafists - because of this wish of exploring the deep faith of their roots. According to the reformists, Islam was stuck, and a new orientation involving looking back at the ancestors during the Prophet's time, was crucial for finding inspiration. Contrary to today's Islamists, the Islamic modernists looked back on the pious forefathers solely for guiding and encouragement, and did not support a literal retreat to the time of Muhammad.[32]

The earliest reformer, al-Afghani, was very eager to reconcile Islam with modern science, rationality, and reform. Applying these to the religion, he wanted to turn Islam in a new direction, and thus strengthen the religion as the new basis of multiple spheres in society.[33] This idea of reconciliation came consequentially because of the West's influence in the Middle East: by giving a new interpretation to the traditional Islamic values – especially the Quran and the

[31] Euben, Zaman. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, p. 20.

[32] Utvik, *Islamismen*, p. 47-48.

[33] Keddie, Nikki R. *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din «al-Afghani»*. University of California Press, 1972, p. 165

Sunnah – it could stand against the West as a reunited nationalistic Islamic front. Islam was to be resurrected as the new unifying and idiosyncratic national societal basis.[34] According to the later reformist Rashid Rida, Islam should also be within the renewed Islamic caliphate. In 1920, prior to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Rida had already proclaimed the idea of a revitalized Islamic caliphate for all humanity.[35] The opposite was to be the case, when the Ottoman state fell in 1924. The Muslim Brotherhood was subsequently created four years later.

Hassan al-Banna was strongly influenced by all three reformers - al-Afghani, 'Abduh and Rida - and the Islamic modernists' impact on the emergence of the Brotherhood and the Islamist ideology cannot be underestimated. There are nevertheless obvious differences between the two phenomena. While al-Afghani, 'Abduh and Rida represented what is considered a modernization of Islam, al-Banna rather stood for an Islamization of modernity, hence creating the basis for Islamism as a political ideology. In this section, I will explain how the Islamic reformists affected the Brotherhood's leader – despite all their differences - and thus also the origin of the Muslim Brotherhood and subsequent birth of Islamism.

2.2.1 The Influence of Islamic Modernism

Naturally, Islamism's roots are deeper than the late 1800s. The life of the prophet Muhammad himself and the pious ancestors are the obvious inspiration and starting point for Islamism. Historian Richard P. Mitchell referred to the Kharijites of Mesopotamia in the late 600s, with their focus on esoteric rituals and mysticism, as a possible inspiration for the birth of the Brotherhood. On the other hand, Salafism, and Wahhabism from the 1700s are undeniably a precursor, as mentioned. All these comparisons, however, are not extensive enough. As Mitchell himself notes, this kind of wishful comparative thinking causes only deception, and could be potentially devastating: not describing certain historical events as unique phenomena in themselves is dangerous.[36] Nevertheless, the concept labelled as Islamic modernism, being so close in time and space with the rise of The Brotherhood's Islamism, is clearly worth

[34] Ibid., p. 1.

[35] Sørensen, Hagtvet, Brandal. *Islamisme: ideologi og trussel*, p. 41; Kerr, Malcolm H. *Islamic Reform.* University of California Press, 1965, p. 153.

[36] Mitchell, Richard P. *The Society of the Muslim Brothers.* Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 321.

investigating. Despite the obvious differences between the two, the first has clearly affected the latter in many ways.

Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) was one of the founders of the reformist movement as well as one of the greatest theologians in the Middle East until his death. As an early free thinker and political activist who wanted to rebuild the Muslim countries, he stands as the greatest pan-Islamic contemporary of his time.[37] In this way, al-Afghani was more interested in gathering people under Islam as total unity, rather than the differences within Islam. He was a visionary leader, and was considered the Muslim Brothers' "spiritual father" after his death.[38] According to Mitchell, al-Afghani was most relatable for Hassan al-Banna and the Brothers, generally because of the historical gap: al-Afghani died before al-Banna was born, and it was easier to look to him as a "spiritual ancestor". For al-Afghani, Islam as a collective phenomenon against the power of the West was always the most important idea. Islam was the "strongest band" to him – it was also the name of the magazine he wrote and published in Paris in the 1880s.[39]

Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) took a turn from Islamic mysticism to modernism and rationalism after studying under his teacher al-Afghani.[40] Like his mentor, 'Abduh believed that Islam had to change, the devout predecessors stood as the greatest examples, and science had to be embraced as in Europe. This must not be misunderstood: both al-Afghani and 'Abduh wanted to keep *shari'a* law, but at the same time, it was inevitably with a new interpretation of the scriptures, in both the Quran and the Sunnah.[41] 'Abduh, as al-Afghani, has a connection directly with the leader of the Brotherhood. Al-Banna was an avid reader of 'Abduh's works, and frequented the same social circle as many of 'Abduh's former students – which included al-Banna's own father.[42] Middle East historian Malcolm H. Kerr wrote as early as the late 1960s that al-Banna clearly stood as a successor to 'Abduh.[43]

Hassan al-Banna wrote that Rashid Rida (1865-1935) emerged as the greatest single influence in Islam's service, of all time. Rida – one of 'Abduh's students – brought his theology in a more

---

[37] Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din «al-Afghani»*, p. 1.

[38] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 321.

[39] Utvik, *Islamismen*, p. 86.

[40] Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din «al-Afghani»*, p. 90.

[41] Utvik, *Islamismen*, p. 87.

[42] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 322.

[43] Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, p. 15.

conservative direction[44], and at a point he almost became a member of the Muslim Brotherhood.[45] With this in mind, Rida may seem like the strongest link between the reformists and al-Banna. However, the differences between them are apparent. While Rida still mounted in the intellectual Islamic reformist tradition, al-Banna, to put it simply, wanted to gather young Egyptians into his organization and remake the nation from the bottom up. Unlike Rida – and the other reformists - al-Banna never had an equally strong theoretical approach. It was not completely foreign to him – he referred to Rida's School of Preaching and Guidance, founded in 1912, as an exceptional example of Islamic teaching independent of the government's methods and formal approach.[46] The Brotherhood leader also wrote in the *Al-Manar* journal until the 1930s[47] - a magazine which Rida edited until his death in 1935. As historian Brynjar Lia points out, al-Banna nevertheless believed that Rida, as well as the other modernists, only reached the audience on an academic level, and thus had insignificant impact on societal change – which was to become al-Banna's focus.[48] This is the main difference between the Islamic modernists and al-Banna and the early Islamism of the Brotherhood.

Regardless of al-Banna's criticism of the reformists, there still exists a clear breadcrumb trail from al-Afghani to his own time. Both the modernists and al-Banna – the latter representing Islamism – stand for a defensive mindset against Western influence and foreign power, though with different methods.[49] In his main work *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, Mitchell writes that the Muslim Brothers undoubtedly regarded themselves as the practical extension of the theoretical groundwork organized by the Islamic modernists. While al-Afghani was regarded as the "caller" or "announcer" and Rida the "archivist" or "historian", the Brother's leader was "the builder" – the director of the project – and "the leader of a generation, and the founder of the nation".[50] In this lies the very idea of the Brothers as the pragmatic continuation of the modernists, and the reason behind it. In al-Banna's eyes, the predecessors had failed in practice, precisely because their work only concerned Islam on a theoretical level. To al-Banna, one of

---

[44] Euben, Zaman. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, p. 19, Utvik, *Islamismen*, p. 89.

[45] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 322.

[46] Lia, Brynjar. *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement.* Ithaca, 1998, p. 57.

[47] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 322; Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 56.

[48] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 56.

[49] Euben, Zaman. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, p. 54.

[50] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim* Brothers, p. 321.

the reasons for this was that neither al-Afghani, ‘Abduh nor Rida really understood the importance of Islam as a comprehensive system. Al-Afghani was for example very impressed with the West’s progress in both science and education, and thought that Islam’s new orientation in some way should take inspiration from the Western models.[51] A few decades later, al-Banna went the opposite way by stating that Islam should encircle all political, social, economic, cultural, and of course, religious spheres of society.[52] As Lia has pointed out, al-Banna was still not completely anti-Western ideologically. However, he still found himself incomprehensibly against the educated Egyptian elite in the country who blindly enfolded Western values to a considerable extent.[53]

For the Muslim Brothers, Islam slowly developing into a political ideology was the natural historical step of Islam’s natural progress, and something they would accomplish in practicality with the new organization founded in 1928. To al-Banna, al-Afghani “only analyzed” the problems, ‘Abduh “thought” and Rida “wrote” – to him, they were solely religious and moral reformers who lacked what he and the Brothers had: the idea of Islam as all-encompassing system, possible in the real world, in line with the truth.[54] Al-Banna gave the same criticism to Young Men’s Muslim Association (YMMA), which he had previously joined in 1927. The biggest threat to his Islamic project – the West – was not taken seriously by the Muslim organization, he said. Al-Banna thought young people were largely left out by various religious organizations. The Islamic communities at this time, including YMMA, communicated only with the religious elite and had difficult and inaccessible academic literature that did not appeal to the youth. Al-Banna proclaimed that the people needed a new and available Muslim organization.[55]

Even though it is impossible to say exactly what kind of organization Hassan al-Banna had in mind in the late 1920s, there is however no doubt that the Islamic modernists, who stood near him historically, influenced the leader. Al-Banna and the newly established Brotherhood had much in common with the reformists. Generally, al-Banna supported a united Islamic front against Western political forces, which al-Afghani had already written about in the 1870s. The

---

[51] Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din «al-Afghani»*, p. 62.

[52] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 72.

[53] Ibid., p. 28-31.

[54] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 321.

[55] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 56.

changes al-Banna made, however, becomes very clear when studying this. The Islamic modernists' pan-Islamic worldview, and their desire for unification and solidarity – which was loose, intellectual and inaccessible according to al-Banna – were transformed into a more rigorous idea of coexistence by al-Banna. The idea of reform was put into a stricter system, with both spiritual, political and social change encompassing the entire system of thought[56] - from Islamic revivalism to a new system of a determined, political-religious order.[57] Already from the first few years of the Brotherhood's existence, the organization educated young preachers, advanced forward their propaganda, as well as having a great interest in political and national affairs, and a strong desire to avoid the Islamic elite.[58] The inheritance from the Islamic modernists – by the notion of strongly associating Islam with societal order – resulted in the Muslim Brothers having, by the early 1930s, a strong political-religious aura encompassing the organization.[59] The mother party of all Islamist parties were thus born.[60]

[56] Utvik, *Islamismen*, p. 91.

[57] Tibi, *Islamism and Islam*, p. 39.

[58] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 57.

[59] Ibid., p. 58

[60] Ibid., p. 1.

3 Hassan al-Banna – The *General Guide*

No one ever surpassed Hassan al-Banna in becoming such a tenacious symbol and spokesperson for the Muslim Brotherhood. To declare that the founder of the Brothers, "The Father of Islamism", built the foundations and paved the way for Islamic thinkers such as Abul A'la Maududi in India, Ruhollah Khomeini in Iran and – especially – Sayyid Qutb, is no exaggeration.[61] Hassan al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood – *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* in Arabic – had already after a few years in existence attained a strong political-religious character central to its core ideology. To al-Banna, politics and religion were practically the same thing, and he announced regarding the two issues that "we do not recognize (…) divisions". The Brotherhood's members were encouraged to declare the same thing when confronting outsiders.[62] Despite his vast commitment to the Muslim Brothers' cause, al-Banna was, as mentioned several times, no prolific writer or intellectual as his descendant Sayyid Qutb. More than anything, he was an activist. The founder's ideological doctrine was probably best compiled in the pamphlet *Toward the Light*. In this essay, al-Banna presented his Islamic principles which he encouraged to be realized, to preserve the nation and secure the creation of the new Islamic kingdom. Two years after his manifesto was written, he was assassinated at the age of 42, probably by the special police under orders of the Egyptian king.[63]

Despite his short life, al-Banna's Society of Muslim Brothers made an immense impact already from the early 1930s. Al-Banna was partly inspired by the Islamic modernists – as shown in the previous chapter – but was still very critical of their ideological project. Throughout the 1930s, al-Banna developed his own approach to Islam in the wake of both the modernists' own project and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The new concept of Islamism emerged as a political-religious resurgence movement in Egypt with al-Banna at the front. In this chapter, I will analyze Hassan al-Banna's ideology as it appears in different works by the author. I will systematically inspect some selected elements of his ideas, mostly based on his own literature.

---

[61] Euben, Zaman. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, p. 49.

[62] Al-Banna, Hassan. *Between Yesterday and Today,* translated by Wendell, Charles. *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*. University of California Press, 1978, p. 36.

[63] Soage, Ana Belen. "Hassan al-Banna or the Politicisation of Islam". *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*. Vol 1. Routledge. 2008, p. 24.

The focus of this chapters' analysis is al-Banna's theory of Islamism: his worldview, his goals and means to get there, as well as his relationship to the West. I will mainly present five main parts of Islamism, which I deem most important in this context. All five ideological elements are selected not only because they are all significant to what Islamism is, but naturally because they all embody the religious-political ideology found in al-Banna's scarce authorship too. These ideological components will be placed under three main categories. They are:

1. *Goals and final objective – what does the ideology demand?*

   In this section, I will highlight the three Islamist features of 1) Islam as a universal, all-comprehending system, and 2) the Islamic state or caliphate as the fundamental basis and 3) *shari'a* as the universal law.

2. *Means and strategies – to reach one's goal*

   Naturally, al-Banna wrote, spoke, and held speeches continuously, to secure the future of his ideology, and spread its message all his life. In this section, however, I will rather analyze the concept of 4) *jihad,* not often associated with al-Banna, and analyze how the founder of the Islamist movement commented on this concept as a way of strategy to achieve the goal of an Islamist society.

3. *The Enemy of the Ideology: The West as the Antithesis*

   This is the focal point of al-Banna's ideological framework. Here, I will highlight 5) al-Banna's perspective of the West, and especially colonialism, which I argue is one of the most important reasons behind the birth of the Brotherhood, i.e. the development of Islamism in general. This is a complicated issue, which I will elaborate on thoroughly throughout this section.

Especially in this last section, it is important to tread lightly. Many historians falsely attribute a pure hatred of the West to al-Banna. The Brotherhood's founder clearly had issues with the

West, as the Brits' presence contributed highly to the Brotherhood's birth and growth in general. This is true, but this also makes it very important to not attain an erroneous picture of al-Banna's worldview. In the forthcoming presentation of al-Banna's ideology, I argue that while al-Banna clearly was angered by the dominating foreign powers of Egypt, ultimately, compromise and certain Western values were always a possibility; that is, a possibility for the desired outcome which still was a way back to "true Islam". In accordance to my theory that al-Banna was a pragmatist vis-à-vis Qutb the visionary, I will therefore clarify that al-Banna should not be seen as a "pure" rigid Islamist in the sense of demolishing all Western aspects, as Qutb longed for.

This is not new. "The father of Islamism" is a controversial figure in the historical sciences. In the secondary sources, I have found several divergent historical representations which stand in a confusing dichotomous relationship to each other. The Brotherhood's founder is described as everything from "moderate Islamist" to an extreme equivalent of Adolf Hitler who want to establish a kind of Islamo-fascist order in Egypt. To correct and examine this fragmented understanding of al-Banna, it is profitable to present and analyze the founder's ideology to draw up an accurate image of "the father of Islamism", heavily based on his own literature. The development of al-Banna's religious and political aims and goals are most clear in light of his own authorship. Therefore, I will mainly use translated primary sources originally authored by the leader himself. In this chapter, I will first provide a short historical introduction to al-Banna's life and the origins of the Brotherhood – which in its first years can hardly be differentiated – before I systematically presents the founder's ideology, as it occurred between the organization's birth in 1928 until his assassination in 1949.

3.2 The Birth of the Muslim Brotherhood

Historically, Hassan al-Banna's ideological framework was developed shortly after the birth of his Islamic organization. The years 1932-1933 often stands as the starting point for the emergence of the Islamic ideology. However, it is especially after 1938 that the all-encompassing nature of Islamism anchors into the thought of al-Banna.[64] Prior to this, the Muslim Brotherhood was primarily a charity organization, and a social forum for Muslims in Egypt. However, al-Banna was already well integrated and established within the religious community, long before the creation of the Brotherhood.

[64] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 202.

Hassan Ahmed Abdel Rahman Muhammad al-Banna was born in 1906 in Mahmudiyya, a small-town northwest of Cairo, near Alexandria. A skillful pupil in school, he was quickly a part of the many school activities which encircled the practice of Islam. He was soon a member – and secretary, at thirteen years old – of the Hassafi organization, which two primary goals were to preserve the Islamic morality in society, and stand up against and minimize the impact of the Christian missionaries in Egypt.[65] Later, when al-Banna moved to Cairo in 1923, he became passionately occupied with Sufism, and read Islamic philosophy, like the works of the Persian 11th century philosopher and theologian Al-Ghazali. During his adolescence, he wrote and edited for multiple journals, once held the annual New Year's Eve speech for YMMA, and was generally well-liked by several high-ranked prominent Islamic leaders at the time. When he was 22 years old, he almost became the protégé of Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, one of the founders of YMMA, which would have placed al-Banna alongside his mentor at the Religious Institute in Mecca.[66] Al-Banna was nonetheless about to take another route for himself.

The young Hassan al-Banna did not become one with the rich imams of Cairo or Mecca. Instead, he moved to the small town of Ismailia, in 1927. He began in his own personal way to reach out to people, spreading the word of the Quran. After graduating – now a teacher in Arabic – al-Banna began preaching for the youth of Ismailia. Twice a week he lectured in local mosques, but also in untraditional places – especially in coffee-shops. These liberated and free-spirited places were considered shameful by many, and al-Banna clearly used this as an advantage.[67] According to Brynjar Lia, al-Banna undoubtedly used unconventional methods – as exampled - to reach out to the young and often uneducated population of Egypt.[68] The Muslim Brotherhood emerged from this, and originated in 1928 as an extension of the earlier Hassafi organization. The reading and preaching of the Quran in coffee-shops became routine, and according to al-Banna himself, three coffee-shops were especially frequented the most. The young leader of the newly established Brotherhood used "everyday language", and tried to appeal to his audience in a straightforward way.[69] The organization began helping in orphan

[65] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 2.

[66] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 30.

[67] Ibid., p. 32-4.

[68] Ibid., p. 34.

[69] Al-Banna, Hassan. *Letter to a Muslim Student*. The Islamic Foundation/FOSIS, 1995, p. 8.

clinics, brought electricity to smaller villages, and started health clinics and institutions.[70] They founded sport clubs and educational institutes. The Brothers affected society with social benefits – but under their religious banner.[71] Additionally, inside the organization, the moral upbringing of the members was central. The moral teachings – *tahdhib* in Arabic – entailed primarily recitation of the Quran and the life of Muhammad.[72]

The Muslim Brotherhood was born out of several ideas. The organization was partly – and inevitably – a practical extension of the Islamic modernists from the late 1800s. Al-Banna had often in his youth met the reformist Rashid Rida, the former student of Muhammad 'Abduh, several times in Cairo, and written for his journal *al-Manar*.[73] At the same time, in the origin years of the Brotherhood, a connection between the Brotherhood itself and Islamic mysticism and Sufism was apparent. The founder al-Banna meant that Sufism in its "pure form" represented the ideal guidelines and the perfect program for Muslims. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood had, shortly after its creation, a strong "Sufi character", from the dressing of the members to the practice of Sufi hymns.[74] Al-Banna soon adopted the Sufi title of General Guide – *al-Murshid al-'Amm* – and the members of the Brotherhood swore a Sufi oath – *bay'a* - to the founder.[75] Soon, as the organization grew, the Muslim society was referred to as a "a state within a state". With the Muslim Brothers growing rapidly in the early 1930s, more branches were constructed within the organization. The most apparent was maybe The Secret Apparatus – *al-Jihaz al-Sirri*: the Muslim Brotherhood's own secret militant elite corps.[76]

The activities of the Muslim Brotherhood are in its first three-four years hard to differentiate from the life of Hassan al-Banna himself. As the Brotherhood's definite leader, he embodied the organization more than anybody else. Therefore, the leader's enthusiasm for the middle and lower social classes became prominent for the organization as well. Primarily, it was the educated middle-class, and some elements of lower middle class, that most frequently attended

[70] Euben & Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, p. 51.

[71] Sørensen, Hagtvet, Brandal. *Islamisme: ideologi og trussel*, p. 118.

[72] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 37.

[73] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 5.

[74] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 38.

[75] Soage, "Hassan al-Banna or the Politicisation of Islam", p. 22.

[76] Al-Banna, *Letter to a Muslim Student*, p. 12.

the Brotherhood's conferences as time went on. The Brothers built their first mosque in 1930, and schools soon followed. The organization expanded in 1931, with a new fraction in the capital of Cairo.[77] From 1932 and onward, the Brotherhood grew massively. The exodus of the Brothers - to the heart of the country - became a success, with allegedly as many as 500 000 members ten years after its inception in 1928. In general, the twenty-year period of 1932-54 stands as the most successful period of the Brotherhood.[78] While growing massively, other departments were also established in Morocco, Sudan, Syria, and Palestine. Consequently, the Muslim Brotherhood became one of the most substantial organizations in Egypt from the 1930s onward.[79] The Society of the Muslim Brothers was created and established, but was in its origins primarily an activist organization which promoted social welfare programs, and a scene for Islamic religiousness – without its Islamist traits. However, as mentioned, this would change in the 1930s.

3.2.1 The Politicization of Religion

Islamism as a concept did not appear unexpectedly without any forewarning. Islamism, as in the idea as the only way of Islam - and as a resistance to the West - was clearly a part of al-Banna's thought, even back to his teenage years. Unilaterally, this can be interpreted as sheer contempt for the West. However, it is important to understand the growth of Islamism in connected with its geopolitical climate. Most Egyptians were alienated by the European power in the country. At the same time, most of Egypt's population were illiterate, and – especially compared to Europe – a very religious population. The resurgence of the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamist ideology must be a result of the Brothers as alternative to the dominating Western powers. In the streets of Cairo, British soldiers were commonplace when al-Banna started his project, clearly reflecting the idea behind the birth of the Brotherhood, and al-Banna's immediate reaction as a young man in Cairo, 1923-27:

> A wave of dissolution which undermined all firm beliefs, was engulfing Egypt in the name of intellectual emancipation. This trend attacked morals, deeds, and virtues under the pretext of personal freedom. Nothing

[77] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 40-3.

[78] Munson, Ziad. "Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood". *The Sociological Quarterly*. Vol 42, No. 4, Autumn 2001, p. 487-510, p. 1.

[79] Soage, "Hassan al-Banna or the Politicisation of Islam", p. 22.

> could stand against this powerful and tyrannical stream of disbelief and permissiveness that was sweeping our country (…)
>
> I saw the social life of the beloved Egyptian people, oscillating between her dear and precious Islam which she had inherited, defended, lived with during fourteen centuries, and this severe Western invasion which was armed and equipped with all destructive influences of money, wealth, prestige, ostentation, power and means of propaganda.[80]

A strong dissatisfaction with the West's impact on the motherland, combined with the fall of the Caliphate in 1924 (and thereby Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's segregation of religion and state in the newly formed republic of Turkey), undoubtedly affected al-Banna in his formative years. Not only did the Christian European powers divide the country from the outside, but it was also crumbling from the inside.[81] The young al-Banna saw Egypt as a country evaporating, drenched in decadence and materialism, with secularism dominating while Muslim virtues disintegrated. Even though al-Banna's view of the West is not as single-minded as the quote above implies - shown by Lia in his book *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* - the dichotomy al-Banna drew up is still the basic core of his Islamist ideology - the West and Islam are not compatible. Occasionally, al-Banna spoke highly of several Western phenomena, such as democracy and individual freedom, and he accepted that these ideas originated from the West.[82] Nevertheless, in al-Banna's eyes the West found itself in a moral and economic recession, and had nothing to offer Egypt. Islam was the only solution for re-making the nation.[83]

The repercussions of an internal crisis inside the organization prompted clear results on al-Banna's part. A conflict between al-Banna and other party members led the founder al-Banna to clarify the nature of the Muslim Brotherhood itself. Al-Banna wrote that the Brothers' perception must be elevated: the solution for a pure Islamic society could not any longer merely be the building of mosques and the preaching of the Quran – the entire nation's soul must be saved. Thus, the internal conflict made al-Banna shift his view onto politics. The belief in the good life, in the form of Islam as the guiding force, went from religious and spiritual to include

---

[80] Al-Banna, Hassan. *Memoirs of the Message and the Preacher* (*Mudhakkirat al-da'wa wa salda'iya* , Cairo, 1986), quoted in Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 28.

[81] Kepel, Gilles. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam.* I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2014, p. 27.

[82] Sørensen, Hagtvet, Brandal. *Islamisme: ideologi og trussel*, p. 121-2.

[83] Al-Banna, Hassan. *Toward the Light*, translated by Wendell, Charles. *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*. University of California Press, 1978, p. 106-7.

all aspects of society.[84] The desired creation of a "strong and steadfast ideology", together with "firm and superior principles" and "a strong moral immunity", is the Muslim Brotherhood's aim and only reason for existence, al-Banna writes in 1933.[85] These key words sum up the newborn political ideology of the Muslim Brothers in the early 1930s: a strong and nationalistic driving force to change the country, in the form of deep faith and piety, were to transform the nation's entire population and its very consciousness to a higher stage closer to Allah.[86]

However, the Brothers' relationship with politics must not be misunderstood. A part of the organization's political-religious program was a strong reluctance and a firm stance against party politics. Islam and politics was merged as a counterpoint to the established political system during the early 1930s. Al-Banna was still a pragmatist, and ran for election on two occasions, but was defeated both times. He was pressured from the 1941 elections by, among others, the nationalistic Wafd Party. Then, he met defeat again in 1945 in what is referred to as "the most dishonest election ever" in Egypt up to that point.[87] After the regime stumbled upon a gun depository in 1948, the Muslim Brotherhood was accused by the government of planning revolution. Hassan al-Banna was assassinated a year later, in 1949.[88]

3.3 The Islamist Ideology of Hassan al-Banna

As historian Gudrun Krämer points out, the central core to al-Banna's ideology was to construct a moral order based on what he believed was the "true Islam".[89] During the 1930s, his moral reformism developed into pan-Islamism: the idea that all Muslims must unite and gather under the same banner, nation, and identity. This concept - the totality of Islam - has become common among Islamist organizations and groups since the Brotherhood proclaimed it as central to their ideology. In the letter *Toward the Light* – sent to King Faruq I of Egypt in 1947 – al-Banna wrote that the Brotherhood's ideology was "…complete and all-encompassing, guaranteeing the establishment of the most excellent institutions for public life in the nation, both practically

[84] Euben, Zaman. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, p. 50.

[85] Al-Banna, Hassan. *'Agrahad al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, JIM, Vol. 7, 1933, quoted in Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 67.

[86] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 67.

[87] Euben & Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, p. 52.

[88] Sørensen, Hagtvet, Brandal. *Islamisme: ideologi og trussel*, p. 119.

[89] Krämer, Gudrun. *Hasan al-Banna*. Oneworld Publications, 2010. Page: VII (introduction)

and spiritually."[90] Al-Banna measured the way of Islam to the life of the West, its traits, and characteristics, which he deemed impossible for Egypt. Islam was the only way. To al-Banna, sheer religiousness without the pledge to Islamic political, social, or economic activism was counterproductive and not of any value. To not engage in political Islam was *jahiliyyah* – non-Islamic and pagan - and the social system inherent in Islam was what distinguished it from other religions, he wrote – it is both a collective and a state religion.[91] Not only was Islam a divine order with the most blessed principles for al-Banna, but it generally also "uplifts the human soul and sanctifies universal brotherhood", according to political scientist Ahmad Moussalli. Islam was both devotion and exaltation, but also a social system and a "general code for all races, peoples and nations".[92]

3.3.1 Goals and Final Objective

The Muslim Brotherhood and al-Banna did not only stand for a religious awakening of the people of Egypt, but also for Islam itself as crucial in the center of the political administrative system. Therefore, my presentation and analysis of al-Banna Islamist ideology begins with the fundamental - the foundation which encircles al-Banna's entire theoretical-ideological program – Islam as a complete, total, and all-embracing system.

As is evident, politics and religion merged for Hassan al-Banna during the early 1930s. "We believe that the rulings and precept of Islam are comprehensive, and organize the affairs of this life and the next", he wrote, "and those who think that its precepts are only concerned with the ritual or the spiritual are wrong".[93] To al-Banna, the Brothers were blessed with the correct way of understanding the faith, as "comprehensive, sufficient and complete."[94] Where others perceived Islam as simply religious and spiritual, al-Banna saw his religion as broad and all-

---

[90] Al-Banna, *Toward the Light*, p. 105.

[91] Moussalli, Ahmad. "Hassan Al-Banna". 2013, Esposito & El-Din Shahin (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*. Oxford Handbooks Online. Page: 6-8

[92] Moussalli, "Hassan Al-Banna", p. 8

[93] Al-Banna, Hassan. *Risalat al-mu'tamar al-khamis* (1938), quoted in Soage, "Hassan al-Banna or the Politicisation of Islam", p. 26.

[94] Al-Banna, Hassan. *Risalat al-mu'tamar al-sadis* (1941), quoted in Soage, "Hassan al-Banna or the Politicisation of Islam", p. 26.

inclusive.[95] "The Muslim Brothers believe that Islam as a universal religion regulates all the affairs of man's life, that it applies to all nations and people, and that it is for all ages and for .all times", al-Banna wrote in the 1940s.[96] In 1938, the leader proclaimed that "Islam is creed and worship, nation and nationality, religion and state, spirituality and freedom, book and sword".[97] Al-Banna expanded and varied on this in several texts, ultimately mentioning and including multiple important political concepts into his system. To him, Islam as a concept should apply to the politics of the nation and foreign policy, its economic system, education, family politics, ethics and power relations, law, culture, and science. In *Under the banner of the Quran*, where these specific political affairs were first announced by al-Banna, he unfortunately only attributes each political category a Quranic verse, and does not elaborate on every principle.

In *Toward the Light*, however, al-Banna thoroughly promulgates how Islam is to penetrate the various sections of society. The text opens with an introduction on Egypt's position at the time: the nation is at the breaking point, and must restore their sovereignty, freedom, and independence through Islam, he notes. Through faith, the nation must rediscover its bygone roots of pride, and quickly depart from Western influences. To al-Banna, Islam "…possesses a sanctity and stability" which surpasses all other systems: Islam will put the country in the right direction, he says, if Islam is implemented into the political order, with its high ideals of social, existential and political independence: "This course is complete and all-encompassing, guaranteeing the establishment of the most excellent institutions for public life in the nation, both practically and spiritually".[98] Further in the essay, al-Banna continues to make the case for why the West cannot replace Islam. The civilization of the West which once "was brilliant by virtue of its scientific perfection for a long time (…) is now bankrupt and in decline".[99] Al-Banna continues then to systematically and punctually sum up how Islam can benefit the nation through several chapters. Egypt needs a broad, all-encompassing hope, founded in the Quran,

---

[95] Al-Banna, Hassan. *Our Mission*. Translated by Charles Wendell. *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*. University of California Press, 1978, p. 47.

[96] Al-Banna, Hassan. *On the Doctrine of the Muslim Brothers,* quoted in Rubin & Rubin. *Anti-American Terrorism and the Middle East.* Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 27.

[97] Al-Banna, *Risalat al-mu'tamar al-khamis*, quoted in Soage, "Hassan al-Banna or the Politicisation of Islam", p. 26.

[98] Al-Banna, *Toward the Light*, p. 105.

[99] Ibid., p. 106.

he writes in "Islam and Hope".[100] The West is in decline, and Islam as an all-comprehensive ideology must save Egypt, and ultimately, the entire world.

He continues in supplementary chapters: "Islam and National Greatness", "Islam and Public Health", "Islam and Science", "Islam and Economics", "Islam and the Armed Forces" and so on, emphasizing Islam's role in every section. This first part of *Toward the Light* is not very extensive, however. These paragraphs are relatively short, but they easily show how religion remains comprehensive in al-Banna's eyes as an instrument to restore the nation. The leader's religious manifesto then concludes with fifty principles sorted under three categories. The first category is about political, judicial and administrative principles, the second regards social and educational administration and the third deals with economic principles. Science must merge with the Quran, he writes in this section. Armed forces must be contained in the name of Muhammad and the holy book. The strongest morality – found in the scripture – must be upheld. A fertile economy will be developed and embraced by the Quran. Egypt will shine as a nation when all principles are completed.[101] I have decided to highlight eight of the principles below. They each show, in their own way, how al-Banna wanted Islam as total and comprehensive. All quotes translated from Arabic into English by Charles Wendell[102]:

> Political, judicial, and administrative:
>
> 1. An end to party rivalry, and a channeling of the political forces of the nation into a common front and a single phalanx.
> 2. A reform of the law, so that it will conform to Islamic legislation in every branch.
> 3. A strengthening of the armed forces, and an increase in the number of youth groups; the inspiration of the latter with zeal on the bases of Islamic jihad.
> 4. A strengthening of the bonds between all the Islamic countries, especially the Arab countries, to pave the way for a practical and serious consideration of the matter of the departed Caliphate.
> 5. The diffusion of the Islamic spirit throughout all departments of the government, so that all its employees will feel responsible for adhering to Islamic teachings.
> 6. The surveillance of the personal conduct of all its employees, and an end to the dichotomy between the private and public spheres.

[100] Al-Banna, *Toward the Light*, p. 108.

[101] Ibid., p. 110-18.

[102] Ibid., p. 126-30.

Second: Social and education

1. Conditioning the people to respect public morality, and the issuance of directives fortified by the aegis of the law on this subject; the imposition of severe penalties for moral offenses.
2. Treatment of the problem of women in a way which combines the progressive and the protective, in accordance with Islamic teaching, so that this problem – one of the most important social problems – will not be abandoned to the biased pen and deviant notions of those who err in the directions of deficiency to excess (…)

These principles all embody and summarize the concept of an "Islamic order" – *al-nizam al-islami* – engulfed in Islamic politics, government, and law. According to al-Banna, political parties should be removed. Then, Islam should infiltrate all legislation and law, and youth groups should be strengthened to ensure the future of *jihad*. The caliphate must be raised again, and private life must be eradicated in favor of the public domain. Further into the texts, he mentions flagellation for prostitution, criminalization of all types of gambling and a campaign against alcohol and other drugs. Theater and cinemas must be monitored with strict regulation. Music will be censored and selected with care. Radio shall be used only for education-related themes, hand in hand with the Quran, in a virtuous and moral way. Non-Islamic literature will not be tolerated. All members of the upcoming nation must also use the same uniform. Men and women must be segregated, both in school, but also in public, and contact cannot be tolerated without special permission.

To sum up, Hassan al-Banna wanted to unite all Muslims in one Islamic order - in one *ummah* under strict, religious universal *shari'a* law, with Islam as the penetrating force in all aspects of society. The Brotherhood's leader, in the letter sent to the king only two years before his death, shows without doubt that his vision for a future entailed an Egypt where Islam permeated all possible sections of society.[103] Hassan al-Banna's project for a comprehensive Islam was primarily focused on his own homeland. However, he writes that the main and central goal is that this new Islamic sphere should eventually include a new Islamic kingdom – a caliphate – which in time will include the entire planet. At the beginning of *Toward the Light*, the leader writes that other Muslim countries must follow his and Egypt's desired new social order and manage themselves in the same way - with the same principles – because they are all "a fatherland and an abode for the Muslim". Thereafter, the Islamic kingdom which the pious ancestors hoisted will return, and then – "(…) the fatherland of the Muslim expands to

[103] Al-Banna, *Toward the Light*, p. 126-31.

encompass the entire world." Finally, he legitimizes this concept with the Quran, Chapter 2, Verse 193: "(…) And fight them until sedition is no more, and the faith is God's!". As Euben and Zaman writes, al-Banna would predominantly leave the mission of developing a comprehensive theory of Islamism to later theologues, like his successor Sayyid Qutb.[104] Al-Banna's theory of Islam as universal may not be thoroughly comprehensive in his works, but it is nevertheless clear what the goal is, based on what the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood himself wrote.[105]

The second part of this section - the establishment of an Islamic state - is both one of the most common ideological characteristics within Islamism, and simultaneously one of the most important components of al-Banna's ideological framework. Still, the idea of a state is not thoroughly explained in his work. As shown above, the ultimate goal of al-Banna's ideology was Islam as an all-encompassing system that ultimately, and at least in theory, includes the entire world. As mentioned, the Brotherhood's founder was no prolific author, and no single work of his thoroughly examines or broadens his thoughts regarding the plans or structure of an Islamic state. Rather, his thoughts on the subject emerges sporadically in several of his texts, but often without thorough elaboration. Of course, *Toward the Light* includes various aspects of the creation of a new caliphate, as it is his most ideological-oriented text. However, as al-Banna was primarily an internal fighter and advocated mostly inside of Egypt, he left little written material on the concept of an all-encompassing worldwide Islamic state. The Brotherhood's founder had enough to work with in his own country, with both the suppression by the British colonial powers and the religious elite being skeptical regarding his newly established society. Richard P. Mitchell wrote that "the precise nature of a Muslim state was not a burning question."[106] This seems partly right. Reading al-Banna's little material on an Islamic state, one thing seems evident: the creation of the Muslim Brotherhood, and its ideology, was principally a response to what al-Banna perceived as moral collapse inside Egypt, on a national scale, and so it is not surprising that a detailed program for an extensive worldwide Islamic state is lacking in his body of work. Even though there exist various references to the all-embracing Islamic state as the final objective in his writings, they are short and lacking in

[104] Euben, Zaman. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, p. 49.

[105] Al-Banna, *Toward the Light*, p. 110.

[106] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 245.

depth. To al-Banna, the highest priority must have been to re-establish the state of Egypt and save the nation from havoc.

In 1942, Hassan al-Banna remarked that the two main objectives of the Brothers were to expel foreign forces from Egypt, and secure the creation of a new Islamic state.[107] The nation must return to the pious ancestral mentality and live under *shari'a* law in line with how the Prophet Muhammad lived, he proclaimed. This is the essence of "Islamic state" as an ideological component in al-Banna's ideology: the restoration of the Islamic state is crucial because it is mandatory for Muslims, in al-Banna's thought. All Muslims are living in sin as long as the Islamic order or state is absent, he notes. Ultimately, this means that the Islamic state is the only correct form of social order for Muslims.[108] To al-Banna, freeing Egypt from the British oppressors was the highest priority, along with the rise of a pure Islamic state. These two principles are of course linked and can be considered two sides of the same coin, evidently clarifying its importance to him in the tract *Between Yesterday and Today*:

> (…) Rather always bear in mind that you have two goals:
>
> 1. That the Islamic fatherland be freed from all foreign domination, for this is a natural right belonging to every human being which only the unjust oppressor or the conquering exploiter will deny
> 2. That a free Islamic state may arise in this free fatherland, acting according to the precepts of Islam, applying its social regulations, proclaiming its sound principles, and broadcasting its sage mission to all mankind. For as long as this state does not emerge, the Muslims in their totality are committing sin, and are responsible before God (…)
>
> We want to realize these two goals in the Nile Valley and the Arab domain, and in every land which God has made fortunate through the Islamic creed: a religion, a nationality, and a creed uniting all Muslims.[109]

As suggested, it becomes clear in this section that al-Banna refers to Egypt - and the rest of the Middle East, rather than the entire world - when he is referring to an Islamic state. He also wrote:

---

[107] Al-Banna, *Between Yesterday and Today*, p. 31.

[108] Ibid., p. 32; Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 234-35.

[109] Al-Banna, *Between Yesterday and Today*, p. 31-32.

> There is no authority in Islam except the authority of the state which protects the teachings of Islam and guides the nations to the fruits of both religion and the world (…).[110]

Furthermore, al-Banna does not specify anything distinct about the formation of such a new state. In *Between Yesterday and Today*, he examines the first Islamic state in the time of the prophet Muhammad, and explains why its downfall occurred and how the West slowly tightened its grip in the Middle East, as time went on. Al-Banna sees history as a process of decline, where the dominating West has permeated Egypt and other Arab countries long enough. An Islamic order, with the caliphate as the main frame, must be restored. The solution is to return to the life of Muhammad, which he deems the perfect society for Muslims. Even though al-Banna himself proclaimed the Islamic state as one of two most important principles, his literature on the subject is staggeringly lacking. Mitchell's view that the Islamic state was not a key factor to al-Banna may seem conflicting to some of al-Banna's own writing. However, since he has left so little written material regarding the structure of an Islamic caliphate – at least in the sense of an entire empire, and the world – we must conclude that a clear-cut program for such a concept was not the highest priority during his lifetime.

After the all-comprehending nature of Islam and the Islamic state, the nature of government and law is something worth investigating, as it is a crucial part of an Islamist society. *Shari'a* law is sporadically mentioned in several written materials by the Brothers' founder. Al-Banna never defined in any text what *shari'a* meant to him or the Brothers, nor did he ever elaborate on the term.[111] Despite this, the concept inevitably appears as one of the groundwork themes in al-Banna's thought – not surprisingly – *shari'a* law being one of the key elements of Islamism. In short, *shari'a* embodies the God-given laws from the Quran and the Hadith. The law is therefore an integral part of the Islamic order and state al-Banna wants to raise, as we shall see.

The Muslim Brothers and al-Banna saw the creation of the Islamic state as the first step in actualizing *shari'a* law.[112] Mitchell argued even further that more important than a state itself, the law of *shari'a* was the true factor defining the Islamic state order. Further, as Mitchell argued correctly, an Islamic order without *shari'a* law is practically meaningless to the Brothers, because *shari'a* laws are the roots of Islam's religious and cultural civilizational

[110] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 244.

[111] Ibid., p. 237.

[112] Moussalli, "Hassan Al-Banna", p. 4.

heritage, and must be the backbone of the new order.[113] However, the Brotherhood's founder, left little written material on the subject. Naturally, in his manifesto *Toward the Light*, a reform of the law "to conform to Islamic legislation in every branch" is apparent.[114] Also, in the essay *To What Do We Invite Humanity?* al-Banna briefly proclaims that the body of the Islamic Sacred Law must uphold the legal affairs of the nation. Despite al-Banna's lack of own theory on the subject, an important part becomes clear in a segment of the latter text:

> Every nation has a set of laws in which the people partake their ruling. These sets of laws must be derived from the proscriptions of the Islamic Sharee'ah (drawn from the Noble Qur'an, and in accordance with the basic sources of Islamic jurisprudence). The Islamic Sharee'ah and the decisions of the Islamic jurists are completely sufficient, supply every need, and cover every contingency, and they produce the most excellent results and the most blessed fruits (…) and Allah (SWT) has commanded and prescribed it: 'And they who judge not according to what Allah has sent down, they are unbelievers.[115]

Two things are apparent here. We know that al-Banna openly felt "the rootlessness of foreign values" in Egypt, and how it was tolerated with little resistance by the Egyptian people, replacing Islamic origin and essence, their own roots, history, culture, and society. This may have contributed to the Brothers' sheer enthusiasm for *shari'a* law, represented by this passage.[116] Secondly, *shari'a* – here simply named Islamic Sacred Law – is clearly more than just a cultural identity for al-Banna and the Brothers. In this paragraph, al-Banna deems *shari'a* law as perfect – it is perfect and encompasses everything. Then, the Quran quote selected by al-Banna simply says that he who does not follow the law is plainly "an unbeliever". Sources on al-Banna's thought on *shari'a* law are few. We know he called it "the law of the land",[117] and postulated among other things that it was in line with a constitutional government.[118] In the literary works where he talks about *shari'a*, he seems to constantly come back to the Islamic state itself and the connection between the two concepts. He deems the legitimate government an important institution, when applying Islamic law to its judiciary system.[119]

---

[113] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 235-36.

[114] Al-Banna, *Toward the Light*, p. 126.

[115] Al-Banna, Hassan. *To What Do We Invite Humanity?*, p. 17. Translated by The Quran Blog on https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_2_-to-what-do-we-invite-humanity.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

[116] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 237.

[117] Moussalli, "Hassan Al-Banna", p. 13.

[118] Ibid., p. 12.

[119] Moussalli, "Hassan Al-Banna", p. 13.

Still, the religio-cultural aspect of *shari'a* seems most crucial to al-Banna. Among other important Muslim Brotherhood figures, al-Banna's successor Hassan al-Hudaybi (1891-1973) proclaimed that most of Egypt laws actually were harmonious with *shari'a*, in the 1950s. Al-Banna still emphasized the gravity and necessity of implementing *shari'a*, in accordance with an arising Islamic state. Mitchell argues that the answer to why this was so important to the Brothers' founder, probably has two sides: al-Banna still felt - as shown – that the West's influence on Egyptian politics were tremendous – and so *shari'a* had to be implemented regardless of how similar the Egyptian government ruled things in accordance to the law and the Quran. The other aspect is the theological implications and the essence of Islam. Without Islamic Sacred Law inherent in the political legislation, the country would continue to be permeated by decadence and degeneration. Islamic countries had to build their foundations upon Islamic law, as Soviet countries built upon communism and Anglo-American governments were founded on democracy, he wrote. Regarding *shari'a*, the religio-cultural self-respect and virtue of building the country founded on Islamic law penetrated al-Banna's thought.[120] He wrote:

> We want to think independently, depending on…. Islam and not upon imitation which ties us to the theories and attitudes of the West in everything. We want to be distinguished by our own values and the qualities of our life as a great… nation which has its past.[121]

As mentioned, the concept of *shari'a* was in al-Banna's mind deeply connected to the other aspects of his ideology, as it was all a part of the same order – the idea of Islam as a total all-comprehensive system. Thus, he connected *shari'a* to the Islamic state and his comprehensive concept of unity. *Shari'a* also connected al-Banna's audience, the Egyptian people, closer to him. As *shari'a* served as "link between Islamic law and national self-determination", *shari'a* became the pivotal combination of "moral integrity, cultural authenticity and national independence."[122] To al-Banna, *shari'a* law became the embodiment of the morality for all Muslims, and for all society. Mitchell writes:

> … the *shari'a*, God's law, performed the even more fundamental task of 'the organization of society and its direction'. For Islam this meant primarily the total unity of man, and thus of society. The establishment of the

[120] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 241-42.

[121] Ibid., p. 242.

[122] Krämer, *Hasan al-Banna*, p. 114.

> *shari'a* would assure the primacy of God's law and thus the application of the only criterion whereby man's behavior could become genuinely, totally moral.[123]

Hassan al-Banna was - not surprisingly - no political theorist regarding *shari'a*. As with the other ideological components above, it is merely a question of interpreting what he wrote and put it in the right context to understand his point of view. Al-Banna clearly wanted *shari'a* as a part his Islamic order. In summary, *shari'a* was imperative to al-Banna not only as religious and cultural backbone and as a compulsory Islamic virtue, but also as a unifying ethos replacing the so-called depravity of the West. All three concepts of Islam as all-comprehending system, Islamic state and *shari'a* are classic Islamist concepts, which penetrated al-Banna's thought.

3.3.2 Means and Strategies – *Jihad* as example

Struggle, fight, sacrifice, combat, and *jihad* all permeated al-Banna's writings.[124] Political theorist Andrea Mura writes that from the very beginning, when al-Banna professed a deep wish for an "Islamisation from below" and an awakening of the people of Egypt, a "way of struggle" – *sabil al-jihad* – was always crucial in his writings.[125] Concrete measures, however, are sorely lacking. His most prominent text on the subject is simply called *On Jihad*. Rather than being an in-depth essay on his own interpretation of *jihad* and what it means to the Muslim Brotherhood, the text is a compilation of Quranic verses dealing with the concept, selected by al-Banna, accompanied by his own short paragraphs to his readers. However, the text provides some information.

As mentioned, Islam is an all-encompassing system to al-Banna, and the Islamic state is the – at least in theory - final and desired framework for the social order for mankind. Accompanying these concepts, the Quranic law is the desired rules of government. To achieve this goal, *jihad* stands out as one desired instrument, both in violent and non-violent form, in both Islamism in general and to al-Banna. Al-Banna deemed *jihad* to be warfare in the name of God. He declared *jihad* a "religious duty" imposed upon every Muslim by God, "from which there are neither evasion nor escape", and "he (God) has rendered it a supreme object of desire (…)".

---

[123] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 242.

[124] Krämer, *Hasan al-Banna*, p. 100.

[125] Mura, Andrea. *The Symbolic Scenarios of Islamism. A Study in Islamic Political Thought*. Routledge, 2016, p. 105.

Emphasizing the necessity and importance of *jihad*, al-Banna postulates that God "regards abstention and evasion of *jihad* as one of the major sins, and one of the seven mortal sins that guarantee annihilation".[126] Al-Banna also professed that *jihad* was as equally important as the other established pillars of the religion, and even claimed that the Quran and other traditional Islamic works supported this view.[127] However, as his output on concrete measures regarding *jihad* itself is short, other writings on concepts such as militarism and war in general, somewhat reflects many of the same ideas inherent in *jihad*, and can be taken into consideration. Martyrdom, warfare, and militarism permeated his speeches given to the Brothers, according to Mitchell, and al-Banna is even especially known for the phrase "Death is art" – or "the art of Death". Stressing the gravity of warfare in the name of Allah, al-Banna even called the Muslim Brothers "the troops of God" and the "battalion of salvation". The Brothers were the vanguard of Islam, whose mission was to guide all Muslims, but especially Egyptians, in the right direction. As both Mitchell and Krämer mention, the tone of al-Banna's writings in general, advocates for a militaristic way of life.[128] In conclusion, al-Banna also uttered that "he who dies who has not fought, and was not resolved to fight, has died a *jahiliyyah* death."[129]

This position must not necessarily be understood as *qital* – the physical and violent form of *jihad*. Now, since *jihad* is often regarded as synonymous with violence and terror attacks, the distinction between violent and peaceful internal *jihad* becomes paramount to understand – especially as both variations clearly are substantial to al-Banna. The leader of the Brotherhood often encouraged his followers to the nonviolent spreading of Islam, which he undoubtedly regarded as extremely significant. In the text *Between Yesterday and Today*, he even proclaimed that deep faith, precise organization and uninterrupted work were the three main objectives for any member of the Brotherhood.[130] He also writes that asserting "a word of truth in the presence of a tyrannical ruler" is a supplementary virtue to *jihad*.[131] Despite this, he is considered by most historians as a follower of *qital* too. In his essay *Peace in Islam*, al-Banna writes that war

---

[126] Al-Banna, Hassan. *On Jihad*, translated by Wendell, Charles. *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*. University of California Press, 1978, p. 133.

[127] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 207.

[128] Krämer, *Hasan al-Banna*, p. 100.

[129] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 207.

[130] Al-Banna, *Between Yesterday and Today*, p. 33.

[131] Al-Banna, *On Jihad*, p. 155.

is forbidden for any other reason than *jihad* – and that *jihad* shall always be accompanied by the phrase "in the cause of Allah" – ultimately proving he is a supporter of *qital*.[132] However, al-Banna proclaims that the slaying of women, children and old men is forbidden, as well as disturbing monks and hermits.[133]

With all this considered, al-Banna's view on *jihad* seems fragmented and somewhat divided. It seems apparent that al-Banna supports both a militaristic *jihad* and a nonviolent, internal struggle. While his peaceful way of *jihad* may be more explicit in his own writing, a *jihad* of physical implications is undeniably a part of his worldview. Mitchell argues that the clear relationship constructed between the concept of *jihad* on one side, and death and martyrdom on the other, is a positive assurance that al-Banna supported the idea of physical *jihad.* Al-Banna even compares the two versions of *jihad* himself, and writes that "fighting and preparing for combat" is not at all a lesser *jihad* than "the *jihad* of the spirit". "Supreme martyrdom" and the *jihad* which implies to "slay or is slain" in the name of God will never be exceeded by any peaceful struggle, he writes.[134] In *Message of the Teachings*¸ he also rendered *jihad* as one of the ten most important aspects of the Brotherhood and Islam: "True belief, proper worship, and Jihad in the way of Allah have light and warmth that Allah casts in the heart of whomever (…)", he deems to his readers.[135] Later in the same text, when he speaks about sincerity:

> By sincerity, I mean that a Muslim brother should dedicate his sayings, work, and Jihad for the sake of Allah and the attainment of His pleasure and good reward without seeking recognition or anticipating any gain, honor, title or advancement in this world. Only then, can you become soldiers of the ideology and the belief rather than soldiers for worldly purposes and interests.[136]

In *Toward the Light*, al-Banna emphasizes the strengthening of armed forces and youth groups as one of the top political and administrative priorities.[137] Additionally, his appreciation for militarism was evident in his speeches, as mentioned, and members of the Brotherhood

---

[132] Al-Banna, Hassan. *Peace in Islam,* p. 24. Translated by The Quran Blog on https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_4_-peace-in-islam1.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

[133] Al-Banna, *On Jihad,* p. 154.

[134] Ibid., p. 155.

[135] Al-Banna, Hasan. *The Message of the Teachings,* p. 4. Translated by The Quran Blog at https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_3_-the-message-of-the-teachings.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

[136] Al-Banna, *The Message of the Teachings,* p. 7.

[137] Al-Banna, *Toward the Light,* p. 126

underwent teachings of history emphasizing the "glory of Islamic conquests" alongside the theoretical study of *jihad*.[138] In *On Jihad*, al-Banna explicitly wages for holy war, following four Quranic verses in his text:

> Refer to these verses[139] in the Noble Book, so that you may see how God urges the Muslim to exercise caution and to acquire experience in warfare, in armies and troops, or as individuals, as circumstances may dictate.[140]

In this quote, al-Banna explicitly encourages his readers to take part in *jihad* not only collectively, but also singlehandedly, if the "circumstances" are right. Later in the same text, al-Banna refers to other traditional written works outside of the Quran. Referencing the Hanafi Islamic jurist Burhan al-Halabi (1460-1549), al-Banna clearly takes a stance and supports violent warfare in the form of *jihad*:

> Jihad in its literal significance means to put forth one's maximal effort in word and deed; in the Sacred Law it is the slaying of the unbelievers, and related connotations such as beating them, plundering their wealth, destroying their shrines, and smashing their idols. The desired aim is to strive to the utmost to strengthen the faith by such means as fighting the inhabitants of the Dar al-Harb[141] (…)[142]

Commitment to warfare was essentially inevitable to al-Banna. At the end of the same essay, the Muslim Brothers' founder declares all Muslims to wage war, and points out how Islamic thinkers like al-Hanbali "agree unanimously that jihad is a communal obligation", and continues "(…) imposed upon the Islamic *umma* in order to broadcast the summons (to embrace Islam) and that it is an individual obligation to repulse the attack of unbelievers upon it."[143] This section could not be more explicit.

Last, but not least, The Special Apparatus fraction of the Brotherhood proves that the militarism spirit of al-Banna indeed had physical implications. Paramilitary youth groups, as well, permeated not only Europe at the time, but existed also in Egypt. The Rovers (known as *Jawwala*), the Brothers' own unit, offered healthy outdoor activities, and lived and breathed the Roman maxim *mens sana in corpore sano* – "a healthy spirit and a healthy body", for its members. The Rovers, however, were not only an outlet for young Muslim men struggling

---

[138] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 208.

[139] The four quotes are Chapter 2: Verse 216, Chapter 3, Verse 156-58, Chapter 3: Verse, 169-75 and Chapter 4: Verse 74.

[140] Al-Banna, *On Jihad*, p. 135.

[141] *Dar al-Harb* – meaning countries not under Islamic rule.

[142] Al-Banna, *On Jihad*, p. 147.

[143] Ibid., p. 150.

during puberty. The youth group's focus on spirituality is apparent. Despite being mainly set up as Excursion Groups (*Firaq al-Rahhala* in Arabic), other elements such as prayer, Sufi self-discipline, teachings about Islamic warriors, chivalrous masculinity and the importance of *jihad*, were all highly central concepts in their training.[144]

To sum it up, *jihad* militarism and martyrdom became crucial to al-Banna and the Brothers, alongside internal *jihad*. Al-Banna meant that success for the Brotherhood was unimaginable without devotion, and that was to be grounded in the form of *jihad* – both physical and non-physical.[145] Even though al-Banna showed compassion to women and children, he nevertheless constantly urged all Muslims to call non-Muslims to Islam, and professed that *jihad* still was obligatory until, essentially, all people belonged to the religion of Islam.[146]

3.3.3 The Enemy of the Ideology: The West as the Antithesis

More than with any of the other ideological components, al-Banna's rejection of The West's colonialism stands out the most in his repertoire. "The West" and "colonialism", of course, are not ideological components or features, like the others above. However, I would argue that al-Banna's view of the West - its presence in Egypt and Middle Eastern countries, and the subsequent general decline of Islamic tradition – is ultimately the framework encircling his entire system. It is undoubtedly important when analyzing his ideology.

Hassan al-Banna can hardly be considered "a thinker", as mentioned, with Krämer going as far as labeling him "anti-intellectual". Rather, pragmatism, social work, and actual change, stands in the center of his ideology. This was largely a response to the occupying foreign forces in Egypt. As political scientist Gilles Kepel puts it, al-Banna and the Brothers "managed to politicize this religious zeal by shifting its focus away from the traditional realms of piety and religious ceremony and onto urban colonial society."[147] This is connected to al-Banna's stance on the West's influence on Islamic culture. With al-Banna being primarily an activist, coffee-shops and other non-typical preaching places became a platform for his *da'wa* – Islamic call –

---

[144] Krämer, *Hasan al-Banna*, p. 54-55.

[145] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 207.

[146] Soage, Ana Belen. "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?" *The Muslim World*, March 2009, Wiley-Blackwell, p. 304.

[147] Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, p. 28.

and he raised institutions and preached the unity of Islam to working class people. Islam became the empowerment of the oppressed and the colonized, vis-à-vis the oppressor and colonizer, as Krämer writes.[148] However, since al-Banna was no rigid ideologue, he often quoted Westerners if it suited him, and praised certain Western ideas. Then, even though al-Banna's resentment toward the establishment and the West's imperialism is one of the main causes for the foundation of the Brotherhood, he could still act compromising at times. In other words, this is a complex matter. Not only is his divergent and somewhat contradictory view on the West hard to grasp in itself, but al-Banna never offered a comprehensive theoretical frame for his ideological groundwork either. His essays, pamphlets, letters, and speeches are not countless, but analysts nevertheless have deemed that his body of work lacks method and systematization.[149] Despite this, one thing is clear. Al-Banna's constant referring to the West is apparent throughout his *oeuvre*, and regardless of his conflicting and compromising view of the West, it still prompted the emergence of the Brotherhood to begin with.

Hassan al-Banna detested the colonialism of Egypt by the British and wanted to free Egypt of foreign influence. Despite praising love for the home country at certain times, he did not think that nationalism and patriotism was the answer to solve the troubling issue of foreign forces infiltrating the homeland.[150] Patriotism, he wrote, occurs when:

> (…) they are aware of the abuse that the colonial West directs against them, abuse which has injured their dignity, their honor, and their independence; as well as exploited their wealth and shed their blood; and wherever they are suffering under the Western yoke which has been forced upon them (…)
>
> However when you try to explain to the people (who are Muslims) that Islam is more complete, more pure, more lofty, and more noble than anything that can be found in Western speeches or European literature, they reject it and persist in imitating the latter blindly, claiming that Islam belongs in one category and this ideology in another.[151]

---

[148] Krämer, *Hasan al-Banna*, p. 93-94.

[149] Mura, *The Symbolic Scenarios of Islamism*, p. 104.

[150] According to al-Banna, Islam was not compatible with what he called "narrow geographical nationalism". He still deemed himself and the Brothers a certain type of nationalist, and "the most fervent and zealous ones" at that, since "their nationalism was ordained by God". The nation of Islam itself, the *ummah*, was considered most important, connected through "bonds of creed and brotherhood". See Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 79 for more.

[151] Al-Banna, Hassan. *Our Message*, p. 9. Translated by The Quran Blog at https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_6_-our-message.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

Furthermore, al-Banna understood nationalism and patriotism, and wrote that it "has a definite place in our call (…)". "Surely we are Egyptians; the most honourable place on this Earth to us, we were born and raised up here", he wrote in 1935. He goes on, encouraging the studying of ancient Egypt and its culture, but vehemently rejects that any sort of ideology should be adopted from it.[152] Al-Banna did not dismiss the features of patriotism wholly. If patriotism and nationalism meant affection, love for one's homeland, freedom, greatness, community, conquest, and so on, he said, then Islam has already taken care of it.[153] As a fierce anti-imperialist, al-Banna appealed to the nationalists of Egypt to unite against the foreign powers – their common enemy.

This must not be misunderstood. Since al-Banna can be primarily interpreted as a proponent for national justice – inside Egypt, and not with a concrete plan for an Islamic world state – he of course blamed the Egyptian government itself for the country's state. This is evident: "(…) We will direct our calls to the leaders of the country: its notables, ministers, rulers, elders, delegates and political parties", he writes in 1938.[154] It is apparent that al-Banna was concerned with this. As Lia states, this denial of the current establishment and power structure in Egypt advanced the development of the Brothers. In fact, the West, alongside the Egyptian government, is both non-Islamic and not tolerable to al-Banna. As the Brothers grew, with firm support from the middle and lower classes of the country, this became the heart of the struggle. Al-Banna was never a rigid anti-Western proponent, but hostility certainly occurred, as shown. Not only was the Western world assaulting the Islamic homeland and its systems of economy, politics, and outright violence in the form of military operations, but maybe most importantly, its demolition of Islamic religion, culture, and heritage, stands as crucial.[155]

Al-Banna's call to change Egypt must be understood through the relationship he had with the West. In short, the repressive colonial and imperialist project in the Middle East triggered the emergence of the Brotherhood, and al-Banna's desire for pragmatic means of change is highly correlated to this geopolitical context of the region. Surely, al-Banna accepted certain Western aspects. He was not a grim xenophobic. At the same time, the West was also behind the

---

[152] Al-Banna, Hassan. *Our Message in a New Phase*, p. 6. Translated by The Quran Blog at https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_5_-our-message-in-a-new-phase.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

[153] Mura, *The Symbolic Scenarios of Islamism*, p. 112

[154] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, p. 206.

[155] Ibid., p. 77.

machinery which hurt his homeland, and ultimately the main aggressor challenging his project to develop an all-comprehending Islamic ideology. In *To What Do We Invite Humanity?*, he writes that Muslims have an "(…) unavoidable obligation to protect the territory of Islam from the attack of the aggressor, to deliver it from occupation, and to fortify it against the ambitions of the transgressor."[156] In summary, al-Banna did not hate the west compromisingly, but detested the Brits' colonialism, and meant that all Muslims had to liberate themselves from the West's submissiveness.[157] As an activist and pragmatist, al-Banna founded the Islamist movement undoubtedly as a response to what he perceived as a poisonous occupation. Al-Banna was no intellectual, and not a leader of a great ideology per se. He was a spokesman for the educated lower middle class. He was an advocate of the abolition of the colonial movement in his homeland of Egypt, and this is certainly one of the main reasons the Muslim Brotherhood ever came into existence.

[156] Al-Banna, *To What Do We Invite Humanity?*, p. 21.

[157] Krämer, *Hasan al-Banna*, p. 94.

4 Sayyid Qutb – The *Rector Spiritus*

Sayyid Qutb never considered himself the leader of any Islamic movement. With his Islamist worldview being presented mostly from the prison cell, Qutb rather regarded himself as a fierce and passionate messenger of Islam. Plainly, Qutb wanted to spread the message that Islam must be elevated to encompass all factions of life, becoming an absolutist system of thought. Like al-Banna, Qutb believed Muslims had forgotten their ancestral and cultural heritage, and by doing so, they became an ethical as well as existential hazard to themselves and society.[158] To Qutb, Islam concerned not only private matters, but were of societal proportions. His most famous book *Milestones – Ma'alim fil-tariq* in Arabic – opens with these apocalyptic words:

> Mankind today is on the brink of precipice, not because of the danger of complete annihilation which is hanging over its head – this being just a symptom and not the real disease – but because humanity is devoid of those vital values which are necessary not only for its healthy development but also for its real progress.[159]

Qutb's opening words are exceptionally explicit. In short, he describes humanity as damned because it lacks the necessary basic element of a righteous moral, which lies within the religion of Islam, with annihilation close and inevitable. Rejecting the Arab nationalism of the time, fronted in Egypt by President Nasser, Qutb supported a revived version of Islam where all political, social, and cultural conduct should originate from the religion itself.[160] To Qutb, all post-independent history of the Middle East was meaningless. In the words of Bassam Tibi, Qutb was the *rector spiritus* – the spiritual leader – of Islamism.[161] Islam had to be the sole basis for all Muslims, in every aspect of their life, against the reign of the modern era Western dominance.[162]

Qutb was not always such a notorious radical. Becoming a member of the Brotherhood only after al-Banna's death and his epiphany-inducing trip overseas to the United States, in his mid-

---

[158] Akhavi, Shahrough. 2013. "Sayyid Qutb", Esposito & El-Din Shahin (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*. Oxford Handbooks Online, p. 1.

[159] Qutb, Sayyid. *Milestones*. Islamic Book Service (P) Limited, 2015, p. 7.

[160] Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, p. 25.

[161] Tibi, *Islamism and Islam*, p. 41.

[162] Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?", p. 295.

40s, Qutb became the man he is known as today rather late in his life. Even though displaying traits of Islamism earlier, it was only after being incarcerated by the authorities that Qutb wrote most of his known Islamist works. After a 1954 assassination attempt on President Nasser, several Muslim Brothers were arrested, jailed, and tortured. Qutb himself was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Due to ill health, he served most of his time in the hospital section of the prison. He was released early, in 1964, but was seized again after the publication of *Milestones* as well as being blamed for preparing a *coup* on Nasser with other prominent Islamists. He was executed in 1966 by the Egyptian authorities.[163] Like in the previous chapter on al-Banna's ideology, this section of my analysis will serve as the part where Qutb's ideology is put under scrutiny. Since this is a comparative analysis of the two ideologues' Islamist traits, I will use the same first four typical Islamist ideology characteristics used in the previous chapter. In addition, the fifth element – Qutb's concept of *jahiliyyah* – mirrors the last section I treated in the previous chapter on al-Banna.

1. *Goals and final objective – what does the ideology demand?*
   As with al-Banna, I will focus on 1) Islam as a universal, all-comprehending system of thought, 2) the case for an Islamic state or caliphate and 3) *shari'a* law as the global law.

2. *Means and strategies – to reach one's goal*
   Having analyzed al-Banna's somewhat indistinct views on 4) *jihad*, I will in this section lay out Qutb's standpoint on the same matter. What does Qutb say on *jihad*, and how important is the concept to him?

3. *The Enemy of the Ideology: The West as the Antithesis*
   The relationship with the West is also highly relevant to Qutb's ideology. While al-Banna's standpoint is more complex, Qutb's ideological project is uncompromising. Here, I will explain and analyze the concept of 5) *jahiliyyah* which dominated his thought.

[163] Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?", p. 296.

In the forthcoming chapter, I will analyze and map the dogma of Sayyid Qutb. First, I will present the background of Qutb – in short – his path from a government employee to his turn to Islamism. Then, I will present his ideology as I did in the previous chapter, heavily emphasizing the same ideological components, followed by the Qutbian element of *jahiliyyah*.

4.2 From Poet to Preacher

American writer and columnist Paul Berman named Qutb "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror" in a 2003 New York Times article.[164] However, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror", had – considering when and where he was born – a secular upbringing, and his main field of interest as a young man concerned literature, poetry, and the ongoing nationalism at the time. Ultimately, the very same poet, who would be working for the Egyptian government in the 1930s as a teacher, ended up becoming the main inspiration for Bin Laden, and subsequently the September 11th attacks. During his lifetime, Qutb went from being a nationalist poet, a literary critic and analyst, to a preacher of Islamism and, a "philosopher of Islamic terror", as Berman noted.

Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Husayn Shadhili was born in 1906 – the same year as Hassan al-Banna – in Musha, a village located in mid-Egypt close to the Nile, near the city Asyut.[165] Political scientist Shahrough Akhavi deems Qutb's early years a "personally pious youth"; even though he attended regular public school, he had memorized the entirety of the Quran by age 10.[166] However, anthropologist James Toth writes in his biography on Sayyid Qutb that both his parents had a seemingly modern and secular worldview, and that Qutb's upbringing in practice was both - for the time – "liberal, modern and nationalistic".[167] Qutb was from a very young age interested in politics and the world. At age 13, during the 1919 revolution in Egypt, he was already politically active, marching in the streets and composing nationalistic poems.[168] He

[164] Berman, Paul. "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror". *The New York Times*. 23.03.2003. http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/23/magazine/the-philosopher-of-islamic-terror.html

[165] Calvert, John. *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*. Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 25.

[166] Toth, James. *Sayyid Qutb. The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual*. Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 13.

[167] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 12.

[168] Ibid., p. 16.

received a BA in education and literature at age 27, in 1933, at Dar al-'Ulum in Cairo – a school with a Western-oriented curriculum. Qutb's career onwards was not a religious themed one either. He began working at the Ministry of Culture and as a teacher, all while his attraction to literature flowered. Qutb continued writing poetry and studied literary criticism – he had first published a poem already by age 15 – all without any strong predictions about his future turn to Islamism. In 1935, he published his first collection of poems called *The Unknown Shore* (*al-Shati al-Majhul* in Arabic) – a volume which in James Toth's words, "reflected his unease, pessimism, and rebellion, what might be called a display of existential angst in search for meaning, stability, and satisfaction".[169] Eventually Qutb's interest in literature and poetry found its way to the Quran itself, and Qutb became interested in the Holy Book's aesthetic, rhetoric and literary proportions.[170] A nationalist from his early childhood, Qutb also joined the Wafd Party after graduation. He felt at home in an anti-imperialist and anti-British organization, but the fact that they did not support a discharge of the British militia from the Egyptian Canal bothered him – Qutb was for complete independence.[171]

After leaving the nationalistic Wafd Party and renouncing the party system altogether in the early 1940s, Qutb's turn to Islamism began around 1945, with his first book regarding the artistic imagery of the Quran. In 1948, he founded the magazine New Thought (*al-Fikr al-Jadid* in Arabic), in which he and like-minded peers published widely on the politics of Egypt and Islam. By this time, as Akhavi states, he had finally left his secularism behind in favor of rigid Islamism. After the magazine was shut down by the government, Qutb left Egypt for USA.[172] Two years later, in 1951, the returned Qutb had become the director of the propaganda office of the Muslim Brotherhood and the editor on the Brothers' journal. Overseas, Qutb had been studying the American educational system, residing first in New York City, then in Greeley, Colorado. As mentioned in this thesis' introduction, Qutb experienced the harsh realities of late 1940s USA: racism, greed, capitalism, as well as support for Zionism – all which he deemed unethical in the highest sense. His experiences in the United States truly shaped his view onwards.

---

[169] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 18.

[170] Mura, *The Symbolic Scenarios of Islamism*, p. 132.

[171] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 17.

[172] Akhavi, "Sayyid Qutb", p. 2.

A year after Qutb's return to Egypt, the Free Officers, led by Muhammad Naguib and Nasser, staged a *coup* which overthrew the British-supported monarchy and King Faruq. Originally supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood, The Free Officer Movement met harsh criticism from the Brotherhood in the early 1950s, as Qutb felt that they rejected the Brotherhood's ideology as the higher moral principle and ultimate truth.[173] Naguib and Nasser also rejected Qutb's wish to incorporate *shari'a* in Egypt. Following an assassination attempt on Nasser by a Brotherhood member, Qutb was jailed in 1954, as mentioned, along with thousands of other political and religious opponents. He spent most of the rest of his life, on and off, behind bars. The new regime dissolved the Brothers and other non-loyal organizations and adversaries, even removing some members of the Free Officer movement itself.[174] A year after his release in 1964, Qutb met up with several prominent Islamists who were contemplating and planning vengeance against the regime.[175] With the new organization quickly being suppressed and Qutb executed in 1966, Qutb died a martyr's death, and stands in the modern era as the most radical Islamic thinker in the 20th century.[176]

The route Qutb took – from soaking himself in literature and poetry, to eventually become the spiritual leader of the Islamist movement – seems almost fantastical without context. As shown, Qutb clearly had interest in political questions from early adolescence, and through his poetry and interest in literature, he expressed deep concerns about troubling questions for the nation, even claiming that he became a poet because poetry "served as an intermediary between what is and what ought to be".[177] Despite this, Qutb joined the Islamist movement, at least actively, rather late in his life. The road there was not linear: Qutb played with both Arabism and Easternism, among other things, before settling down. All along, however, he respected the religion of Islam.[178] Historian John Calvert deems Qutb's late route to the Islamist platform as the result of his aversion towards some organizations' strictly defined system of thought, and weight on discipline, despite sharing dissatisfaction with the Western and foreign powers in the homeland. This includes organizations like Young Egypt – who like al-Banna's Brotherhood certainly were worried with the downfall of proper morals and the fading of Muslim virtues –

[173] Mura, *The Symbolic Scenarios of Islamism*, p. 133.

[174] Ibid., p. 33.

[175] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 240.

[176] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 3.

[177] Ibid., p. 16.

[178] Ibid., p. 34.

but ultimately were more concerned with other cultural connections, and promoted the ancient Pharaoh culture of Egypt in favor of the implementation of the Quran's words into daily Egypt life.[179] Qutb's reluctance to party politics and establishment was too strong, and he considered these systems to be secular. The Brotherhood, however, shared Qutb's views, and became his podium for the rest of his life.

4.2.1 The Development of Radical Islamism

Sayyid Qutb started out as a poet, and turned messenger, visionary, preacher, all in the name of Islam. Qutb expanded on al-Banna's Islamist vision, and without a doubt is the main theorizer of the two. Writing extensively in jail in the 1950s and '60s, many of Qutb's works remain highly important today. *Milestones*, or *Signposts on the Road* as it is sometimes translated as, is Qutb's most important Islamist work: not only is it Qutb's own personal political and religious manifesto, but it also is considered the main Islamist work for the generations following him. With *Milestones,* Qutb shifted the focus away from the al-Banna-era of the Brotherhood which mainly, in practicality, concerned domestic politics, to a world-wide perspective. *Milestones*, however, was written only two years before the Islamist's death, and thus came near the end of his life. Though Qutb wrote extensively from his youth and onwards, Islamist-oriented writings in general did not appear until the mid-1940s. The timing of Qutb's turning is not accidental. With both the 1936-39 Arab revolt in Palestine fresh in his mind and the tension in Europe and World War II unfolding at the same time, his mother also passed away in 1940, affecting him badly. Qutb's health also worsened in this period. Later that year, he published an article which denounced popular music, both in the form of night clubs and over radio – it was "poison running through the essence of the nation", and should be criminalized, he thought.[180] Qutb's journey towards radical Islamism from there on echoes al-Banna's words and actions.

After the criticizing of music came the opposition against cinema, magazines, public bathhouses, and in general most Western-oriented aspects of Egyptian society. As an anti-imperialist, Qutb had been critical of the West since the 1930s, but by the mid-40s, he began attacking its values more in the sense of rejecting the entire civilizational and cultural project

[179] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 86-7.

[180] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 39.

of the West.[181] From 1945 on, Qutb's religious focused authorship began to unfold. First, with *Artistic Imagery in the Quran* (*al-Taswir al-Fanni fi al-Qur'an* in Arabic), and then with *Scenes of Resurrection in the Quran* (*Mashahid al-Qiyama fi al-Qur'an*) which both mark the beginnings of Qutb as a serious religious scholar. Toth regards this phase as Qutb's "moderate Islamist" phase, where he explored Islamism fully with his literary background. Up until his visit to United States in 1948, Qutb wrote extensively. From 1946 on, before his trip to USA, Qutb criticized politicians and the establishment, foreign imperialism, and colonialism, as well as Western writing and values in general. In 1949, Qutb completed *Social Justice in Islam*, his first book on his new worldview. By this time, he had abandoned his love of literature all together to focus on his new cause. While *Social Justice* is a "moderate Islamist" work compared to his later *Milestones*, he still called for an all-comprehending Islamic society, which must

> (…) embrace all the aspects of life and all varieties of endeavor; similarly it must include both spiritual and material values. Its political theory in the final resort is concerned with the implementation of the religious law.[182]

In this period, Qutb fostered an approach of Occidentalism which became the antithesis of the Orientalist view. Islam became the pure and natural, the perfect, vis-à-vis the appalling and degenerate West.[183] He explicitly named France and Britain as colonizers, dominating several countries and areas in the Middle East, and he especially condemned Britain's lasting occupation of Egypt and Sudan. Qutb also began criticizing the US – before his trip – and named the superpower an imperialist nation who increasingly continued to show both their political, moral, and economic failure. In 1946, he wrote:

> How I hate and despise this European civilization and eulogize humanity which is being tricked by its luster, noise, and sensual enjoyment in which the soul suffocates and the conscience dies down, while instincts and senses become intoxicated, quarrelsome, and excited.[184]

Despite this. Qutb did not hate all Western concepts. After his visit abroad, Qutb wrote the text *The America I Have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values* (*Amrika allati Ra'ayt fi Milan al-*

---

[181] Ibid., p. 44.

[182] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 59.

[183] Ibid., p. 50.

[184] Ibid., p. 50-51.

Qiyam al-Insaniyya in Arabic), in 1951. As he had done earlier in his career, Qutb praised the technological advances of the West after his visit. During the early 1930s, Qutb had regarded himself as an "ardent nationalist and modern secularist", according to Toth's biography, and he promoted "freedom, justice, and equality", and opposed "tyranny, oppression, and inhumanity". He was an anti-British colonialism, but still endorsed these Western values at the time.[185] However, after returning to Egypt from the US in 1951, he questioned the moral legitimacy of the United States:

> This great America: What is it worth in the scale of human values? And what does I add to the moral account of humanity? And, by the journey's end, what will its contribution be?
>
> I fear that a balance may not exist between America's material greatness and the quality of its people. And I fear that the wheel of life will have turned and the book of time will have closed and America will have added nothing, or next to nothing, to the account of morals that distinguishes man from object, and indeed, mankind from animals.[186]

Americans, here as a symbol for the West's people, thought and culture, are according to Qutb, "the peak of advancement", but also "the depth of primitiveness".[187] The return to Egypt marked Qutb's beginnings with the Muslim Brotherhood and subsequently troubled relationship with the government, being incarcerated for many years during the 1950s and '60s until his death. However, Qutb's last years were his most productive when it comes to his ideology and thought.

4.3 The Islamist Ideology of Sayyid Qutb

Sayyid Qutb claimed that Islam only knows two kinds of societies – the Islamic and the non-Islamic – the *jahili* world. Qutb followed this statement in Chapter 7 of his magnum opus *Milestones*, uncompromisingly reserving "the Islamic society" for those "which follows Islam in belief and ways of worship, in law and organization, in morals and manners". Commenting on the concept of *kafir* – unbelievers – Qutb indirectly reserves the label of "Muslim" only to those who solely follow all these concepts. All others are *takfir* – excommunicated. Subsequently, the *jahili* society "is that which does not follow Islam and in which neither the

[185] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 17.

[186] Qutb, Sayyid. *The America I Have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values*, p. 1. Kashful Shubuhat Publications Found on https://archive.org/details/SayyidQutb. Last accessed 1.11.17.

[187] Qutb, *The America I Have Seen*, p. 4.

Islamic belief and concepts, nor Islamic values or standards, Islamic laws and regulations, or Islamic morals and manners are cared for".[188]

Qutb did not tolerate a middle ground –a society was either Islamic or not. Qutb's ideology developed as the Arab regimes in the Middle East strengthened their grip on the Islamist movement. Located in the repressive period between the disassembling of the Brotherhood in the '50s and the Islamist resurgence period in the '70s, Qutb stood out as the main Islamist voice in the post-colonial era of Egypt and the Arab world. Proclaiming his agenda from the prison cell, Qutb wrote extensively. One of his first and most important Islamist works were the voluminous *In the Shade of the Quran* in (*Fi Zilal al-Quran* in Arabic), a lengthy read into the entirety of the Quran. Qutb's last book, however, his political and religious manifesto *Milestones*, is his most important work when scrutinizing his ideology. As with al-Banna, I will begin this part with goals and final objective, and Islam as an all-comprehending system of thought as central to the core of his belief system.

4.3.1 Goals and Final Objective

Sayyid Qutb's ideological project was essentially to revive Islam as the exclusive social, political, and cultural moral order in society. Qutb and his "new Koranic generation" were to, according to him, build the new Islamic community on the ashes of the current nationalism, like Prophet Muhammad had done centuries ago.[189] Qutb's religious and political project is steeped in the same trajectory as al-Banna's, but goes further. In a way, Qutb took al-Banna's social and moral reform and developed it into a more unmistakable and coherent ideological system.[190] Islam as the absolutist all-comprehensible system of government rules Qutb's entire order and philosophy. According to Qutb, all Islamic principles are *shamil* – comprehensive – and there is no distinction between religion and the material world.[191] To Qutb, Islam's comprehensive nature permeates everything. God's divinity and unity applies to everything in the universe "to one single, comprehensive will, the will of God".[192] Already in the late 1940s,

[188] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 93.

[189] Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, p. 26.

[190] Euben, Zaman. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, p. 49.

[191] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 208.

[192] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 105.

Qutb called "The Islamic political system (…) the eternal system for the world throughout the future of the human race."[193]

With the opening words of *Milestones*, Qutb clearly set the tone for his most important book, and in effect the mere absoluteness of his thought. Qutb considered all mankind to stand on the edge of a cliff, ready to fall into the pit of moral depravity and destruction. These opening remarks in *Milestones*, as well as the book in general, stands as the general summarization of his entire prophetic vision: the current modern world, as it stands, must perish, and give way for Islam, which is "(…) the only system which possesses these values and this way of life".[194] Referring to the former intellectual values of the Western world, now slipped away, Qutb deems the revival of Islam itself as the only valuable substitute possible to take over the wheel of humanity. Here, the emphasis on the revival of Islam itself implicitly tells us that Qutb sees Islam as dead and in the need of resurrection, ultimately to become the all-comprehending system of life for all humanity. He writes:

> In the Islamic concept, the sovereignty of God means not merely that one should derive all legal injunctions from God and judge according to these injunctions; in Islam the meaning of the 'Shari'ah' is not limited to mere legal injunctions, but includes the principles of administration, its system and is modes. This narrow meaning (i.e., that the Shari'ah is limited to legal injunctions) does not apply to the Shari'ah nor does it correspond to the Islamic concept. By the Shari'ah of God is meant everything legislated by God for ordering man's life; it includes the principles of belief, principles of administration and justice, principles of morality and human relationships, and principles of knowledge.[195]

Addressing the Islamic law itself as all-comprehending, Qutb continues, noting that "similarly, it includes political, social and economic affairs", and "with the intent that they reflect the complete submission to God alone". Furthermore, Islam must "deal with morals, matters, values and standards of the society". "All aspects" of art and science must also adhere completely to Islam as a system of government. In general, *hakimiyyah* – the sovereignty of God - is the essential point in Qutb's thought, which he says must be applied to all facets of society.[196] To Qutb, only Allah could know what is suitable for human nature, because all other systems are based on human ideas, i.e. corruptible and not God's, which basically means they

[193] Qutb, *Social Justice In Islam.* Octagon Books, 1970, p. 91.

[194] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 8.

[195] Ibid., p. 107.

[196] Ibid., p. 107-8.

are infused with selfishness and restricted human rationality - unlike God.[197] The Divine guidance of Allah stands in the center of Qutb's comprehensive thought. In light of God's sovereignty, Qutb proposes that the concept of adoration – *ouboudiyyah* – must be given to Allah exclusively, as the supreme leader of mankind. A party, army, nation, people – or other manifestations of government – often results in barbarism, anti-Islam and *jahiliyyah*, Qutb claimed.[198]

There is no doubt that Qutb subscribed to an uncompromising system change, as historian John Calvert notes. Calvert writes that Qutb clearly wanted to "reconnect the human being to his or her place in the natural order through the vanguards of true Muslims", against "the vast ocean of *jahiliyyah* which encompasses the entire world".[199] Qutb writes:

> Our foremost objective is to change the practices of this society. Our aim is to change the Jahili system at its very roots – this system which is fundamentally at variance with Islam and which, with the help of force and oppression, is keeping us from living the sort of life which is demanded by our Creator.[200]

In *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, political scientist Shahrough Akhavi lists up twelve concepts deemed most important to Qutb's social thought, indirectly affirming his all-comprehensive view of Islam and the world:

1. God's unicity – *tawhid*
2. God's sovereignty – *hakimiyyah*
3. Praxis – *al-waqi'iyyah*
4. The Islamic Way – *al-minhaj al-islami*
5. Divine immanence – *al-kaynunah al-rabbaniya*
6. Living in a state of ignorance of God's commands – *al-jahiliyyah*
7. Religious call *al-da'wah*
8. Exertion for God's sake – *al-jihad*

---

[197] Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?", p. 297.

[198] Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, p. 26.

[199] Calvert, *Sayyid*, p. 233.

[200] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 21.

9. Organic dynamic concrescence – *al-tajammu' al-haraki al-'udwi*

10. Consultation – *shura*

11. Mutual responsibility – *al-takaful al-itjima'i*

12. Social justice – *al-'adalah al-utjima'iyyah*[201]

Naturally, this list itself indirectly tells us that Qutb's thought is all-comprehensive by nature, covering everything from the sovereignty of God to the cause of *jihad*. Furthermore, Qutb emphasizes that, when inviting people to the true cause of Islam, one must bear in mind "a fact which is characteristic of Islam itself": that "Islam is a comprehensive concept of life and the universe with its own unique characteristics". Additionally, Qutb noted that "it is not the function of Islam to compromise with the concepts of *jahiliyyah*", stressing the uncompromising absolutism inherent in his thought. "This was not the case when it first appeared in the world, nor will it be today or in the future", he continues. Ultimately, Qutb believes that Islam sculptures one's life: the religion gives the follower not only spirituality, but "practical form" and "establishes a system in the world which has been prescribed by God". All rules, legislation, habits, values and standards are derived from the mind of God, and the most crucial activity for a Muslim is to invite people away from *jahiliyyah* and toward the world of Islam, and to "depose *jahiliyyah* from the leadership of Man".[202]

Qutb goes even further in his essay *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics*. Here, he notes that one of Islam's most important characteristics is, in fact, its comprehensiveness, which he writes is exclusive for Islam. Pushing the envelope even further than al-Banna, Qutb refers to Islam and its comprehensiveness not only in terms applying it to society, humanity, and civilization, but also to space, time, and existence, broadening his system to literally new dimensions. Man occupies this universe in only a fragment of eternity, he writes. He has limited knowledge, experience, and mental capacity. A human system can therefore only be valid for a certain time and place. Islam and the divine rule of Allah, he continues, can be the only fully comprehensive system of thought, because it is non-human, and thus not limited by nature. All

[201] Akhavi, "Sayyid Qutb", p. 7.

[202] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 129-31.

contradictions and disorientation innate in human concepts are fixed by Allah's comprehensiveness, true belief, and oneness.[203]

Going further, the topic and question of an Islamic state or Islamic caliphate is without doubt important to Qutb's all-comprehending ideology, but as with al-Banna, a clear-cut systematized program concerning the practicalities of such a state is not to be found in his authorship. One can easily deduce that an Islamic state of sorts is imminent and paramount to Qutb, however, since the destruction of the *jahiliyyah* society and the implementation of Islamic law is explicitly central to his ideology. Assisting this hypothesis, we also know that *hakimiyyah* - God's sovereignty - is the basis for his philosophy, emphasizing the need of a subject (God) as the head of a society (an Islamic state or caliphate). God's sovereignty, steeped with *tawhid* – God's unity – is essentially the building blocks for an Islamic society and state, to Qutb.[204] *In Milestones*, he writes:

> Islam is not a 'theory' based on 'assumptions', rather it is a 'way of life' working with 'actuality'. Thus it is first necessary that a Muslim community come into existence which believes that 'There is no deity except God', which commits itself to obey none but God, denying all other authority, and which challenges the legality of any law which is not based on this belief.
>
> Only when such a society comes into being, faces various and practical problems, and needs a system of law, then Islam initiates the constitution of law and injunctions, rules and regulations. It addresses only those people who in principle have already submitted themselves to its authority and have repudiated all other rules and regulations.
>
> It is necessary that the believers in this faith be autonomous and have power in their own society, so that they may be able to implement this system and give currency to all its laws.[205]

Here, Qutb first deems that a Muslim community must rise, challenge the establishment and pursue the sovereignty of God as the sole guidance. Then, Islam will initiate law as practical problems arises. Since God is the sole sovereign commander, a theocracy is out of the question for Qutb. Given the fact that a religious leader for such a state would merely be a messenger of the sacred law, and not divine himself, he has no real power or authority, Qutb states. While an imam or caliph must exist within such a state to execute the divine law, God is the only and

---

[203] Qutb, Sayyid. *The Islamic Concept and it Characteristics*, p. 57-8. Translated and found at IslamiBasics.com at www.islambasics.com/index.php?act=download&BID=156. Last accessed 1.11.17.

[204] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 192.

[205] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 33.

principal lawgiver, and essentially 'head of state'.[206] Essentially, as Qutb then writes, the "(…) only one place on earth which can be called the home of Islam (…) is the place where the Islamic state is established (…).[207] It is obvious that Qutb regards the Islamic state as important to his ideology, but he does not expand very far regarding practicality of a society or state, but merely acknowledges the need for a framework in which such a state could operate.

One the other hand, one can argue that the very notions of "nation" and "state" seem alien to Qutb, looking at it differently. Qutb talked mostly about God's sovereignty and the Islamic state in spiritual and transcendental terms. Unlike al-Banna - a pragmatist who first and foremost worked for actual change and the removal of the British in Egypt - Qutb looked beyond the home country and understood Islam as the solution to a much broader problem. To Qutb, the obstacle of *jahiliyyah* in the world was the main enemy which had to be defeated, and Egypt's own problems were not necessarily first and foremost the main issue at hand. The world revolution was his main concern, hence the lack of theory on the pragmatic nature of a nation or an Islamic state as Egypt.

The nation state is downplayed all together in Qutb's thought, according to political theorist Andrea Mura. Rather, an Islamic *community* in direct contact with *shari'a*, is the necessary version of Qutb's kingdom, Mura writes. A society where the "Islamic government find its inner legitimization outside itself" – that is, in Allah – "rather than in the immanent power of the state or the people of the state", is essentially what Qutb inscribes in *Milestones*.[208] Of course, Qutb wanted a "state" in the form a society to exist, but the Islamic government or system are restricted by the Quran and God itself. The Islamic governance is itself limited, and its only role is to administer Allah's laws and sustain his kingdom on Earth.[209] As Ana Belen Soage has written, Qutb even hesitated to suggest concrete measures for an Islamic state, because it was unnecessary – a substantial Islamic society would by nature emerge once everything was in motion against the *jahiliyyah* society. Details of government were essentially relative, Qutb thought, and he denied proposing an extensive inquiry of government and legislation.[210] Without doubt, an Islamic society or community is clearly high on Qutb's agenda,

---

[206] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 192-93.

[207] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 118.

[208] Mura, *The Symbolic Scenarios of Islamism*, p. 141.

[209] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 193.

[210] Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?", p. 297-302.

but in general, a definite outline regarding Islamic governance is nowhere to be found in *Milestones*. Rather, God is absolute authority and supreme legislator which every Islamic society must follow, for the community to truly be Islamic, Qutb thought.

Unlike the somewhat vague notions concerning Qutb's ideal Islamic state, his view on Islamic law governing such a place is described more in depth in his work. Qutb estimates the word of God, and the holy law of *shari'a*, to be a universal law for all mankind. He particularly stressed *shari'a* as essential to an Islamic government's legal system. As Islam is the "universal declaration of the freedom of man on the earth from every authority except God", the "positive" and "dynamic" idea of it all is "bringing about the implementation of the *shari'a* of God and actually freeing people from their servitude to other men to bring them into the service of God (…)".[211] To Qutb, Islam "constructs its foundation of belief and action on the principle of total submission to God alone". Islam's notions, beliefs and rules of life are in consequence an expression of this submission, and the "practical interpretation of the declaration that there is no deity except God". This submissiveness is an effect "of the need to harmonize human life with that law which is operative within man himself and in the rest of the universe".[212] This very law, eventually what he deems as *shari'a*, is evidently important to Qutb. *Shari'a* is the ultimate authority, which is absolutely necessary for the "home of Islam" – *Dar ul-Islam* – the only true state or society for Muslims, he writes, in contrast to the *Dar ul-Harb* – the "world of hostility."[213]

Qutb even goes as far as deeming the Quranic laws as equal to the laws of nature – both "operative from every moment according to what God has prescribed for them from the dawn of creation". Ultimately, *shari'a* is the only possible connection to establish harmony "between the physical laws which are operative in the biological life of a man and the moral laws which govern his voluntary actions (…)". To Qutb, this is the only solution for peace in the entire universe.[214] Clearly, more important than the mentioned Islamic state per se, God's sovereignty

[211] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 59.

[212] Ibid., p. 87.

[213] Ibid., p. 118.

[214] Ibid., p. 88-92.

aligned with the establishment of Islamic *shari'a* law is one of the most crucial elements to Qutb's thought.[215] He stressed the value of the law in *Milestones*, as expected:

> By the Shari'ah of God is meant everything legislated by God for ordering man's life; it includes the principles of belief, principles of administration and justice, principles of morality and human relationships, and principles of knowledge.
>
> The Shari'ah includes the Islamic beliefs and concepts and their implications concerning the attributes of God, the nature of life, what is apparent and what is hidden in it, the nature of man, and the interrelationships among these. Similarly, it includes political, social and economic affairs and their principles, with the intent that they reflect complete submission to God alone. It also includes legal matters (…) It deals with the morals, manners, values and standards of the society, according to which persons, actions and events are measured (…).[216]

As shown above, Qutb deems the *shari'a* an interdimensional all-comprehending system of law circulating and governing the entire Islamic community. Having established the importance of *shari'a* to Qutb, several questions arise, however. Since Quranic law is a vast and broad phenomenon in Islamic religion and theology - what exactly does he mean by *shari'a* in practical terms? It is obvious that Qutb wanted to enforce the God-given law upon every living soul who manifested in an Islamic community, but the question of what and how still stands. In contrast to "the practical" al-Banna, maybe, Qutb rarely touches upon these issues in *Milestones* – as shown above - with little elaboration on an Islamic state as well. In another work of his, *Islam and Universal Peace,* Qutb however shares some thought on the practical sides of *shari'a* – what Toth calls "an Islamic Bill of Rights". According to Qutb, *shari'a* law both dominates and includes legal rights, security, material sustenance and social equilibrium. These four concepts essentially give Qutb's *shari'a* physical and material connotations – establishing *shari'a* as quintessential to uphold law, livelihood, social security and stability. By 'legal justice', Toth notes, Qutb means "applying and abiding by an impartial Islamic law where both sides have rights and duties". Further, the 'social security' of *shari'a* shall enforce "punishment for violations", and material sustenance will "ensure people's physical and spiritual well-being, employment, livelihood, and income (…)", while social equilibrium shall protect and uphold an acceptable state of living.[217] Even though Qutb mostly wrote about *shari'a* in spiritual and

[215] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 197.

[216] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 107.

[217] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 197-98.

"utopian" terms – deeming it a natural law and universal for all mankind – he still wrote and considered actual and concrete proposals concerning the topic as shown here.

Despite this, Qutb cannot be considered an intellectual interpreter of *shari'a*. It is important to establish that *shari'a* is a wide and varying phenomenon, with the four Sunni *fiqh* schools of Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali being historically significant, as well as the Shi'ite variant of Jafari. Never elaborating on which *shari'a*, Qutb basically embraced and supported "all *shari'a*". Qutb himself meant that Sharia was "firm and stable, but not unyielding", and that it could be "applied to all aspects of life (…)".[218] When considering his notes on *shari'a* in *Milestones*, it might seem like he is reinterpreting the concept and makes it his own, but his approach is far too broad to be called a new interpretation, since it does not include any specifics or established elements. Evidently, Qutb was fundamentally more interested in the spiritual aspects of Islam, and less interested in the construction of actual government and law. *Shari'a* surely was important to him – as with al-Banna – but the actual formality of the law itself remain largely irrelevant vis-à-vis the nature of the divine pan-Islamic concept that encompassed his thought.

4.3.2 Means and Strategies – *Jihad* as example

If *jihad* penetrated al-Banna's thought, then Qutb's mindset was heavily permeated by it. With an entire chapter in *Milestones* dedicated to the concept of *jihad*, Qutb used a considerable number of pages discussing the concept in his most notorious work. First and foremost, it is paramount to establish that Qutb called for *jihad* as a definite strategy to achieve God's sovereignty for humankind, which was its sole purpose. He wrote:

> The reasons for Jihaad (…) are these: to establish God's authority in the earth; to arrange human affairs according to the true guidance provided by God; to abolish all Satanic forces and Satanic systems of life; to end the lordship of one man over others (…)
>
> The Jihaad of Islam is to secure complete freedom for every man throughout the world by releasing him from the servitude to other human beings so that he may serve his God, Who is One and Who has no associates.[219]

[218] For more on Qutb's thoughts on *shari'a*, see Toth, p. 198-99

[219] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 70.

Previously mentioned concepts such as God's sovereignty and the general all-comprehensiveness of Qutb's thought are represented here, and *jihad* is deemed as a key to unlock the all-dominating Islamic community under God's command. In *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics*, Qutb writes similarly that "Jihad is thus struggle for the initiation and establishment of this system which aims at securing freedom of conscience and belief for every person on earth."[220]

It is important, however, to establish what Qutb means by *jihad*, since the concept is as fragmented as *shari'a*, with different meanings and interpretations. Basically, *jihad* means "exertion, striving or struggle in pursuit of God's way, to spread belief in the One God, and to further or promote God's kingdom on Earth."[221] Qutb himself defines *jihad* as "striving", and deemed *jihad* as "any form of activity, either personal or community-wide, of Muslims in attempting to strive for the cause of God and for the sake of Islam".[222] Defining *jihad* implicitly as both preaching and argument, Qutb carries on with the notion that *jihad* is in no way "defensive war", as some scholars claim. Qutb was aware of the many contradictory passages on *jihad* in the Quran. As Calvert notes, some verses alert Muslims to be careful against the 'enemies' – the people of *jahiliyyah* and the *Dar al-Harb* – while other verses and passages permit fighting non-believers in defense.[223] To Qutb, *jihad* is struggling and striving in every sense spreading the Muslim cause, from the fist to the latter. This includes both *jihad* in the sense of "internal struggle of purification", *jihad* preaching, *jihad* action and activism, and most controversially, the *jihad* of the sword. In essence, *jihad* is the permanent striving "to make this (Islam) system of life dominant in the world", as he himself wrote.[224] It is still not defensive striving or war, he claimed, because Muslims are not merely preserving and protecting their homelands from foreign invasions when carrying out *jihad*. According to Qutb, *jihad* is rather the spreading of freedom:

> It is immaterial whether the homeland of Islam – in the true Islamic sense, Dar-ul Islam – is in the condition of peace or whether it is threatened by its neighbors. When Islam strives for peace, its objective is not that superficial peace which requires that only that part of the earth where the followers of Islam are residing remain secure. The peace which Islam desires is that the religion (i.e. the Law of the society)

[220] Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and it Characteristics*, p. 10.

[221] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 143.

[222] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 53.

[223] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 221.

[224] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 76

> be purified for God, that the obedience of all the people be for God alone, and that some people should not be lords over others.[225]

Again, stressing the need for a sovereign God ruling over mankind, Qutb proclaims here that the freedom of a country is irrelevant to the real cause of the *jihad*, which is the development and subsequent establishment of Allah's kingdom. If *jihad* is to be called defensive, he wrote, then it would be "the defense of man against all those forces that limit his freedom."[226] As with several of the other topics above, the practicality of Qutb's *jihad* remains ambiguous. How does *jihad* – especially *jihad* of the sword – really work? Who declares *jihad*, and how does it unfold? Qutb is not very interested in these questions, but he does propose a "vanguard of dedicated and dynamic believers, trained systematically to develop their spiritual and physical capacities" to *jihad*.[227]

Going back, Qutb wrote about *jihad* as early as the mid-1940s. This early in his authorship, it is not entirely evident what he meant. Toth suggests that he may have meant *jihad* as synonymous with resistance or political opposition – "the *jihad* of the tongue". However, there is no doubt that *jihad* would soon be equivalent to militant activism as well.[228] As Qutb developed his Islamic concept, *jihad* as a notion began to take form in his thought throughout the 1950s. In 1960, *Islam and Universal Peace* was published. Here, Qutb presented his own "Just War Theory", where he sketched out the guidelines for when *jihad* is allowed and necessary. To Qutb, *jihad* is essential to

- establish justice in its widest sense
- eliminate oppression, chaos, ill-treatment, tyranny, despotism, extortion, injustice, and to do so by administering *shari'a law*
- insure justice, order, dignity and respect
- spread good and forbid evil
- secure people against terror, coercion and injury

[225] Ibid., p. 62-3.

[226] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 62.

[227] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 147.

[228] Ibid., p. 51-52.

- fight for the cause of God
- abolish polytheism, idolatry, and disbelief
- ensure the submission of all people to God
- propagate the oneness and the dominion of God on earth
- overturn obstacles restricting the free propagation of Islam
- oppose those who prevent others from converting to Islam
- let freedom prevail
- assist others who are too weak in all these tasks

Qutb then concludes that *jihad* is

> (…) not just the defense of Islam (…) but also for actually imposing *shari'a* as a caring and compassionate duty since Islam is good and beneficial for all humanity – both absolutely, and relative to any alternative.[229]

Despite this being written a couple of years before *Milestones*, it becomes indisputable that Qutb permitted fighting and warfare as a noble and justifiable way of executing *jihad*, and that this view developed in this period. Following al-Banna, he denied the modernist approach of thinkers such as Rashid Rida, that *jihad* primarily was a spiritual way (known as the Greater *jihad*) of striving and battling non-believers. [230] To Qutb, *jihad* was one of the prime tools for a world revolution, and a fighting type of *jihad* – *jihad bis saif* – came to be at the heart of his agenda. After proclaiming that Islam is not a belief, but the "declaration of the freedom of men", Qutb concludes that those "(…) who understands this particular character of this religion will also understand the place of *Jihaad bis-saif* (striving through fighting) (…)"[231] Inspired by the conservative reading of *jihad* from Ibn Qayyim al-Jawaziyya in the 1300s, *jihad bis saif* (or *jihad bi al-sayf*) became Qutb's own version of *jihad* – a "struggle of the sword", clearly and explicitly advocating for warfare in the name of Allah.[232] According to Soage, Qutb maintained the view that preaching was not enough, because "the usurpers" of God's divine order would

[229] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 144-45.

[230] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 222.

[231] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 61.

[232] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 145.

not let go of their *jahiliyyah* state. *Jihad* in every sense of the word would be crucial to "eliminate the physical and mental obstacles" that avert people to join the Muslim cause. *Jihad* is a never-ending and perpetual state, Qutb followed. Islam demands all of humanity and all of mankind, and so *jihad* cannot end until Judgement Day when the true cause of Islam is enforced and established everywhere in the world.[233] The aim of *jihad*, then, is to demolish the *jahiliyyah* culture, constitute God as the sole ruler of the Earth and free everyone from the "tyranny of men", and establish the law of *shari'a*.[234]

Despite discussing and acknowledging the three peaceful ways of *jihad* throughout his authorship, Qutb ultimately fully embraced and understood that *jihad* of the sword was specifically necessary. Surely, Qutb promoted preaching and argument as the ideal form of *jihad*, but – in his eyes – the unyielding nature of *jahiliyyah* made the *jihad* of the sword imperative and unavoidable. When free information and possibilities became prohibited, then no other possibilities are conceivable, he wrote. Being imprisoned for many years, Qutb then finally fully embraced this type of *jihad* in *Milestones*. In the last years of his life, Qutb wholly incorporated violence into his beliefs as completely necessary. To Qutb, the revitalization of the spirit of Islam and annihilation of the system of *jahiliyyah*, became an obligation for all Muslims. The violent form of *jihad* essentially became a boundless and immortal cause, which would only end when the entire world was ridden of the barbarism of *jahiliyyah* and absolved into the oneness of God.[235]

4.3.3 The Enemy of the Ideology: The Concept of *Jahiliyyah*

I argued earlier that al-Banna clearly had the problematic relationship between the West and the Islamic world as one of his defining ideological traits, especially regarding pragmatism, activism and substantial change in society. Qutb on the other hand must be analyzed with another specific concept at hand. More an ideologue than his predecessor, Qutb's *modus operandi* is, essentially, the core of his ideology – the concept of *jahiliyyah* - which has been mentioned numerous times already. As is evident now, this is the most vital element in Qutb's ideological framework. Encircling his entire system of thought, *jahiliyyah* is the Islamic notion

[233] Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?", p. 304.

[234] Toth, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 143.

[235] Ibid., p. 150-53.

of not being submitted to God – "cut off from the wellspring of truth".[236] Traditionally, the word *jahiliyyah* refers to the pre-Islamic pagan times in the Arab region of the world – the "age of ignorance" before the time of Prophet Muhammad. Qutb attributed this term to the Nasser regime from the mid-1950s, when the Brothers suffered under the new leader's harsh conditions, because society drifted away from Islam, or, in Qutb's words, was not Islamic at all. *Jahiliyyah*, then – in a modern sense, the World's ignorance of the Divine guidance - became Qutb's version of the ancient term applied to modern society and the Nasserist regime. *Jahiliyyah*, this "social illness", had presented itself everywhere throughout history in various shapes and forms, Qutb thought, and was now present in Egypt. In *Milestones*, he wrote:

> If we look at the sources and foundations of modern ways of living, it becomes clear that the whole world is steeped in jahiliyyah, and all the marvelous material comforts high-level inventions do not diminish this ignorance. This jahiliyyah is based on rebellion against God's sovereignty on Earth.[237]

While *jihad* is the eternal struggle, and an Islamic state and *shari'a* are two main goals – adjoined under Islam as an all-comprehending system – *jahiliyyah* is the most principal issue for all Muslims. According to Qutb, the world is drenched in this barbarism, and he writes that "our foremost objective is to change the practice of this society", referring to the society of *jahiliyyah* which must perish for Islam to flourish. Qutb's theory of *jahiliyyah* developed rather late. But, as with the other Islamist features above, his view on this issue escalated in his later years, probably due to the increasing harshness permitted by the Egyptian government to both the Muslim Brotherhood in general, as well as to his own imprisonment. While the dichotomy between good and evil existed in his literature earlier, the concept of *jahiliyyah* came forward in the beginning of the 1960s, during the last few years of his life.[238]

By at least 1964, Qutb meant that every society or civilization which is not entirely Islamic, is *jahiliyyah* by nature. Not only did Qutb believe that *jahiliyyah* was the opposite of Islam, but also that it was actively in opposition. As with Islam, the *jahiliyyah* is always a "(…) form of a dynamic social grouping, a society (…)", with its "(…) conceptions, values, ideas, feelings, traditions, and customs". Being an "(…) organic society whose individuals relate to each other, support each other and cooperate together (…)", *jahiliyyah* actively "(…) sought to preserve

---

[236] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, p. 273.

[237] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 11.

[238] Shepard, William E. "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of Jahiliyyah. *International Journal for Middle East Studies*, Vol 35, No. 4 (Nov. 2003), p. 534.

and defend its existence, consciously or unconsciously, and to destroy any dangerous elements which threaten that existence in any way". To Qutb, *jahiliyyah* is the aggressive antithesis of Islam, rejecting *hakimiyyah* – God's sovereignty - and instead following the thoughts of man. Dismissing the sacred supremacy of God, Middle East historian William E. Shepard writes that, this "(…) is out of tune with the divinely ordained cosmic harmony of which the *shari'a* is a part and clashes with true human nature".[239] To be a part of *jahiliyyah*, consciously or not, becomes an act of disobedience. *Jahiliyyah* is not only the societies which are not Islamic, but a resistance which Islam must crush. Qutb's infamous rigidness becomes indisputable, when he professes about *jahiliyyah* in the opening pages of *Milestones*, where he proposes his solution:

> We must (…) free ourselves from the clutches of jahili society, jahili concepts, jahili traditions and jahili leadership. Our mission is not to compromise with the practices of jahili society, nor can we be loyal to it. Jahili society, because of its jahili characteristics, is not worthy to be compromised with. Our aim is first to change ourselves so that we may later change the society (…)
>
> Our aim is to change the Jahili system at its very roots – this very system which is fundamentally at variance with Islam and which, with the help of force and oppression, is keeping us from living the sort of life which is demanded by our Creator.[240]

Qutb's idea is uncompromising – the concepts and values of *jahiliyyah* must be eradicated, for Islam to rise again. Qutb accepts no bargains or accommodations: "Never! We and it are on different roads, and if we take one step in its company, we will lose our goal entirely and lose our ways as well."[241] Ultimately, Qutb believes there exists only Islam and *jahiliyyah*, and nothing in between:

> (…) There are two kinds of culture; the Islamic culture, which is based on the Islamic concept, and the jahili culture, which manifests itself in various modes of living which are nevertheless all based on one thing, and that is giving human thought the status of a god so that its truth or falsity is not to be judged according to God's guidance. The Islamic culture is concerned with all the theoretical and practical affairs, and it contains principles, methods and characteristics which guarantee the development and perpetuation of all cultural activities.[242]

---

[239] Shepard, "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of Jahiliyyah", p. 526.

[240] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 21.

[241] Ibid., p. 21.

[242] Ibid., p. 111.

As established, God's autonomous and unlimited dominance and oneness in the world - and in the entire universe - is Qutb's most cherished and imperative goal for Islam. To him, *jahiliyyah* is the exact opposite of this – man's sovereignty over humankind and the rejection of God. Qutb never accepted any form of graduate step-by-step concepts that could bond Islam to other ideas or ideologies, to realize its goal of success. To Qutb, Islam and *jahiliyyah* were exact opposite poles, actively. He vehemently rejected the notions of those who wanted to amend the world of *jahiliyyah* and find some shared basis that could end up in Islam:

> Either Islam or *jahiliyyah*. There is no other state, half-Islam and half-*jahiliyyah*, that Islam can accept. Islam clearly indicates that the truth is one, not multiple, that everything other than the truth is perdition, and that the two cannot be mixed. Either God's government or *jahiliyyah* government. Either divine law or human whim.[243]

He wrote similarly in his essay *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics* that

> There are only two possibilities for the life of a people, no matter in what time and place they live. These are the state of guidance or the state of error, whatever form the error may take; the state of truth or the state of falsehood, whatever may be the varieties of falsehood; the state of light or the state of darkness, regardless of the shades of darkness; the state of obedience to the Divine guidance or the state of following whims, no matter what varieties of whims there may be; the state of Islam or the state of *jahiliyyah*, without regard to the forms of *jahiliyyah;* and the state of belief or the state of unbelief, of whatever kind. People live either according to Islam, following it as a way of life and a socio-political system, or else in the state of unbelief, *jahiliyyah*, whim, darkness, falsehood, and error.[244]

Qutb meant that his stern definition and system of Islam vis-à-vis the non-Islamic were God's own words, and that those who "are not in the party of God, are in the party of Satan."[245] Already in the 1950s, Middle East historian Wilfred Cantwell Smith wrote that "the fundamental malaise of modern Islam is a sense that something has gone wrong with Islamic history", with the notion that "the fundamental problem of modern Muslims is how to rehabilitate that history, to get it going again in full vigour, so that Islamic society may once again flourish (…)". This very idea is at the heart of Qutb's ideology of Islam versus *jahiliyyah*, and Shepard deems that Qutb's concept "manifests it in a particular profound, radical, and

[243] Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?", p. 297.

[244] Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and it Characteristics*, p. 52.

[245] Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?", p. 298.

systematic form".[246] Qutb believed the world of *jahiliyyah* lacked all things good, and essentially were sub-human in following human ideas instead of God's. All human societies are based on race and class, and are drenched in materialism, Qutb thought. Only the emphasis on creed and virtue found in Islam can be used as the groundwork for a society, for a greater sense of human capacity and a humane civilization – what he called *hadara insaniyya*.[247] As is evident, the main problem Qutb had with the world of *jahiliyyah* is that it rejected Allah's sovereignty and, consciously or unconsciously, acted against the idea of inserting God as the sole and absolute supreme ruler and divine being. Since this is one of Qutb's most important ideological elements, any form of compromising is out of the question. He requires a complete system change. In this notion we find a principal element to Qutb's ideology. He believes Islam has just cause to lead, govern and judge – to rule:

> (…) Islam has the right to take initiative. Islam is not a heritage of any particular race of country; this is God's religion and it is for the whole world. It has the right to destroy all obstacles in the form of institutions and traditions to release human beings from their poisonous influences, which distort human nature and which curtail human freedom.[248]

Essentially, the barrier of *jahiliyyah* must be shattered for Islam to save humanity from themselves. Islam and God's sovereignty must give salvation to the human race by becoming absolute – "to release mankind from servitude to human beings so that they may serve God alone (…)".[249] The concept of *jahiliyyah* was Qutb's final doctrine – a final message from behind the prison cell. In the last years of his life, Qutb saw the world divided between the world of Islam and the world of *jahiliyyah*. The *jahili* world is ignorant of God's divine guidance and Islam is the light:

> (…) When man establishes the representation of God on earth in all respects, by dedicating himself to the service of God and freeing himself from the servitude to others, by establishing the system of life prescribed by God and rejecting all other systems, by arranging his life according to the Shari'ah of God and giving up all other laws, by adopting the values and standards of morality which are pleasing to God and rejecting all other standards (…) and when his attitude toward the material and moral aspects of life

[246] Shepard, "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of Jahiliyyah", p. 538.

[247] Shepard, "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of Jahiliyyah", p. 526.

[248] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 75.

[249] Ibid., p. 75.

is infused with this spirit, only then does man become completely civilized and the society reach the height of civilization.[250]

[250] Ibid., p. 99-100.

5 Discussion

In the previous two chapters, I have inspected five key Islamist features inherent in both Hassan al-Banna's and Sayyid Qutb's religious ideology. Prior to this, I raised some methodological problems in relation to my analysis. While al-Banna's main objective was to purify Egypt from foreign powers and to Islamize society from the bottom up, Qutb wanted to annihilate all thought that was not solely in line with God's divine sovereignty – *hakimiyyah.* With Qutb essentially taking al-Banna's Brotherhood philosophy and all-encompassing thought further into a coherent ideological system, one may view a comparison as unfair, and as something that would paint a distorted picture – especially considering their distinct background and basis. As some scholars might determine, al-Banna clearly had other priorities than Qutb, and analyzing their ideas in relation to each other will only produce results based on false presuppositions. As stated, few direct comparisons in relation to ideology even exist, and they are generally not considered to be in the same realm of Islamism - except being prominent Muslim Brotherhood figures. Since little has been written on the ideology of al-Banna and Qutb in relation to each other, I have looked at the most prominent Muslim Brother scholars, such as Brynjar Lia and Richard P. Mitchell, but not found much on this subject. Neither of them stress the similarities found in the core of al-Banna's and Qutb's worldview. However, I believe there are more similarities than often thought – or at least, explored – and thus a comparative analysis is worthy of discussion.

Even when taking their respective environment and base into account, a substantial amount of ideas appears as very similar. It is true that al-Banna's successor Hasan al-Hudaybi indirectly criticized Qutb in his 1969 book *Preaches, Not Judges*, by criticizing the concept of *takfir* – the concept of proclaiming a Muslim a non-believer. Later, an explicit denunciation was made, when Brotherhood Guide Umar al-Tilmisani disclosed that Qutb's thought only mirrored his own, and not the Muslim Brotherhood as an organization, in the early 1980s. As Soage has written, most western scholars have accepted this view in the consecutive decades, and al-Banna has largely been neglected in relation to ideology and Qutb.[251] As mentioned, they are different on many levels, and this is not surprising. Whereas Hassan al-Banna laid the foundation for the idea of an Islamic order through sociomoral reform and activism, Qutb

[251] Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?", p. 294-5

intellectualized Islamism and developed the concept further, deeming everyone not following his specific view of Islam as enemies – belonging in the realm of *jahiliyyah*. However, since both al-Banna and Qutb ultimately want an Islamist system to embrace the entire world, their worldviews - despite their background and method, remain comparable - ultimately resembling each other, in my opinion. In this sense, I follow Ana Belen Soage and Andrea Mura, who have compared al-Banna's and Qutb's thought earlier.

5.1 A Comparative Analysis

First, regarding goals and final objectives, both al-Banna and Qutb viewed Islam as an all-comprehending system. To them, a complete moral order based on Islam, was Islam itself. Al-Banna meant that the Brotherhood's project was the "true Islam", which was absolute, all-comprehensive and faultless. Qutb saw of course his version of Islam as the correct one, and the only possible version. All other interpretations were *jahiliyyah*. As such, both al-Banna and Qutb meant that Islam was a complete system that had the guidelines for all matters and spheres of life, both political, social, and cultural. Al-Banna deems explicitly that Islam must penetrate every phase of life in *Toward the Light* – and that it "(…) applies to all nations and people, and that it is for all ages and for all times".[252]

Years later, Qutb took this further by stating that Islam must save humanity from its degenerate moral order that is based on humankind itself – and look beyond the horizon to God as the sole sovereign power that must control everything in the universe. "When belief in *La ilaha illa Allah*" – meaning "no deity except God" – "(…) penetrates into the deep recesses of the heart, it also penetrates through the whole system of life", Qutb wrote.[253] On this notion, al-Banna and Qutb share a similar idea – that essentially Islam is everything, and must dominate the world and pierce every phase and sphere of life. The main difference, however, is their distinctive approaches. Then, since the idea of Islam as all-comprehending is so broad, it is hard to deliver a simple conclusion to what degree they are similar or different on this aspect. Since this is essentially the overarching concept for their entire thought, many differences appear, as we will see as we delve into more specific matters.

---

[252] Al-Banna, Hassan. *On the Doctrine of the Muslim Brothers,* quoted in Rubin & Rubin. *Anti-American Terrorism and the Middle East.* Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 27.

[253] Qutb, *Milestones,* p. 32.

On the concept of an Islamic state, no thorough or detailed writings exist in neither al-Banna's nor Qutb's works. While both certainly mentioned the importance of an Islamic state several times, a comprehensive notion surrounding the practicalities of a state are lacking in their respective bodies of work. Al-Banna was first and foremost a pragmatic activist inside Egypt who battled the foreign powers and the resistant forces which opposed his ideal Islam. Even though he professed about an all-embracing Islamic system, a detailed program regarding an Islamic state – both in a world-wide fashion or as Egypt transformed – remains nearly non-existent in his literature.

Qutb is similar to some degree. Even though he at least mentioned some concrete measures regarding a state, it was not something he proclaimed obsessively, and it is not found in his last work *Milestones*. The reason for this is probably because of Qutb's view on Islam and the world. As mentioned, Qutb saw beyond Egypt to a much broader extent than his predecessor. Although al-Banna declared Islam a system for the entire world, he mostly dealt with national issues. Qutb, on the other hand, spoke about the world problems: Islam versus *jahiliyyah* – the antithesis of God's sovereignty – and the need to wipe out all human philosophy in exchange of God's kingdom which must be absolute. As with al-Banna, Qutb never really presented a systematized project for the acceleration of an Islamic state, but for a different reason all together. Al-Banna never professed about an all-encompassing Islamic state, because he mostly targeted the national issues happening inside Egypt. Neither did he design or sketch out the specifics of a comprehensive Islamic state for Egypt alone, as he was no theorist or philosopher, but merely an activist. Qutb, however, did not elaborate on the formation of a state because he deemed it as unnecessary. First, he believed that the legitimization of power should come from outside the nation state itself, because God must be the leader of such a state. Thus, he implicitly undermines the value of the state, by deeming that the power must come from outside. This just supports the idea that Qutb might have seen beyond the national or state level, even from the start. Secondly, Qutb believed that a state would naturally rise once the battle against *jahiliyyah* was in its beginning. Neither al-Banna nor Qutb deeply calculated a detailed plan for the rise of an Islamic state, but it is natural to assume that it is because of these distinct reasons.

Going further, both al-Banna and Qutb considered *shari'a* as essential to any Islamic society. Al-Banna suggested that *shari'a* law had to be the fundamental moral code for all Muslims and Islamic societies, and Qutb professed that the Islamic sacred law of *shari'a* had to be a universal

law for all mankind, and that it was paramount to any legal system. They both believed *shari'a* was absolutely necessary to restore humanity and reestablish God's kingdom on Earth.

Al-Banna was no great interpreter of *shari'a*. Qutb did not touch greatly upon the implications of the various kinds of *shari'a*, either. However, what could be interpreted as different from al-Banna to Qutb, are the reasons for the wish of implementing the Islamic sacred law. Al-Banna was no great theorist of Islam, but clearly meant that *shari'a w*as important. Richard P. Mitchell argued that for the Brotherhood during the 1930s and '40s, *shari'a* surpassed the idea of an Islamic state, as the law characterized Islam more than the state. Mitchell deemed that *shari'a* embodied the basis of Islam for the Brothers and al-Banna, both in context of the wish to regain the lost civilization of Islam, and as the groundwork for a new restored order. To al-Banna, *shari'a* was then not only perfect and imperative for an Islamic society, but critical as an identity marker against the degenerative Western influenced Egypt – a reminder of an ancient Islamic order that had to once again be restored. Qutb was naturally also invested in the decline of the Islamic civilization and the need to reestablish the lost kingdom for that specific reason. But, ultimately, Qutb spoke more about the *shari'a* as the absolute authority, completely necessary for a new Islamic society. In opposition to the "world of hostility", the "home of Islam" needed the spirit of *shari'a* to be the perfect civilizational project for Muslims.[254] To Qutb, *shari'a* was considered equal to the laws of nature in its truth, and even necessary to establish harmony in the universe.[255]

Ultimately, Qutb was more interested in *shari'a* as the key to freedom for humanity than anything else. This is also true of al-Banna to a certain degree – if we view his *shari'a* as something that will eradicate the foreign influence and initiate Islamic law. Qutb, however, explicitly presents the freedom of humanity from the thought of humanity itself as the prime cause and reason to launch *shari'a* as the main body of the rule of law. As with al-Banna, Qutb deals little with the practicalities of the law. The *shari'a* as the path to submission to God alone, and the spiritual facets in general, was Qutb's main concern in contrast to al-Banna's more pragmatic interests.

Regarding *jihad*, there is no secret that both al-Banna and Qutb embraced the concept wholly, even the physical ramifications of warfare and violence. Again, both al-Banna and Qutb wrote

[254] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 118.

[255] Ibid., p. 88-92.

little on *jihad* in practical terms. Al-Banna remains somewhat ambiguous when writing about *jihad* all together, but with a soldierly tone in his writings, it becomes clear that he embraced *jihad* as war against the non-believers. Qutb naturally does too, naming "jihad of the sword" essential and the most important way to strive against the world of *jahiliyyah*. Naturally, with the concept of *jihad* embodying several types of striving and meanings, it is important to be perfectly clear here. Surely, both al-Banna and Qutb also supported peaceful *jihad*, emphasizing the need for both preaching and argument. Al-Banna considered *jihad* – striving for Islam in general - a devout obligation, a commitment for all Muslims, and wrote that it is a sin to not act out *jihad* as a religious duty. He wrote about deep faith as *jihad*, and emphasized the need to change society through the spiritual realm. However, it is obvious that he supported *jihad* also as *qital* – meaning fighting. He called the Muslim Brotherhood "God's troops" and clearly stated that *jihad* as combat not was a lesser *jihad* compared to the spiritual variation. His view on *jihad* is fragmented and disorienting, with few instructions on how the concept works in general, except his clear emphasis on striving both physically and non-physically as important. In one instance, al-Banna even wrote that *jihad* can be permitted outside of a war scenario: "(…) as individuals, as circumstances may dictate".[256]

To al-Banna, *jihad* as war was necessary, and despite having some modifications, like sparing the lives of women and children, he nevertheless proclaimed *qital* as an obligation to all Muslims. Qutb agreed wholeheartedly, but again, other incentives may lie behind. Similarly, as to his view on *shari'a*, Qutb gave great significance to the idea that Islam is the savior of humanity, to the idea of *jihad*. To Qutb, *jihad* was in itself the spreading of peace, on the course to emancipate humanity from the corruption of human thought and philosophy, and reinstate God's sovereignty on Earth. Qutb undeniably meant that "*jihad* of the sword", as he called it, was the most crucial type of *jihad*, and paramount to secure the destruction of the civilization of *jahiliyyah*. As *jihad* – and even this violent form of *jihad* – was the salvation of humanity to Qutb, the spiritual implications again triumphs everything else. Again, as with *shari'a*, Qutb did not give much interest to the execution of *jihad* itself, and instead was more interested in the spiritual aspects of the concept. Even though al-Banna is generally considered to be not as hostile in his relation to *jihad* – not surprisingly due to the fragmented nature of his writings, and certainly true to a degree considering his sparing of women and children – he still deemed *qital* a preeminent feature to reach the goal of an Islamic civilization. Qutb's approach is not so

[256] Al-Banna, *On Jihad*, p. 135.

inconsistent. Near the end of his life, he undoubtedly thought that to shield the cause of Islam and advance its way of life, the non-Muslim system of *jahiliyyah* had to be approached with *jihad* in its violent form.

Lastly, I discussed al-Banna's and Qutb's relationship with the West, or more correctly, Islam's opposing forces, viewed through their eyes. Whereas al-Banna had no specific ideological doctrine concerning this, Qutb had. Surely, al-Banna detested the colonialism and imperialism that saturated Egypt during his youth, but was not uncompromising to the extent Qutb was. The Brotherhood's founder accepted some elements that could be considered 'Western', and also sought out to include groups such as Egyptian nationalists to battle the greater enemy. The greatest contrast between al-Banna and Qutb is found here. Qutb, in his later years, did not propose any compromises like this. Instead, he created his own theory of *jahiliyyah*. Since this category or element of Islamism is vastly important to them both, this difference creates a crucial gap between the two, essentially emphasizing Qutb's more ultimate revolutionary and uncompromising nature. This contrast merely confirms that al-Banna was more or less practical in his view of Islam as an absolute order, while Qutb was more immaterial and spiritual in his approach, and only tolerated an unyielding path to the sacred kingdom under the sovereign God.

Despite this void between the two, the similarities that also exist are too obvious to ignore. Both al-Banna and Qutb saw the West's colonial and demoralizing order – or in Qutb's words, the *jahiliyyah* - as the main enemy who prevented the Islamic world to flourish. Al-Banna's anger with these issues largely accelerated the materialization of the Muslim Brotherhood, and thus the beginning of Islamism as a political-religious ideology in general. Despite al-Banna's non-systematic approach to the West and colonialism as the antagonist of Islam, in contrast to Qutb, this issue cannot be underestimated. Without doubt, al-Banna emphasized other issues. He dealt with current social and political matters in Egypt at the time, supported the middle and lower classes, and vocally attacked the religious establishment. Al-Banna's understanding, compromise and pragmatism also remains idiosyncratic in contrast to Qutb. Either way, Islam, and the conflicting forces, permeated most of his writings and persisted as central to the core of his thought. All things considered, al-Banna wanted a comprehensive Islamic system for the entire world. In a way, Qutb took this idea further – crucially deeming everyone not following his exact form of Islam as non-Muslims - and applied the ancient term *jahiliyyah* to the modern world. It would be foolish, then, to say that Qutb would not agree with al-Banna on this matter – as revolutionary as he was - developing this thought further. As the aversion for the West and

its colonialism was one of the main reasons the Brotherhood came into being - and was constantly referred to by al-Banna as an obstacle that had to be eradicated for Islam to flourish - it can easily be compared to Qutb's version of *jahiliyyah* and Islam as the two conflicting forces in the world. Then, despite al-Banna's more fragmented and non-comprehensive thought, the notion of the non-Muslim community as a shared enemy is obvious.

Evidently, in terms of ideas, both continuity and break exist in the passage from al-Banna's thought to Qutb. Obviously, in terms of continuation, Qutb extended the path laid by his predecessor in general, and advanced forward his all-comprehensive view. Qutb took both *shari'a, jihad*, the idea of an Islamic state and all the other elements treated in this paper further and developed a slightly systematic and spiritual approach to Islam. This does not mean that Qutb often referenced or professed the thought of al-Banna specifically. Qutb's continuation of al-Banna's ideas must rather be seen strictly in terms of the ideas themselves. This is clear. Even though Qutb referenced earlier scholars, he ultimately always ended up going back to God for justification and truth. Despite this, the connection is clear. As Soage states, Qutb's thought must clearly be seen as the logical extension of al-Banna's worldview.[257] However, the rupture between them must not be ignored. Bringing the call of Islam closer to spirituality than pragmatism, Qutb became more uncompromising than his predecessor in every regard. Naturally, despite this crystal-clear continuation between al-Banna's and Qutb's ideas, we must not disclaim the rupture, which is his most unique idea: that everyone, even those claiming themselves to be Muslims, are a part of the *jahiliyyah* society, if they do not follow the rules laid out by Qutb himself in works such as *Milestones*.

It has not been my intention to connect al-Banna and Qutb literally through any means. The Muslim Brotherhood would agree. Qutb's thought was largely unwanted by the organization after his death, while al-Banna's steady bedrock remains something that the Brotherhood still professes on their Internet website Ikhanweb.com to this day.[258] Still, obvious similarities exist, and my reason for this thesis has been to highlight these similarities through some of the most crucial Islamist features. As early as 1934, al-Banna claimed "(…) that it is our duty to establish

[257] Soage, "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?", p. 295.

[258] For example, al-Banna's infamous texts *To What Do We Invite Humanity?*, *Towards the Light* and *Letter to a Muslim Student* can be found under "Messages of Imam" on the website. See Ikhwanweb.com: http://www.ikhwanweb.com/articles.php?pid=90. Last accessed 20.10.17.

Allah's sovereignty over the world (…)"[259]. Similarly, decades later, Qutb emphasized that the entire world and humanity needs new leadership, and that "The distance between the revival of Islam and the attainment of world leadership may be vast, and there may be great difficulty on the way, but the first step must be taken for the revival of Islam."[260], underlining the correlation between Islam and world command under God's sovereignty.

[259] Al-Banna, *To What Do We Invite Humanity?*, p. 3

[260] Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 9-10.

6 Concluding Remarks

In this thesis, I sought out to present and compare certain major key Islamist features found in both Hassan al-Banna's and Sayyid Qutb's political and religious ideology. As is evident and known to historians, obvious differences exist between the thought of al-Banna and Qutb. The Muslim Brotherhood's founder al-Banna appealed to lower and middle-class residents in Egypt, talked down the establishment, and is largely remembered as a teacher and a guide rather than a philosopher or an intellectual. Sayyid Qutb, decades later, was revolutionary in nature, more spiritual than practical, uncompromising, intellectual, as well as an author and poet. Due to this, few researchers have extensively treated the core of their Islamism directly in a comparative view. In this paper, I have argued that, contrary to what is often presupposed - or at least explored - their ideologies can easily be compared, as key Islamist features are similarly approached and embraced in their bodies of work.

Both al-Banna and Qutb embraced Islam as an all-comprehending system that must govern all aspects of both private and social life. Even though they both wrote little on the practicalities of an Islamic state, an Islamic society or *umma* clearly was imperative to them both. They both wished to incorporate the law of *shari'a* – not only because it was the law of God – but as a counterpoint against the continual decline of the Islamic civilization at the time. Both al-Banna and Qutb deemed *jihad* essential, with al-Banna calling it an obligation for all Muslims, and Qutb simply acknowledging it as the truth itself.

Finally, they both saw the non-Islamic West and its colonial project as the antithesis of Islam which had to perish for the religion and system of life to again flourish. Largely, the decline of the Islamic civilization and subsequent Western influence in Egypt triggered al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood and ideology overall. Qutb took this idea further in the early 1960s, and regarded everyone not following his exact system of thought to be in the realm of *jahiliyyah* – even Muslims. Despite their unique differences, I would argue that it is inevitable to not see a common thread in terms of ideas, from al-Banna to Qutb. To summarize, al-Banna and Qutb should both be considered more alike than most historians presuppose, considering some major Islamist elements. Further research should define to which extent this relationship between their ideologies holds true.

Literature

Primary Sources

Al-Banna, Hassan. *Da'watuna* (Our Message), 1935, in *Jaridat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*. Translated by The Quran Blog at https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_6_-our-message.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

———. *Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna (1906-1949. A Selection from the Majmu'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna.* Translated by Charles Wendell, University of California Press, 1978.

———. *Letter to a Muslim Student*. The Islamic Foundation/FOSIS, 1995. Also translated by The Quran Blog at https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/letter-a-muslim-student.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

———. Majmu'at *Rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna.* International Islamic Federation of Student Organization.

———. *Our Message in a New Phase*. Cairo, 1940s. Translated by The Quran Blog at https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_5_-our-message-in-a-new-phase.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

———. *Peace in Islam*. Cairo, 1948. Translated by The Quran Blog at https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_4_-peace-in-islam1.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17

———. *The Message of the Teachings.* Translated by The Quran Blog at https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_3_-the-message-of-the-teachings.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

———. *To What Do We Invite Humanity?* Cairo, 1934. Translated by The Quran Blog at https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_2_-to-what-do-we-invite-humanity.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

———. *Toward the Light*, Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1936. Translated by The Quran Blog at https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_1_-toward-the-light.pdf. Last accessed 1.11.17.

Qutb, Sayyid. *The Islamic Concepts and its Characteristics.* Translated and found at IslamBasics.com at www.islambasics.com/index.php?act=download&BID=156. Last accessed 1.11.17.

———. *Milestones*. Islamic Book Service (P) Ltd, 2015.

———. *Milepæler.* L.S.P. Forlag, 2004. Translated by Kari Vogt.

———. *Social Justice in Islam*. Octagon Books, 1970.

———. *The America I Have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values*. Kashful Shubuhat Publications, 1951.

Secondary Sources

Berman, Paul. "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror". *The New York Times*, 2003.

Calvert, John. *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*. Columbia University Press, 2010.

Esposito & Shahin, *The Oxford Handbook for Islam and Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Euben & Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*. Princeton University Press, 2009.

Gerges, Fawaz A. *The Far Enemy. Why Jihad Went Global*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Keddie, Nikki R. *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din «al-Afghani»*. University of California Press, 1972.

Kepel, Gilles. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2014.

———. *The Roots of Radical Islam.* SAQI, 2005.

Kerr, Malcolm H. *Islamic Reform.* University of California Press, 1965.

Kjelstadli, Knut. *Fortida er ikke hva den en gang var: en innføring I historiefaget.* Universitetsforlaget, 1992.

Krogh, Thomas. *Hermeneutikk: Om å forstå og fortolke*. Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 2014.

Krämer, Gudrun. *Hasan al-Banna.* Oneworld Publications, 2010.

Lia, Brynjar. *The Society of the Muslim Brothers: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1928-1942*. Ithaca Press, 1998.

Mitchell, Richard P. *The Society of the Muslim Brothers.* Oxford University Press, 1993.

Mozafarri, Mehdi. “What is Islamism?” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*: Vol. 8, No. 1, 17-33, March 2007.

Munson, Ziad. “Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.” *The Sociological Quarterly*. Vol 42, No. 4, Autumn 2001, p. 487-510.

Mura, Andrea. *The Symbolic Scenarios of Islamism: A Study in Islamic Political Thought.* Routledge, 2016.

Rubin & Rubin. *Anti-American Terrorism and the Middle East*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

Shepard, William E. “Sayyid Qutb’s Doctrine of “Jahiliyyah*”*. *International Journal for Middle East Studies*, Vol 35, No. 4, Nov. 2003.

Soage, Ana Belen. “Hasan al-Banna or the Politicisation of Islam”. *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*: Vol 9, No. 1, March 2008.

———. “Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?” *The Muslim World*, March 2009.

Sørensen, Hagtvet, Brandal. *Islamisme: ideologi og trussel.* Dreyers Forlag, 2016.

Tibi, Bassam. *Islamism and Islam*. Yale University Press, 2012.

Toth, James. *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Utvik, Bjørn Olav. *Islamismen*. Unipub, 2011.