

The Political Capacities of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt

– Goals, Opportunities & Strategies

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January 2003 I moved to Cairo to begin an interdisciplinary Diploma degree¹ in Middle East studies at the American University in Cairo (AUC). During summer semester I attended a course led by Dr. Raymond Baker called Globalization, Islam and Democracy. I was introduced to a whole new understanding of the complexities between Islam and politics, and since then I wanted to study this subject in further detail, which has culminated in this thesis.

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1. Introduction

In 2005 elections for both the parliament and for the presidency took place in Egypt. These elections were preceded by a reform agenda represented by Egypt's president, Hosni Mubarak, in the early months of 2005. This reform covered law amendments for election procedures and political participation (e.g. Egypt State Information Service 2005, Hamzawy 2005b, ICG 2005, Dunne 2006). Mubarak has implemented various political reforms ever since he entered office in 1981 and on Egypt's official web pages the political reform in 2005 is hailed as the latest step in a row of reforms towards democratization:

Egypt has been a scene of a series of landmark steps to introduce political reforms for promoting democracy in Egypt and paving the way for a new phase of political work going in line with the economic, social and cultural developments in Egypt and world approach on democracy, freedoms and human rights. (Egypt State Information Service 2005).

The reform agenda created some hope for real political changes, both in Egypt and internationally (e.g. ICG 2005, al-Jazeera 2005, Middle East Times 2005). In her speech at the American University in Cairo in June 2005 Condoleezza Rice proclaimed that "President Mubarak has unlocked the door for political change" (Rice 2005). However, most scholars and journalists welcomed the reform with less enthusiasm and in the aftermath of the elections the law amendments were criticized for being cosmetic measures taken to preserve rather than change an essentially authoritarian order (e.g. al-Amrani 2005, al-Anani 2005, al-Ghobashy 2005a,b, Hamzawy 2005a,b,d, Hamzawy & Brown 2005, ICG 2005, Dunne 2006). For the first time in the Egyptian history a multi-candidate election for Presidency was carried out², nevertheless Mubarak won 88.6 % of the votes (e.g. Egypt State Information Service 2005, Al-Ahram 2005) and he will be in office for another six years. The National Democratic Party³ (NDP), the party of the President, remains in majority⁴ in the Parliament. Egypt is a good example of so called "hybrid" democracy, where the democratic institutions are in place, however democratic

² The low voter turnout, officially 23% of registered voters, reflects the lack of faith in the electoral process (Abaza 2006).

³ Established in 1978 in the wake of the establishment of the multiparty system introduced by Sadat in 1977 and the ruling party ever since.

⁴ 311 seats out of 454 (Al-Ahram 2005).

policy is lacking. Despite political reforms towards political liberalization in the Mubarak era, Egypt is still an authoritarian (semi) corporate regime (Al-Amrani 2005; Hamzawy 2006; Dunne 2007).

The Islamist social movement⁵, the Muslim Brothers, still not allowed by the regime to form a political party⁶ nor to engage in political activities as a civil association⁷, won 88 seats or 19 % in Parliament in the election in November-December 2005. This is the strongest showing by an Egyptian opposition party in half a century (Hamzawy & Brown 2005) and the Brotherhood is today the biggest and only serious opposition “party” in Egypt⁸. Due to the abovementioned political restraints and control, the performance of the Muslim Brotherhood came as a surprise to the regime and the secular opposition forces (ICG 2005, Hamzawy & Brown 2005). The result of the parliamentary election represents a *paradox*, namely that the illegal social movement Muslim Brothers in an authoritarian and corporate regime showed such huge election success. This paradox constitutes the backdrop of this thesis and illustrates that despite power structures made by the regime, the social movement is an agent applying diverse strategies to circumvent stringent obstacles to enter the formal political system.

Purpose & Research Questions

The driving force for carrying out this thesis is to understand the various obstacles and opportunities for democratization or political change in Egypt, and in the Middle East in general. Lack of democratic policy is again a major hindrance for sustainable development in the region (Arab Human Development Report 2004)⁹. The Muslim Brothers is today, despite its illegal status, the biggest opposition party in Parliament; as well as the best organized and widespread organization in Egypt. It is a non-violent organization applying existing political structures attempting to achieve influence for

⁵ The definition of the organization Muslim Brothers as an Islamic social movement will be discussed in further detail in the background chapter of the Muslim Brothers.

⁶ Law 40 of 1977

⁷ Law 32 of 1964

⁸ Even more striking was the rate of success; sixty-one percent of the 144 candidates nominated won. The result represents “a six-fold increase over their 2000 showing of seventeen seats” (Hamzawy & Brown 2005).

⁹ See for instance Törnquist (1999) and Elgström & Hyden (2002) for research on the relationship between development and democracy.

political change by democratic means, even though the regime tries to prevent it from doing so.

Theoretically this thesis is a contribution to the research on “how actors strategize to increase their capacity to promote political reform in order to combat problems of development” (Törnquist 2002). Törnquist (1999, 2002, 2004) proposes three questions that are especially central to the analysis of the strategies and capacities of political movements. First question is where in the political terrain the actors choose to work, second is what issues and interests they promote and politicize; and the final question is how people are mobilized into political movements and the political sphere. The thesis will focus on the two first questions, as they are intertwined in the case of the Muslim Brothers. Their goals partly points out the political space they choose to work in, as well as the political context influence and alter their goals again. The last question is already answered by the thorough research of Wickham in *Mobilizing Islam* (2002). She argues that in authoritarian settings social movements are most likely to mobilize in decentralized structures, and will fail to obtain access to the political system because they will face counter-mobilization by the regime (Wickham 2002). This thesis will challenge and pursue some of her findings, when it comes to where in the political terrain the Muslim Brothers choose to work. There is no doubt that the regime controls the political activities of all political opposition, but as I will show, with patience and pragmatism the Muslim Brothers have made strategic choices to become the most influential political opposition party.

Even though the thesis focuses on the Muslim Brothers in the formal political sphere behaving as a political party, social movement theory frames this research. Social movement theory has been applied and developed for a couple of decades; however Wickham (2002) and Wiktorowicz (2004) argue that studies on Islamic activism have been detached from these studies until recently. Islamic activism is important to study both due to its political impact and in theoretical terms, because it raises broader questions of opposition movements in authoritarian regimes.

Inspired by the work of Bourdieu (e.g. Harker et. al 1990, Bourdieu 1990, 1992) this thesis will illuminate the dialectic relationship between structure and agency, as

neither aspect is sufficient to give the full picture of Islamic activism¹⁰. We need to know both the constraining structures made by the regime as well as the strategies applied by the Muslim Brothers. The recent research of Lust-Okar (2005) will be presented to show how studies on structures fail to see the opportunities and the capacities of actors to circumvent the existing structures. Further, such research will also render the structures more static than what they really are. Lia (1998) calls for more research on the political practices and activities of Islamist movements, both to give a broader image of Islamic activism as well as understanding the dynamics of authoritarian regimes (Lia 1998: 287).

As I study the Muslim Brothers as an Islamic social movement in the context of an authoritarian and cooperative regime, the aim of this thesis is to critically examine how the political goals and strategies of Muslim Brotherhood in the Mubarak era are determined by the political context in which they operate. The main research question is: *How can we understand the political capacities of the Muslim Brothers?* The capacities of the Muslim Brothers are determined by two factors; the structures and their own goals and strategies. This research is guided by two sub-questions. First, on the agency level; *how do political obstacles and opportunities in the formal political system affect and shape the goals and strategies of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt?* This reflects Törnquist's question on what issues and interests the actors choose to politicize. Second, on the structure level; *why do the Muslim Brothers, despite political and judicial hindrances, work within the formal political system?* Or in Törnquist's wording where in the political terrain the actors choose to work. A research model on how context, goals and opportunities are interrelated is developed in chapter 2.

Before entering the methodology chapter a brief account on the case and context will be represented, to shed light on the long and multifaceted relationship between the Muslim Brothers and the regime which will be drawn upon in later chapters.

¹⁰ See Stokke (2002) on how to apply Bourdieu's concepts in the study and analysis of social movements. Due to limited space I have to omit a discussion on Bourdieu in this thesis.

The Case – The Muslim Brothers in Egypt

The Muslim Brothers¹¹ is the first modern Islamic social movement and it has been, and still is, the role model for modern Islamist movements (Lia 1998). The Muslim Brothers as an organization is neither easy to define nor to categorize; Harik (1997) considers all aspects of the Muslim Brothers defining it as “a spiritual worldwide organization that is (1) a *da’wa*¹² from the Quran and the *sunna*¹³ of the Prophet Muhammad; (2) a method that adheres to the *sunna*; (3) a reality whose core is the purity of the soul; (4) a political association; (5) an athletic association; (6) an educational and cultural organization; (7) an economic enterprise; and (8) a social concept (Harik (1997) referred to in Abed-Kotob & Sullivan 1999: 45). This thesis will be concerned with the role of the Muslim Brothers as a political association, conceptualized as an Islamist movement.

The thesis focuses on the Muslim Brothers in the Mubarak era; however, this chapter gives a brief review of the history of the Muslim Brothers, as the historical experiences of oppression and progress is shaping their strategies and goals today. When asking the Supreme Guide¹⁴ Akif about how he would explain the good results from the last election in 2005, the answer was that “it is the accumulation of 78 years of persistent work on bringing out the good intellectual, correct understanding of the religion, and good social relations” (Akif: interview 02.05.06.). Further, the organizational and ideological development in the initial years of the movement is to a large degree normative to the organization of today; however under reinterpretation due to the contemporary context as will be shown later.

History of the Muslim Brothers

The Muslim Brothers was founded in 1928 in Ismailia, a port city at the banks of the Suez Canal, by Hassan al-Banna. Starting up as an Islamic welfare organization, the

¹¹ The Arabic name of the organization, transliterated, is Jam’iyyat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, meaning the Society of the Muslim Brothers. Short forms are often used, Ikhwan Muslimin the Muslim Brothers, or only Ikhwan - the Brothers or the Brethren. The concept Brotherhood is both misleading and might even have negative connotations, referring to something closed and clandestine (al-Ghobashy 2005). However, the most common name in English is the Muslim Brotherhood. The various concepts will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

¹² Literally this means “call” or the “call to Islam” in missionary terms. In the Muslim Brotherhood vocabulary the term usually means the organization’s principles and ideas. (Lia 1998).

¹³ Tradition and example (Vogt 2005).

¹⁴ The leader of the Muslim Brothers.

Muslim Brothers soon expanded their activities to political participation and demands for political reform, based on reinterpretations of Islam, to reach their objective of “achieving the nation’s goals and ambitions” (Lia 1998: 283, al-Banna: interview 03.05.06). In 15 years the Muslim Brotherhood developed from a small, rural, Sufi¹⁵ organization for the workers at the Canal Suez Company, to become an international, comprehensive movement situated in Cairo (Mitchell 1969, Lia 1998, al-Banna: interview 03.05.06.). The charismatic leadership of Hassan al-Banna is often emphasized as an important factor for the growth of the organization (Mitchell 1969, Lia 1998). As Gamal al-Banna said; “this great evolution of the organization was due to the ingenious capacity of Hassan al-Banna as an organizer and that he was a man of the people; living simple and pious he gained respect and loyalty from a huge segment of the Egyptian population” (Al-Banna: interview 03.05.06.). Further, the authority of al-Banna was based on “personal qualifications and ideology” as opposed to traditional norms such as social standing, this principle was normative for all members of the society (Lia 1998: 281). This principle is very important taking into consideration the hierarchical structure of the Egyptian society at that time and extensive patron-client networks (ibid). The political engagement of the Muslim Brothers in the 1930s was highly modern, in terms of political propaganda and activism. They brought politics to the people and raised political consciousness through open meetings, newspapers and flyers, in contrast to the exclusive and closed political activity of the elite (Lia 1998: 282). The Muslim Brothers was a pro-Palestine anti-colonial movement, appealing to educated lower-middle and middle class effendia¹⁶ (Lia 1998: 13, al-Ghobashy 2005). Ideologically, the Muslim Brothers interpreted Islam as a source to claim the right to political participation of every Muslim and that every Muslim has a duty to confront any oppressors (Lia 1998: 283, al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06). The Muslim Brothers initiated a process of “practical reinterpretation” of Islam, meaning that the religion should relate to “the modern age and all aspects of modern life” (Lia 1998: 286). The movement was financially independent (Lia 1998: 281); “Hassan al-Banna said that al-

¹⁵ Mystic tradition within Islam (Vogt 2005).

¹⁶ Effendi means gentleman (when referring to non-Westerners wearing Western clothes and the fez or tarboush). In pre-revolutionary Egypt the Effendia denoted civil servants and white-collar employees from the middle classes, educated at non-religious faculties and schools (Lia 1998: 290).

Ikhwan al-Muslimun was the poorest association and at the same time the richest, because the organization did not get any financial support from the state or any other sources, but the large number of members and sympathizers were their capital". (Al-Banna: interview 03.05.06). Further, the movement established relations with the local aristocracy and members of the ruling elite in order to gain support (Lia 1998: 281). "They had a pragmatic approach in the way they were dealing with the King, the government and the foreign powers" (Ibrahim: interview 05.04.06). The details of its founding and early history reveal that the society was a highly "adaptive political creature" (Al-Ghosbashy 2005) and a representative for the people (Lia 1998, al-Banna: interview 03.05.06.).

In the 1940s Hassan Al-Banna and the Muslim Brothers reaches a peak, which also leads to its ruin. The Muslim Brothers had become such a huge organization with substantial popular support that it constituted a threat to the regime and the movement was met with several counterattacks from the regime. The Brothers had 500 000 active members and as many sympathizers and 500 'shu'ba', branches, around the country, as well as branches in Palestine, Algeria and Syria (Mitchell 1969; Gamal Al-Banna, interview 03.05.06.). The branches were transformed into social meeting places providing library and social activities. The branches had a parallel system, one for social services, as health and education; and one providing spiritual information and political awakening. The idea of Hassan al-Banna was that the spirit of Islam can cover all aspects of society, whether it is political, social, or spiritual (Al-Banna: interview 03.05.06.).

In addition, the al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun provided sports activities, including military training. The military group of Ikhwan, a special force, was trained as an army and many were officers from the Egyptian army, one of them was Gamal Abdel Nasser, who later carried out the Free Officers' Coup in 1952 and became the first president. The initial idea to establish this army was to protect the Palestinians from invasion and when Israel was proclaimed independent in 1948, volunteers from Ikhwan Muslimin were sent to Palestine to fight. They reached Israel long before the national official army of Egypt, and they proved stronger than the Egyptian army. The Egyptian government could not tolerate this military superiority and the popular support of the Ikhwan. The government banned and dissolved the Ikhwan in December 1948. The conflict between the regime and the organization accelerated in 1949, culminating in the murder of Hassan al-Banna (Al-Banna: interview 03.05.06.).

After the coup in 1952 the Free Officers wanted to make deals with the Muslim Brothers, but they turned down the proposition, because the Brothers were not willing to compromise their political agenda (Ayubi 1991: 134-135; al-Ghobashy 2005: 377; Ibrahim: interview 05.04.06). This disagreement resulted in mutual distrust and in 1954, after an attempt to assassinate Nasser, the Muslim Brothers was totally banned and thousands of members, leaders and followers, were imprisoned and tortured for years (Al-Ghobashy 2005, Ibrahim: interview 05.04.06, al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06). The 1950s and 1960s is an era characterized by a lot of tension between the Ikhwan and the regime, the Ikhwan attempted to assassinate government officials and the regime cracked down all activity of the organization (Ibrahim 1981). One of these prisoners was Said Qutb, as he was tortured in prison he developed hatred towards the regime, which he claimed was corrupt and evil because of secularism and westernization (Baker 2003, Kepel 2003, al-Ghobashy 2005). He was inspired by al-Mawdudi, the ideological father of Political Islam and in prison Qutb wrote the (in)-famous book *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, *Milestones*¹⁷ (Baker 2003; Kepel 2003). According to Gamal al-Banna:

“This book changed the idea of politics and al-jihad, about the aims of an Islamic government. The climate was a climate of polarization, not a climate of logic. The impression of Ikhwan was completely changed from a reform friendly association to a revolutionary organization that claimed al-jihad and to make the governance of Allah, this is all the ideas of Said Qutb and not the ideas of Hassan al-Banna. This was not even the ideas of Ikhwan, because the Mogad¹⁸ at that time was a great judge, Hassan al-Houdaiby, he was a man of complete legality, and he did not accept these ideas” (Al-Banna: interview 03.05.06).

Sadat allowed the organization to exist, albeit not as a political party, and many Brothers were released from prison, facing an altered Egyptian political landscape open for non-violent strategies (Al-Ghobashy 2005). Since the 1970s the Muslim Brothers have been active in various political activities, in addition to its socio-religious work (Al-Ghobashy 2005; Ibrahim: interview 05.04.06.). The liberal economic reforms of Sadat throughout the 1970s released massive Marxist-oriented student activism, which turned into Islamic activism. Many of the core members of the Muslim Brothers were politically engaged students in the 1970s (Wickham 2002, Tønnessen 2005). Since the 1980s the Muslim

¹⁷ This book is today considered to be one of the most influential sources for Islamic extremism, e.g. al-Qaida.

¹⁸ The Supreme Guide.

Brothers have become central political actors participating in elections for both Parliament and for national professional associations.

The Muslim Brothers Today

In the Mubarak era, the Muslim Brothers has called for gradual change undertaken from within the political system, it is noted for its accommodationist approach, with support from the Muslim masses, and is the single most important opposition group to Mubarak's ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) (e.g. Sullivan & Abed-Kotob 1999, Wickham 2002, al-Ghobashy 2005). Nevertheless, this period is characterized by changing strategies of the regime from accommodation and control, which again have influenced the Muslim Brothers in various ways. The 1980s was characterized by accommodation and progress. Then again in the 1990s the regime launched a counteroffensive against all Muslim groups including the Muslim Brothers, accusing it of being an illegal organization with ties to extremist groups (Wickham 2002). Despite the government's intensive media campaign against the Brothers, the arrest of several prominent Brotherhood leaders before the elections, and attacks on Brotherhood candidates and their supporters by security police during the election periods in both 2000 and 2005, they have remained the strongest opposition party in Parliament.

The Muslim Brothers, have been central actors in the syndicates and unions since the 1980s, in addition to their efforts on parliamentary participation. Under Mubarak the syndicates and unions became repoliticized, because the opposition parties realized that they could acquire some autonomy from state domination and the Muslim Brothers has been active in applying this political channel (Sullivan & Abed-Kotob 1999, Wickham 2002, Abdelrahman 2004, Kassem 2004). During the 1980s the Muslim Brothers had gained the majority in the Doctors' and Engineers' syndicates. By 1992 it had gained "landslide victory" in the syndicate council elections of five of the country's most prestigious and wealthiest professional syndicates, namely those representing the engineers, doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, and scientists. Kassem observes that "the Brotherhood's increasing interest in syndicate activities in the late 1980s and early 1990s went hand-in-hand with the increasingly exclusionary measures imposed by the government on legislative elections" (Kassem 2004: 112). After 2000, the Brotherhood has experienced some tightening of control of the regime on the professional syndicates.

Gamal Al-Banna told me that he advised the Muslim Brothers to enter the professional syndicates as a political strategy; to approach the regime from various angles (Al-Banna: interview 03.05.06). Further, he stressed that it is not a coincidence that the Brothers entered the professional syndicates and not the labor unions. First, the workers' unions are under stricter guard of the state and fully co-opted. Second, the regime would not allow the Muslim Brothers to enter the Labour Unions, because they could constitute a serious threat to the nation's infrastructure (Al Banna: interview 03.05.06.). Another obvious reason is that the majority of the Brotherhood members are professionals. In 2006 the Muslim Brothers tried to enter Labour Unions, but they faced massive resistance from the regime¹⁹.

Even though the Muslim Brothers are in majority in many professional syndicates, the direct political impact is restricted. Essam Al-Erian, member of the Doctors' Syndicate, finds it challenging to cooperate with the Minister of Medicine because they do have a good dialogue and cooperates well, at the same time they have divergent political interests (Essam Al-Erian: interview 02.05.06). However, posts in the boards of Egypt's professional syndicates have given the Muslim Brothers an ample opportunity to show that they are serious political actors. Al-Houdaiby claimed that many Egyptians have realized that "the Ikhwan are not in the syndicates boards for personal privilege and they are not corrupt. People know they are sincere, innovative and hardworking" (Al Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.). The Muslim Brothers got the chance to demonstrate its efficiency and organizational skills on a popular level when a major earthquake hit Cairo and left 500 people dead and thousands homeless in 1995. The earthquake hit on a Thursday afternoon after most government offices had closed for the weekend. While the Muslim Brothers reached the disaster areas almost immediately and used the Humanitarian Relief Committee of the Doctors' Syndicate to organize and provide medical relief, food, clothing, and other necessities to the victims throughout the weekend, government backed assistance did not arrive until Saturday morning. During that time both the Doctors' Syndicate and the Brotherhood-dominated Engineers' Syndicate also set up emergency relief centers and donated money from their respective syndicates to help the families most affected by the earthquake. In addition, the

¹⁹ See Al-Ahram and IkhwanWeb, among others, for more details on this.

Engineers Syndicate used its members' skills to inspect the safety of approximately 10,000 residencies before allowing the families to return to their homes (Wickham 2002, Kassem 2004). According to al-Erian:

People support us more and more, due to the lack of the services from the government to the population. The government withdraws from several tasks and the people want some opponents in the syndicate to express their dissatisfactions. We are considered a good and reliable opponent group because we are widespread, trustworthy and we have a good program. The others are divided and their political program is weak (Erian: interview 02.05.06.)²⁰.

The movement has undergone great changes, or transformations, both organizationally and ideologically (Al-Ghobashy 2005). The movement is a heterogenic group with a number of internal challenges, caused by intergenerational differences and “wings” with various ideas of organization and strategies (Rashwan 2006). Despite internal disagreements, there has been a shift in their ideological plank from politics as a sacred mission to politics as the public contest between rival interests (Al-Ghobashy 2005). The main goal of the Muslim Brothers is the establishment for a free and fair society. As expressed by Wickham:

Though couched in religious terms, this vision of a better society embodies many of the same hopes and aspirations – for freedom from dictatorship and for social justice and public accountability – that have inspired secular movements for democracy elsewhere around the globe (Wickham 2002: x – xi).

The Muslim Brothers is a comprehensive movement engaged in several activities. In addition to politics they are heavily engaged in promoting social welfare, particularly, in the areas of health care and education. The organization and its supporters run schools, hospitals, day care programs, job training centers, tutoring programs, Quranic instruction programs, after-school programs, and numerous other development and social programs. (Sullivan & Abed-Kotob 1999). As al-Erian said, the Brothers have two main duties “serving the people in the districts and being accountable representatives in parliament” (Al-Erian: interview 02.05.06.). Further, he stressed that they were not like “a society in society, but networks throughout society. This structure is a mixture of political strategy and Islamic structure.” It is sometimes difficult to divide the various aspects of what is political and what is social work. At least the social work has a positive effect on the

²⁰ Literature on the Muslim Brothers in the syndicates and unions are e.g.: Özdalga & Persson 1997, Beckman & Sachikonye 2001, Abdelrahman 2004, Kassem 2004.

political, in sense of mobilization and gaining trust, this is also expressed by Wickham (2003). Further, they use non political channels for mobilization, first and foremost through mosques and support of education and health care (Wickham 2002).

The charity work provided from the Muslim Brotherhood is not for political purposes; it is there all the time as part of the five pillars. The Quran says: “he is not a true believer who goes to sleep knowing that his neighbor is hungry”. There is no direct link between the social work and the political activities of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the connection is the people recognizing that the Muslim Brotherhood really serves them. On the other hand working on the grassroots level gives members of the organization the opportunity to meet people and get to know about their daily challenges. This interaction with the people gives an idea of reality and our politics stems from reality (Al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

The Muslim Brothers mobilizes from all layers of society, from rural farmers, to educated lower-middle and middle urban class, and lately from the upper classes (Kandil 2005). However, the majority of the members and the supporters are educated middle-class professionals. According to Wickham (2002):

The prototypical Islamic activist is not an illiterate peasant or laborer, but a young, upwardly mobile university student or professional, often scientific or technical degree. Far from embodying the defensive protest of traditional social classes on the decline, the Islamic movement is strongly associated with the most “modern” citizens in Arab societies (Wickham 2002: 2).

According to al-Houdaiby, being a Muslim Brother member does not mean that all their activities are linked to the organization:

Being a brotherhood member does not mean that I am 24-7 brotherhood. I am member in several organizations and even though I tell my Brotherhood friends to participate in some workshops etc. does not make it a brotherhood organization. The same applies if I run a charity organization, the brotherhood can give financial support because we work together and we have the same aim and intention, but that does not make it part of the brotherhood” (El Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

Despite their popularity and comprehensive activities, the Muslim Brothers keeps a low profile. Their Headquarter is a flat in a middle class area, al-Manyal, which is an island on the Nile just south of the city centre. The only indicator that the flat is connected to the Muslim Brothers is a small plate on the wall in the staircase with their name written in Arabic and English. This headquarter is illustrative to the Muslim Brothers strategy, they have a popular image and at the same time do not show any sign of power, avoiding to threaten the regime. Despite their discrete appearance the regime keeps an eye on

their activities constantly. At any time civilian policemen sit outside the headquarter registering everybody visiting and leaving the building. My informant chose to park his car far from the entrance, so that the police would not register his car.

The Context – The Formal Political System

This chapter will give a general outline of the political context and the political system that the Muslim Brothers operates in.

The Formation of the Political System

The Egyptian constitution, adopted in 1971 and amended in 1980, declares that Egypt is an Arab republic with a democratic system (Egypt State Information Service 2005). The *executive authority* is the President. Until 2005 he was elected by popular yes and no referendum, however the law amendments in 2005 opened up for multi-candidate presidential elections, however with strict control of the selection of candidates²¹. The current president, Hosni Mubarak, in office since 1981, was elected for another six years. The president formulates and supervises the implementation of general state policy (Egypt State Information Service 2005). The President has constitutional power to appoint the cabinet; the ministers and their deputies, and further to relieve them from their posts (Kassem 2004).

The *legislative branch* is the People's Assembly (Majlis al-sha'b), the lower house of Parliament, which approves the general policy, new laws, the budget and the development plan. The People's Assembly is made up of 444 directly elected members and 10 members appointed by the President, who serve for a five-year term. The upper house of Parliament, the Shura Council, functions as a consultative council, established in 1980 to "widen the circle of political and democratic participation" (Egypt State Information Service 2005)²². It offers advice and consultation, and proposes new laws

²¹ The amendment stipulates that party representatives and independent candidates will be able to run for president in the 2005 election. Independent candidates need to collect 250 signatures from the members of the Shura Council (upper house of the parliament), People's Assembly (lower house of the parliament), and municipal councils. Currently, the NDP dominates all of them. Candidates from existing parties will not need to meet any conditions. To run in the 2011 presidential elections, however, a candidate must be from a party that has been legally active for at least five consecutive years, and whose members have in past elections won at least 5% of the seats in both the People's Assembly and the Shura Council (ICG 2005).

²² A similar council also existed prior to the 1952 revolution.

and regulations to the People's Assembly (Egypt State Information Service 2005). Formally, the Egyptian government has complete control over the religious establishment. The Government appoints the heads of all three main Islamic institutions; Al Azhar²³, Dar el Ifta²⁴, and the Ministry of Religious Endowments, which in turn "control all other Islamic structures for education, research, dissemination, and fatwas²⁵" (Kodmani October 2005). This is a complex constellation characterized by interdependence, competition, and muted struggle (Kodmani 2005). According to Kodmani, the government maintains an intricate and dynamic relationship with the religious establishment.

At times, the state leans on the Islamic establishment to support its policies, and the religious establishment likewise seeks – and receives – the support of the government to reassert its full control on religious affairs when needed (Kodmani 2005).

In many occasions the secular regime appears as more religious conservative than the religious opposition. Ever since the Muslim Brothers was established in the 1920s, the relationship between them has been tense. Al-Azhar has, "since the nineteenth century, been under the state control, and hence has acted as a formal legitimizer for successive ruling elites" (Ibrahim 1981: 35).

The *judiciary* is exercised through four categories of courts of justice; the highest judicial body is the Supreme Constitutional Court. The judiciary is under the control of the government. Administratively, Egypt is divided into 26 Governorates, each headed by a Governor who is appointed by the President. Local Popular Councils are elected bodies that work with local government administrative units at various levels. The local election and rule are of an arbitrary nature under state control, the elections that were supposed to take place in 2005 are still postponed. With its large bureaucracy and a powerful security apparatus, the Egyptian government is able to respond effectively to security threats and ensure public order.

²³ Al-Azhar is the oldest operating university in the world, built around year 1000. It is a renowned Sunni University in Middle East and center for Islamic scholarship and education (Kodmani 2005).

²⁴ Dar el Ifta is formally recognized as the only source of *fatwas* (see next footnote), although this is not the case in practice, in an attempt to centralize issuing of fatwas (Kodmani 2005).

²⁵ Statement from a mufti, legal opinion (Vikør 2005) based on Shar'ia.

The formal political structure in Egypt has changed considerably since the military coup d'état in 1952 (Kassem 2004), the birth year of today's regime. The bloodless coup d'état was carried out by a group of young army officers, the Free Officers, that overturned the constitutional monarchy and in 1953 declared Egypt a republic (Kodmani 2005, Dunne 2006). The first president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, successfully negotiated the evacuation of British forces from Egypt in 1954 (Kodmani 2005). The Free Officers abrogated the 1923 Constitution²⁶ and abolished all political parties (Dunne 2006). The Nasser era was characterized by independent national development, central planning and a leading role for the public sector in development, followed by a populist-socialist one-party political system, the banning of political opposition, and the linking of mass organizations to state organs (Abdelrahman 2004; Kassem 2004; Majed 2005). Further, Nasser made education free, not only in the primary and secondary years but at the university level as well (Baker 2003). This was an opportunity for lower-middle and middle class urban families to expand their possibilities, and for social mobility. In addition, university graduates were guaranteed jobs in the public sector (Baker 2003).

Majed (2005) argues that after the 1967 defeat²⁷ there was a growing discontent with Nasser's socialist project. "The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the emergence of a protest movement calling for freedom and democracy, and the formation of secret political organizations, Arab nationalists and Marxists among them." (Majed 2005: 11). When Sadat came to power in 1970 he made an ideological turn towards economic and political liberalization and Sadat expressed his political vision on four pillars. The first pillar was economic liberalization, formulated as the Infitah, the Open Door Economic Policy²⁸ (Ibrahim 1994). Two pillars were related to foreign policy; a strategic shift in global alignment from East to West, and reconciliation with Israel (Ibrahim 1994). The fourth pillar was "a limited political opening toward a more pluralistic democratic

²⁶ The 1923 Constitution is considered the most democratic Constitution in Egypt's history. The greatest obstacle was the role and power of the king.

²⁷ The Six-Day War, when Israel, among others, gained control over the Sinai Peninsula.

²⁸ Law 43 of 1974

society, with the promise of more to come” (Ibrahim 1994). This vision was realized with the multiparty system in 1977²⁹.

Partial Semi-Corporate Autocracy

Mubarak carried on the liberalization reforms initiated by Sadat. The reforms are characterized as symbolic political liberalization, as well as half-hearted economic liberalization (Abdelrahman 2004). The Egyptian economy in the 1980s was in a crisis due to the failed economic policy of Nasser and Sadat. Efforts on economic restructuring in the 1980s were not sufficient to assist Egypt’s development and in 1991 a comprehensive economic reform and structural adjustment program (ERSAP) was implemented by law³⁰. ERSAP has made the everyday of most Egyptians worse in reduced scale and decreased quality of public services, most serious in fields of education and health. Egypt could not longer provide free education and guarantee university graduates public jobs. The result is that public education in Egypt suffers from serious decay at all levels and the “last decades of the twentieth century saw the emergence of an army of “educated proletarians” who drove taxis and served tables, while they waited ten years or more for assignment to a low-paying public-sector job.” (Baker 2003: 27).

Egypt in the 1990s experienced a huge increase in the number of NGOs, syndicates and trade unions. Yet, Egypt’s civil society is strictly controlled under the Law of Civil Association established under Nasser in 1964³¹. According to this law, all civil associations in Egypt have to register with the Ministry of Social Affairs (Abdelrahman 2004, Kassem 2004). Bianchi argues that Egypt’s rulers “opted for strategies of corporatization that are of a more tentative, partial, and inconsistent than the “state corporatist” system of Latin America or the “societal corporatist” systems of Western Europe” (Bianchi 1989: 20), which means a system with both pluralist and corporatist structures, *semi-corporate system*. Two factors limit the functioning of civil associations; first the organization in question is required to abstain from any “political activities” (Kassem 2004). The term “political activity” is rather ambiguous and allows

²⁹ The multiparty system will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 when discussing the role of the Muslim Brothers as a political party.

³⁰ Law 203 of 1991

³¹ Law 32 of 1964

the ministry to hinder the activities of several actors (Al-Sayyid 1995). Second, the same law provides the authorities the right to reject the founding of an organization “if the environment has no need for the services of another association.” (Kassem 2004: 89). Civil society and civil-political society (associations and unions)³² remains as weak under Mubarak as under his predecessors. According to Kassem (2004) the constraints of the professional associations have increased since the 1990s and the autonomy of the trade unions has been marginalized to such a degree that it is difficult to distinguish them from the state. Further, the emergence of independent human rights groups in the 1980s has resulted in “a new battle for the government in trying to preserve its domination of power within civil society.” (Kassem 2004: 105). The Law of Civil Associations was amended in 2002³³ further restricting the legal framework of NGOs. The law prohibits NGOs from taking part in political or syndicate activities and receiving crucial funding in the absence of governmental approval (Hamzawy 2005a).

The whole political scene and society in general in Egypt is governed under the Emergency Law No 162 of 1958 almost continuously since 1967 (Human Rights Watch 2003). The emergency law is the most serious strain for democratization which is a form of martial law, placing the country in a state of emergency and providing exceptional powers to the security forces and the executive to monitor, arrest, and detain those suspected of activities deemed threatening to national security (Shehata 2006). Further, the laws also restrict the exercise of freedoms of speech and assembly guaranteed by the Egyptian constitution in ways that hinder party efforts to recruit support (Kassem 2004). Emergency rule has been continuously renewed every third year since Sadat’s assassination in 1981. The emergency law was due to expire May this year and Mubarak promised his voters that he would lift the unpopular emergency law if reelected and replace it with a more narrow anti-terrorism law. The Sinai bombs in April was an excuse to extend the law another two years, however Mubarak had hinted earlier that the law would be extended until a more suitable anti-terror law was drafted (Shehata 2006)

Egypt is a good example on how liberalization not necessarily brings about democratization. Crafting of institutions, privatization of the economy and a huge civil

³² These concepts will be defined in chapter 2.

³³ Law 84 of 2002

society does not create democracy without democratic rules and policy (Luckham et al. 2003). Observers of the Egyptian political system (Wickham 2002, Brumberg 2003, Abdelrahman 2004, Kassem 2004) argue that controlled liberalization in Egypt has not boosted democratization³⁴, but rather produced a new variant of authoritarian rule, partial autocracy. Further, Wickham even argues that neither Sadat nor Mubarak ever intended to fully democratize Egypt. Egypt and other regimes use the fear of Islamist gaining power as an argument to continue controlling the political system, as an excuse of the power elite to keep status quo and power. Or in other words: “Arab regimes have long invoked the nightmare of anti-Western fanatics taking power through the ballot box to frighten the United States and Europe into implicitly supporting these regimes’ repressive measures toward Islamist movements.” (Hamzawy 2005c). Brownlee (2002) sees a “deliberalizing” trend in Egypt because of the regime’s extensive use of military courts and the security forces in controlling opposition parties, elections, Islamist activity, civil society and the press.

Both the regime and the Muslim Brothers are balancing in a thin edge; the regime in order to keep control at the same time as keeping the image of a democracy. The Muslim Brothers on the other hand works from within the system in order to alter the power relations, without threaten the regime too much which will lead to another ruin as in the 1940s. As I will show later, this balancing act does not make the regime stable as many will contend. One good example on this is that the elections for Parliament and the Presidency have been changed from one election to the other in the Mubarak era. Al-Houdaiby argues that today the regime is threatened by four factors or “disorders” as he calls it, which disturbs the stability of the regime of today.

“One factor is the judges, who call for more independence of the judicial power. They are the ones who are issuing the dissolutions or interpretations of the constitution and this activity is harming the regime that is why they have been treated badly lately. The second factor is the elections. Elections in non-democratic systems are just formality, as the elections were before the 2000 election in Egypt. However, when the regime is giving the impression of carrying out free and fair elections and they don’t it harms and undermine the image of the government. The third factor is the media which criticize the regime, especially during elections and covering all the attempts on forging the results. The fourth factor is the legislative

³⁴ As opposed to e.g. Korany (1998) who argued that liberalization in Egypt was functioning concluding that Egypt was a “maturing democracy” (Korany 1998).

body of the state that has the power to exposing and questioning the regime. The Oregime does not know what to do, in order to keep control.” (Al Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

Research Design & Methodology

The almost 80 years old Islamic movement, the Muslim Brothers, has been studied in various academic fields from various angles. However, studying the political strategies of the Muslim Brothers in the formal political system within the theoretical frames of social movement is a new endeavor. As I have already referred to earlier, Wickham (2002) has applied social movement’s theory in order to understand the mobilizing factors for Islamic movements. However, the political opportunity structures remain unexplored. This section outlines the design for the study and the methodological choices and challenges to answer the research question: *how can we understand the political capacities of the Muslim Brothers?*

Case Study

The aim of this thesis, as noted earlier, is to understand how the political context influences the goals and strategies of the Muslim Brothers as an Islamic movement, to understand the dynamics between context and goal/ strategy. Yin (2003) has defined case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2003: 13). Hence, a case study approach is a useful tool to achieve extensive and comprehensive account of the relation between the political system and the political goals and strategies of the Muslim Brothers.

Qualitative research in general and case study research in particular have been criticized for its lack of scientific rigor, especially in terms of *generalization*. In contrast to quantitative research where the objective is to achieve statistical generalization based on population or universes, the goal of applying case studies is to expand and generalize theories (Yin 2003). In other words, the generalization is based on analytical and or theoretical representativeness and not statistical representativeness (Andersen 1997: 14). This ambition, of theoretical generalization, is not guided from the belief of universal laws; rather a search for identifying linkages between phenomena and regularities across unique variations (Andersen 1997: 10). This thesis will carry out an analysis of the

Muslim Brothers in correlation with the Egyptian regime, based on existing theories on social movements. In order to generalize, it is important that there is control over unwanted variation; to overcome this challenge there has to be a connection between the research model and relevant theory (Andersen 1997: 16). I will develop a framework as I discuss theory in chapter 2. The aim is not to develop new theories, rather to apply concepts and theory to summarize and structure empirical material (Andersen 1997: 69). Nevertheless, I will discuss the relevance of existing theory and possible deficiencies.

I chose Egypt as the site for this research because I studied Middle East politics at the American University in Cairo in 2003 and I had basic knowledge about the country and had a network that eased my research. In Norway the focus on the Israeli Palestinian conflict to a large degree overshadows the interest and research on other countries in the region. The complexity of the Muslim Brothers fascinates me and because of its huge impact on politics in Egypt the movement is a natural case for the research. Besides, all the attention and hopes for the election in 2005, made me want to find out how we can understand the political role and the capacities of the Muslim Brothers.

Data Sources

A central strategy to uphold the construct validity of the thesis is to apply what Yin (2003) calls methodological triangulation, which means collecting and interpreting multiple sources of evidence to avoid “subjective” judgment, to corroborate the information gathered. The main sources for my thesis was semi-structured open-ended interviews, structured questions on e-mail, content analysis of written material and former research on the empirical and theoretical field. I spent 6 weeks in Cairo, the capital of Egypt, during spring 2006 carrying out fieldwork for the thesis, conducting interviews and collecting data material.

Theoretical literature has been applied both to formulate and construct the empirical research model, as well as empirical source to the assessment of the contextual constraints on the political capabilities of the Muslim Brothers. Further, books and articles were collected in Egypt that I would not have accessed in Norway. The state-run English weekly newspaper Al-Ahram, accessible on internet, provided useful analysis prior to and in the aftermath of the election in 2005 and further gave important coverage

of the political development in the country in general. Al-Ahram is less censored than the majority of the Egyptian media because it is published in English. Further, the home page on internet of the Muslim Brothers is an invaluable source. It contains both breaking news on political development in Egypt, gather analytical articles from members as well as external actors, and provides general information on the organization. The thesis is also applying information from different think tanks, regional and international, writing articles and analyses on Middle East politics including Egypt, mainly the Carnegie Foundation, Middle East Report and International Crisis Group.

Prior to the fieldwork the informants was strategically divided in two constructed groups. The first group contains members of Muslim Brothers, as the key source to the strategies and goals of the movement. The other category is Egyptian scholars and their perception of the political regime and the political role of the Muslim Brothers. The questions were specific according to the position and background of the persons interviewed, in an open discussion manner. However, as social movement theory is the point of departure for my study, my questions were formulated in the vocabulary from these kinds of studies as well as my own research model. I focused my questions on goals, opportunities and strategies.

As my point of departure on the fieldwork I visited the American University in Cairo, where I obtained a degree in Middle East studies in 2003. None of my former teachers were lecturing the semester, so I had to make new and interesting acquaintances. I talked to the sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim who provided me with insightful information and notes that he had from a seminar on the topic of social movement theory and Muslim Brotherhood. Further, I talked to Dr. Hazem Kandil, he was very helpful to give me a thorough overview over the political strategies of Muslim Brothers and he gave me useful advices for my further research. He also gave me the name and number of his former student Ibrahim al-Houdaiby, who became my key informant. He is fourth generation of central Muslim Brotherhood member, his grand grandfather and his grand father have been supreme guides of the Muslim Brotherhood and his father has been a candidate from the Brotherhood to the Parliament in 2000. Al-Houdaiby assisted me in getting in touch with other Muslim Brotherhood members.

Conducting fieldwork implies a set of challenges and unforeseeable situations. A major limitation to gather information is *language*. Most Egyptian politicians and scholars speak English fluently and I had only to use translator during two interviews and then the informants knew some English, so that they understood my questions, but needed help to express their answers. As my Arabic knowledge is very basic, I had to rely solely on written sources in English and that is off course a major obstacle. However, most official websites, including the website of Muslim Brotherhood has English versions and there are several English written newspapers. Another obstacle is the access to *statistical data*. First, because most statistical data are manipulated and second, not much data is public. Moreover, the Brotherhood could not give any information when it comes to numbers because they are illegal, and hence cannot keep record on e.g. members and branches. Another challenge that I faced was the informants' prejudice of me in terms of my agenda and my background knowledge. First, most of my informants and especially members of the Muslim Brothers have to answer questions about the relationship between Islam and democracy on a daily basis, from national as well as external interviewers. So, even though I started my interviews to say that I would go beyond this discussion, the interviews circled around these questions most of the time, with pre-fabricated answers. Second, my informants underestimated my level of knowledge, almost all the answers began with an introduction of Muslim Brotherhood and their political agenda and an introduction of the regime in Egypt. I experienced several times that they ended their answers where my questions had started.

Conducting fieldwork in Egypt has one huge advantage, Egyptians, like most Arabs, are very helpful and do what they can to assist. Ibrahim al-Houdaiby and my friend Ashraf Ibrahim, helped me to arrange meetings and to translate. Also people I do not know even assisted me. However, Egyptians in general are very busy mainly because they have more than one job, because of the low income-level, but also because many of the informants had full-booked schedules from early morning till late night with meetings and other obligations. However, when a meeting for interview was set, it lasted one or two hours with tea breaks and small talk. Another challenge that I did not foresee is that I was there during Egyptian spring break, with Coptic Easter, Muhammed's

Birthday and some official national holidays spread out over two, three weeks. Many of my preferred informants were absent in this period limiting the actual time to gather information and make interviews. I did not meet any problems being woman.

I also had informal conversations with friends and their family members and people in the streets, about the regime and the Muslim Brothers. I realized that a lot of conspiracy theories are flourishing and that the propaganda from the national media works. Some people reacted like they did not know who I was talking about when I mentioned the Muslim Brothers, even if I said it in Arabic. The Muslim Brothers are illegal and some would not talk about them, others thought of them as terrorists, and some even talked about the existing democracy of Egypt. Everybody in Egypt are personally engaged in issues concerning Islam and democratization, hence even academics are biased on these issues, making it even more pertinent to let the information through a critical filter.

Criteria of Soundness

How can the trustworthiness of my project be evaluated? What are the criteria for judging the quality of the research design? All research must respond to “canons of quality” (Marshall & Rossman 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have proposed four alternative constructs, to the positivist terms; validity and reliability, which are; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These concepts reflects more accurately the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm (Marshall & Rossman 2006).

The first construct, *credibility* means an in-depth identification and description of the subject showing the complexities of processes and interactions embedded in data derived from the setting that is convincing to the reader. “Within the parameters of that setting and population and the limitations of the theoretical framework and design, the research will be credible” (Marshall & Rossman 2006: 201). The empirical limitations are the political goals and strategies of the Muslim Brothers in the Mubarak era (1981 – today). The social movement theory provides concepts for the theoretical framework, with additional actor-oriented theories for analyzing the background for the strategic

choices of the Muslim Brothers. The theoretical framework will be developed and operationalized in chapter 2.

Transferability is the second construct and it refers to what is mentioned earlier about generalizability meaning that the findings of the research will be useful to others in similar situations, with similar research questions. This is parallel to the external validity criteria. Transferability is more problematic in qualitative research than in quantitative; however two strategic choices can be made to circumvent these problems. First, the theoretical framework will show that data collection and analysis is guided by concepts and models from the social movement theory. Another strategic choice is triangulation, triangulating multiple sources of data or evidence, the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point, because “any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode” (Yin 2003: 98). In the chapter on Data Sources the use of triangulation is accounted for.

The third construct is *dependability*, “in which the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study and changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting. This represents a set of assumptions very different from those shaping the concepts of reliability. Positivist notions of reliability assume an unchanging universe where inquiry could, quite logically, be replicated. This assumption of an unchanging social world is indirect contrast to the qualitative/ interpretive assumption that the social world is always being constructed and that the concept of replication is itself problematic.” (Marshall & Rossman 2006: 203). For instance, similar research on the Muslim Brothers conducted in the 1990s made other conclusion, than I will do today. That is why I question some of the conclusions and theories produced by Lust-Okar (2005) and Wickham (2002), because the political landscape and the Muslim Brothers were different a decade ago. In the chapter on the Theoretical Framework, the dynamics of this case will be considered.

The final construct, *confirmability*, captures the traditional concept of objectivity. This means that if the logical inferences and interpretations of the researcher make sense to someone else. This can be asserted by making the logic and interpretive nature of the

qualitative research transparent to others, thereby increasing the strength of the assertions. Qualitative research implies natural subjectivity of the researcher shaping the research. Nonetheless, this is also one of the strengths of qualitative research, that the methods require in-depth understanding of the participants in order to understand their worldviews. Geertz (1973) claims that “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun”. In order to understand this web, the researcher needs to interpret the meaning of the informants, perform “thick description”. However, what is mentioned in the Case Study chapter, I realized how both I and my informants were influenced by prejudices. Further, I have strategically chosen literature and information on the internet to substantiate my project. “The researcher’s insights increase the likelihood that she will be able to describe the complex social system being studied. (Marshall & Rossman 2006: 203). Hence, the more interviews I made and the more literature I read, the more balanced the comprehension of the case became.

The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters including this introduction. The next chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis culminating in a research model that will guide the analysis to answer the research questions. The variables, the goals and opportunities, of the research model will be operationalized and explained prior to developing the model. Then, in chapter 3 the political goals of the Muslim Brothers are discussed and analyzed based on the theoretical framework, dividing between the goals for reform; systemic goals as well as their programmatic goals. The first sub-question, *how do political obstacles and opportunities in the formal political system affect and shape the goals and strategies of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt?*, will be analyzed and discussed based on the empirical findings here. In chapter 4 the opportunities and the strategies of the Muslim Brothers in the formal political system will be scrutinized to answer the second sub-question: *why do the Muslim Brothers, despite political and judicial hindrances, work within the formal political system?* The final chapter will draw on the conclusions from the two previous chapters in order to answer the main research question: *how can we understand the political capacities of the Muslim Brothers?* Further, the paradox presented in the introduction, that Muslim Brothers as an illegal organization is the biggest opposition party, will become more comprehensible.

2. Theory

Before I begin to construct the theoretical framework I want to cite Bianchi's thoughts about the Egyptian society, which reflects mine when I started my research on the country's politics: "Egyptians do not mirror the generally dualistic images that dominate our commonsense thinking and social scientific discourse". After a while of researching one recognizes that "our most basic assumptions about the dichotomous nature of "capitalist" and "socialist", "public" and "private", "civilian" and "military", "state" and "society" are being challenged" (Bianchi 1989: 3). In order to perform the analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood I need to stretch some concepts to make them fit the case and context.

In this chapter I will develop a theoretical framework in order to analyze the political strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood. A couple of delimitations of theory are appropriate. First, I choose not to discuss Islamism, political Islam, as the ideological basis for Muslim Brotherhood, because it is a wide notion, as well as it does not necessarily tell us anything about the practical choices of strategies made by the Muslim Brotherhood. Further, as Abul Futouh, member of the Guidance Bureau of the Brotherhood, expressed in an article "the term "reformist Islam" represents a more accurate description of the activities of Islamists movements than "political Islam" (Abul Futouh 2006). Behind the religious rhetoric lies a pragmatic attitude towards politics, where the political context and socio-economic conditions are of more importance than the expressed attitudes (Ayubi 1991, Burgat 2003). I am not searching for a theoretical connection between democracy and Islam, but rather to understand what Islamic movements do in order to bring about change. Utvik argues that in order to understand the depth of Islamism the investigation must "proceed to examine and compare the ways in which various Islamist groups have translated the general message of Islamism into agendas for reform" (Utvik 2006: 2). Further, goals and ideology are not static, but rather changing according to context and time, which will be discussed in further detail theoretically and empirically. Second, I have chosen to leave out the notion of civil society, as it is too vague and all-encompassing to contribute to the analysis of Muslim Brotherhood. As a normative concept civil society is fine, however, not for analytical

purposes (Törnquist 2002: 23). Lastly, the concepts democracy and democratization are used cautiously throughout the text. The Muslim Brothers are the foremost actors for political reform in Egypt towards a predictable and just political system. The Muslim Brothers have some restrictions on using the word democracy, not so much because of the content, but because of the negative connotations as a Western notion. Nevertheless, democratization theories provide useful concepts and thinking tools for analyzing the goals and strategies of the Muslim Brothers, as they through their goals and strategies hope to change the regime from authoritarian to a better society for all Egyptians.

When studying the Muslim Brothers it is important to understand both the structural balance of power which influences their capacities and possibilities as well as their strategic practices (Harris, Stokke & Törnquist 2004). In other words, the goals and actions of the Muslim Brothers are both determined by “structuring structures and acting actors”³⁵. Therefore this chapter will both introduce structural as well as actor oriented theories. This chapter gives a brief presentation of the theoretical basis for social movement theory. Followed by the theory of Lust-Okar, focusing on the structural limitations for regime change in the Middle East and then propose an alternative model on how social movements applies opportunities in the political field. In order to carry out the analysis of the political capacity of the Muslim Brotherhood, social movement theory contributes with key notions for the empirical research model constructed for this purpose.

Social Movement Theory & Islamic Activism

The social movement literature, tracing back to the 1960s, is extensive, both in theoretical and empirical sense, however it is a relatively new endeavor to study social movements outside the Western hemisphere. Sidney Tarrow defines social movements as “collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities” (Tarrow 1998: 4). Social movement research sheds light on how individual grievances develop into collective actions, conceptualized in the mechanisms of *mobilizing structures*, *political opportunities* and

³⁵ The concept of structuring structures and acting actors is borrowed from Bourdieu. The theoretical approach is inspired by his thinking, but due to lack of space, discussion on the usefulness of his theories for developing countries it is left out. See Stokke (2002).

cultural framing (McAdam et al. 1996). The academic literature on social movements increasingly recognizes the dynamics between the opening or closing opportunities for activism and the responses based on recognition and interpretation of these opportunities (McAdam et al. 2001, Wiktorowicz 2004). This is important to keep in mind when studying the Muslim Brothers.

Islamic activism can theoretically be considered a social movement, subject to the same methods of analysis (Wickham 2002; Wiktorowicz 2004). Social movement theory is a unifying theoretical framework for inquiry of Islamic activism (Wiktorowicz 2004). Wickham (2002) defines Islamic activism and the Muslim Brothers as a certain subset of social movements. First, it is a particular type of social movement, meaning movements oriented towards systematic change, as opposed to “issue-oriented” movements. Second, it is a movement within an authoritarian political system, where independent political activity is restricted by limited freedoms of speech and association. Wiktorowicz argues that most studies on Islamic activism have not followed the theoretical and conceptual development from research on social movements, rather remained as “descriptive analyses of ideology, structure, and goals of various Islamic actors or histories of particular movements” (Wiktorowicz 2004). Wickham (2002) and Wiktorowicz (2004) argue that the study of Islamic activism, until recently has been detached from the social movement field and that the dynamics between social movements and the context remain unexplored or downplayed.

Wickham is especially criticizing grievance-based explanations on Islamic activism, not because they are wrong, but incomplete. She refers to two major explanatory models which she calls “cultural identity” and “political economy” models, which locate the origin of Islamic activism in the grievances in the potential recruits. The former refers to the reaction of Western domination over Muslim societies, the latter on the secular authoritarian regimes failures in providing economic growth, social equality and political rights for their citizens. These models do not explain why the grievances are turned into action. Wickham argues that if individuals do not recognize possibilities for change based on lack of motivations, resources or opportunities, they might abstain from action, no matter how extreme their misery is. (Wickham 2002: 7). This is the core of contemporary social movement theory that “contentious” collective

action is not merely a result of accumulated structural grievances, but rather the movements' collective action through mobilizing agents, structures, and ideas. This is especially interesting when collective action is under strict scrutiny of the state.

As a social movement the Muslim Brothers represents some kind of an anomaly because contemporary social movement theory links the rise of movements to the opening of formal political institutions and/ or the realignment of political institutions elites to the advantage of challenging groups. However, the Muslim Brothers choose to mobilize and operate in a very restricted political field. It is the aim of this thesis to understand how and why the Muslim Brothers operates in the highly restricted political system.

Political Opportunity Structures

Whether, when and how social movements emerge and develop depends on the opportunities and constraints (Tarrow 1998). How the context shapes a movement's trajectories is conceptualized as political opportunity structures. Contemporary social movement researchers (McAdam et al. 2001; Diani & Mc Adam 2003) contend that the structural models are static and that it is necessary to conceive 'contentious politics' as processes and dynamic mechanisms. Studying the political opportunities of the Muslim Brotherhood, I will show this dynamic; however for the sake of analysis I will use the term political opportunity structure. The goals and strategies decide whether a movement succeeds in utilizing the opportunities. In other words it is not only external factors that matter, but also internal conscious choices and agency (Jenkins and Klandermans 1995). This refers to the political capacity of a social movement, to discover, create and make use of opportunities. McAdam et al. (1996) have identified four factors that influence the political opportunity structures for social movements in general. The first factor is the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system. Secondly, the stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity. Third, the presence or absence of elite allies is determinant to the opportunities. The last factor is the state's capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam et al. 1996: 27). These factors will be operationalized in the next chapter on the theoretical framework. Wickham argues that during the Mubarak era the political system is characterized by few opportunities for change:

Authoritarian elites remained unified, the vast internal security apparatus of the state remained intact; and while a few opposition parties were legalized, the ban on the Muslim Brotherhood remained in place. In sum, we find coherent authoritarian elite with both the desire and the institutional arsenal to block Islamic opponents from challenging their grip on power.” (Wickham 2002: 12).

How can we understand the Muslim Brothers efforts to operate in the formal political system? To answer this question we need to look at two aspects; how the Muslim Brothers read, manage and alter the political opportunities and second what issues and interests they politicize?

The Political Terrain

Where in the political terrain does the Muslim Brothers position themselves? Törnquist has elaborated a model to visualize the political space in which various political actors operate. He contends that the political terrain has three structural bases. “These are the major and often overlapping ways in which societal activity is organized on the central as well as local level: state & government, business units (from small farms to big corporations) and self-government & management.” (Törnquist 2002: 35). See Figure 1.

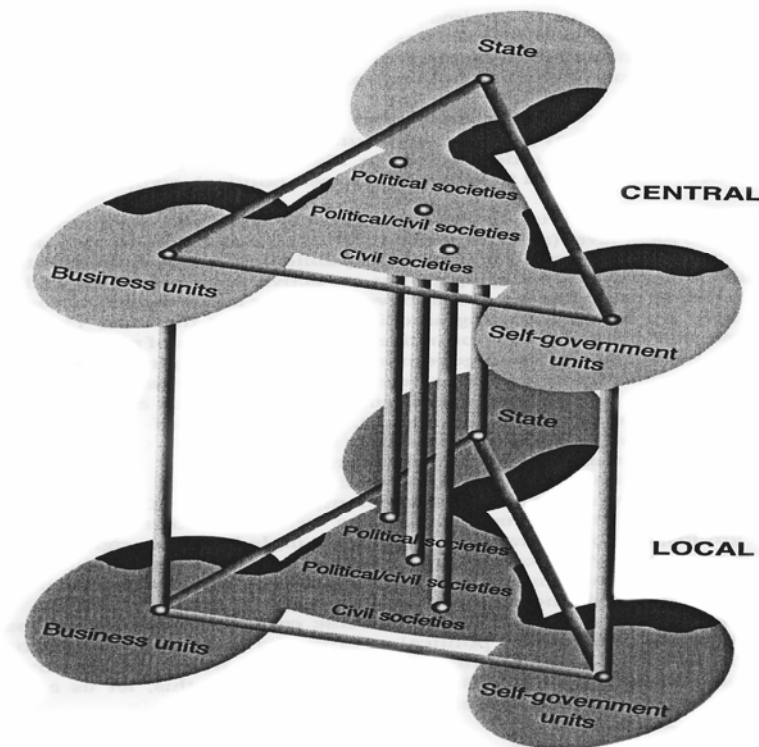


Figure 1. The Political Terrain.

This thesis is concerned with the central level of the political terrain. Between these three bases is the public sphere, or rather central sphere. This sphere is not always public in the sense that it is not necessarily transparent and open, rather private and hidden. This space is again divided in three parts. First, *the political society*, which refers to a country's national representative institutions in which legal political parties compete for power (Linz & Stepan 1996: 8, Törnquist 2002: 37). The activities in the political society are directed towards the state and the government. Here it refers to the Egyptian parliament and the legally constituted political parties that participate in parliamentary elections. Borrowed from Wickham (2002), I choose to call the political society the "center". Next is the *civil society*, "periphery", which is actual associations relating primarily to business and self-management units encompassing all other potential arenas for collective action; social, cultural and economic groups, institutions, and networks that enable citizens to participate in public life, but do not compete for political power. Finally, civil-political societies, the "semi-periphery", combine or link the activities that relate to state, on the one hand, and business or self-management, on the other. Comprising the major occupational or professional interest groups (for example, labor unions, student unions, professional associations etc). Wickham contends that uneven political liberalization under Mubarak created a political system with a hollow center and a dynamic periphery³⁶, meaning that the formal political system remained controlled from above, while there emerged a vast network of Islamic institutions with de facto autonomy from state control. Therefore, she extends the concept of opportunity structures beyond the field of formal political institutions and elites to the "periphery". The Muslim Brothers operates in the public sphere in all three aspects, but this thesis will focus on how the Muslim Brothers operate in the political society³⁷. In the 1980s and 1990s the Muslim Brothers could relatively freely contest for leadership positions in the interest-group associations of Egypt's new middle class, while electoral competition for seats in parliament remained tightly controlled from above. Nevertheless, this thesis will argue that there are political opportunity structures in the "center" and that the Muslim Brothers are strategic agent taking advantage of

³⁶ This relates to "glocalization" theories. See e.g. Cox (1997) and Harris, Stokke & Törnquist (2004).

³⁷ For thorough studies of the Muslim Brothers in the civil-political society see e.g. Bianchi 1989, Wickham 2002, Kassem 2004, Abdelrahman 2004.

these opportunities. I will find out why the Muslim Brothers find it worthwhile to operate in this hollow “center”.

Studying social movements in authoritarian regimes require a definition on how the regime restricts and limits political freedom in order to understand where opportunities and obstacles for social movements exist in the “center”. How can we theoretically define the authoritarian regime? Lust-Okar (2005) argues that formal institutions matter in authoritarian regimes, in opposition to those who claim that institutions are weak under authoritarian regimes and of less interest. Further she argues that various institutional rules are used by authoritarian elites to create and maintain various relationships between the state and political opponents and among various opposition groups themselves. (Lust-Okar 2005: 1). This argument corresponds to the theory that divides between democratic institutions and democratic policy (Törnquist 2002; Luckham et al. 2003). Lust-Okar divides between two set of rules that control the opposition. The first set of rules is the “divided Structure of Contestation” (divided SoC) (“semi-open”), which allows some groups to participate legally in the formal political system while excluding others. In other cases, the incumbents treat the opposition equally, either inside or outside the political system, so called inclusive or exclusive unified Structure of Contestation (unified SoC) (Lust-Okar 2005: 38-40). Egypt has experienced both kinds of structures of contestation; during Nasser and partly under Sadat the political system was characterized by exclusive unified SoC (“closed”), with the introduction of multiparty system under Sadat and the era of Mubarak is defined as divided SoC (“semi-open”). See figure 2.

Lust-Okar argues that divided SoC is the most stable system, because the incumbents are balancing the strength of included and excluded opposition groups. When some political opposition groups are allowed to participate in the system, while others are barred, incumbent elites may be able to continue to provide limited rights while thwarting further demands. These limited rights for the legal opposition make them more dependent on the regime hence also supporting them in suppressing the illegal opposition. Brumberg (2002) supports this argument. He argues that the threat perception lies in the very logic of partial autocracies which he calls the divided SoC, which “to endure, they must implicitly or explicitly allow some opposition forces certain

kinds of social, political, or ideological power – but things must never reach a point where the regime feels deterred from using force when it deems fit” (Brumberg 2002: 58).

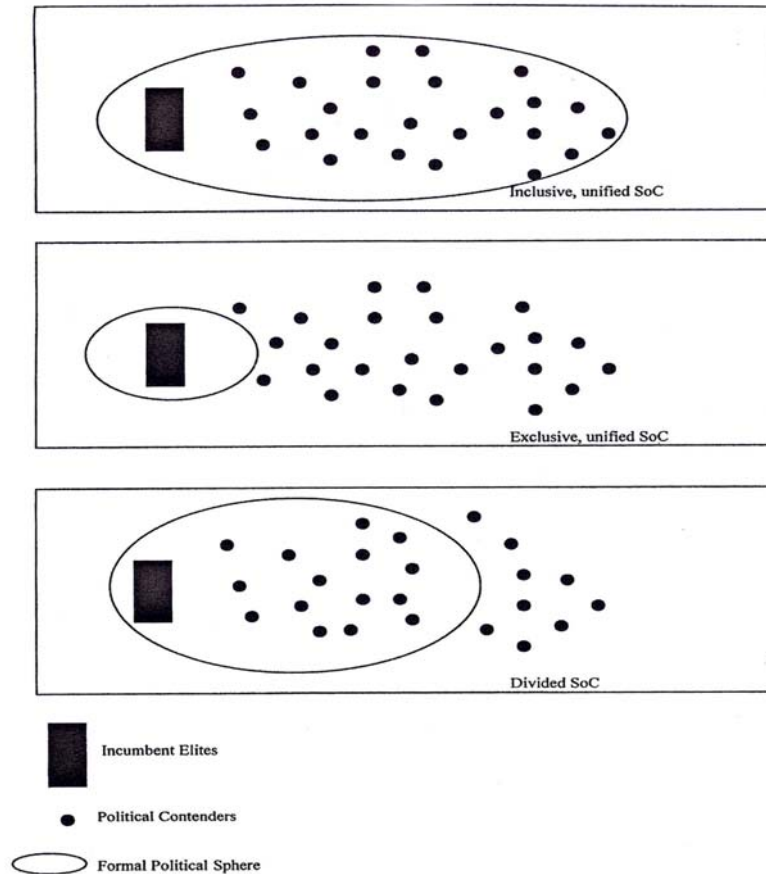


Figure 2. Structures of Contestation.

Lust-Okar argues that the legal opposition will be less interested in calling for radical political or economic reforms because they are dependent on the support of the regime for their legal status. The benefits of accommodation outweigh the costs (Brumberg 2002). Tied to the incumbent regime and thus unable to press for radical change, the included cannot take full advantage of increased popular discontent, accompanying e.g. economic crises. In contrast, excluded political contenders capitalize on economic difficulties and expand their popular support. This opposition becomes an increasing threat to both incumbents and moderate opponents. Legal opponents, fearing that illegal forces may exploit any political instability to press their own demands, become unwilling to mobilize against incumbents. Thus, where a sharp division exists,

between included and excluded political opponents, included may become less likely to protest and cooperate with the illegal.

Further, divided SoC are characterized by cycles of opposition demands. It is in the very nature of these regimes to have waves of opposition demands, other groups threaten to join in, and moderate demands are weakened. As Sidney Tarrow (1998) has observed, a movement's very success can lead to instances of counter mobilization by its opponents, changing the environment in which the movement had initially thrived. In Egypt both the regime and the Muslim Brothers are balancing between gaining power and not create discontent.

During the 1980s the legal opposition cooperated with illegal parties, first and foremost the Muslim Brothers, and capitalized on the popular discontent and demands for reform for mobilization and to gain support. In its progression from unobtrusive activities on the "periphery" to a series of bold electoral challenges close to the political center, the Islamic movement "ultimately reached the limits of the regime's tolerance" and "provoked a massive counterattack by government authorities" (Wickham 2002: 17). On the eve of the 1990s President Mubarak made it clear to the legal opposition that creating such situations or joining with excluded groups to pressure the regime was unacceptable. Mubarak had earlier granted the Brotherhood unique privileges, allowing it to organize openly while refusing to legalize it. However, by the mid 1990s, Mubarak took advantage of the illegal status of the Brotherhood to repress it as well as groups such as the Socialist Labour Party that were cooperating with it. The Mubarak regime closed off opportunities for electoral competition within Egypt's interest-group organizations and targeted the Brotherhoods' most dynamic leaders in a new wave of repression. Without support from broader sectors of the mass public and without the desire or capacity to attempt a revolutionary challenge, the Brotherhood was temporarily paralyzed by the regime's crackdown. The institutional structure allowed Mubarak to divide the opposition, creating dynamics that were more violent. As the crisis continued, the moderate opponents became less and less willing to challenge the regime." (Lust-Okar 2005: 172-173). In sum, while the pillars of the authoritarian state intact, the Islamists' ascent remained contingent on the regime's forbearance, and the more visible, influential, and outspoken the Islamists became, the more likely it was that this

forbearance would be revoked.” (Wickham 2002: 18). However, the Muslim Brothers did not give up by the repression in the 1990s and as will be discussed later, the Muslim Brothers made new plans to still challenge the regime and gain support from other opposition groups.

Lust-Okar argues that political liberalization is not necessarily a process, criticizing modernization theorist and neo-liberalists claiming that political liberalization is a unilinear process moving toward either democratization or revert to more closed system of authoritarianism. She refers for instance to the argument of Przeworski “that although incumbents choose liberalization in the attempt to maintain their regime, such contingent or partial liberalization is usually instable because of the “thaw” principle: “a melting of the iceberg of civil society that overflows the dams of the authoritarian regime” (Lust-Okar 2005: 4). The introduction of democratic institutions does not create democracy if the multiparty system, elections and the civil society is controlled (Brumberg 2002). Brumberg suggest that guided pluralism (liberalized autocracy, partial autocracy) is not only a “survival strategy”, but rather a type of political system “whose institutions, rules, and logic defy any linear model of democratization” (Brumberg 2002, 56).

The Lust-Okar model tells a lot about the political system that the Muslim Brothers operates in, however it is too rigid. As I will show later is that there are legal opposition groups that cooperate with the Muslim Brotherhood. And if we take the election law as a means for control for the stability of the regime it fails, because not one election has been like the other, in changing election laws, electoral surveillance and constellation of party alignments. However, there is no doubt that there are cycles and that the openings of the system might as well be strategic choices of the regime instead of deliberate efforts on democratization. Wickham argues, in contradiction to Lust-Okar, that the shift from “closed” to “semi-open” systems constituted a dilemma, as the reforms intended to bolster the authoritarian regime had the unintended effect of increasing the resources and opportunities available for organized challenges from below.

Before we resume to the next chapter Wickham's account on the political system is still valid:

Even after some opposition parties were legalized in 1976, contestation for power within Egypt's formal political system was still controlled from above. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood remained banned and was prohibited from running its own list of candidates for parliament; members of the Brotherhood who ran as independents or as affiliates of legal parties were routinely intimidated and harassed; and under the country's emergency law, it was illegal for Brotherhood members to disseminate their literature or assemble in public without permit." (Wickham 2002: 12).

Why are they still in the game despite the restrictions and harassment? To operate in the "center" represents two dilemmas; first the judicial system hampers the access to the political society and second; the political society does not have any real political power and hence not an obvious arena for influence.

Means and Ends

How can the interests and goals of the Muslim Brothers be decisive for their strategies? How can we assess their interests and goals? Törnquist (2002) claims that the ideas and interests that the movements focus on signal what aims they will reach for and what means they will apply in order to reach these aims. He suggests that there are three kinds of ideas and/ or interests that movements focus on. It is the single issues and/ or specific interests, ideologies and/ or collective interests and moral/ spiritual values. The Muslim Brothers embrace all of these ideas and interests; expressed in their program "Development, Reform and Revival". I will return to the details of the program in chapter 3.

In his studies on democratization Törnquist (2002) separates the universal ends or principles of democracy from the contextual means that vary over time and with the balance of power. Further, he claims that the political opportunities decide whether actors apply existing institutions and rights in order to obtain political influence. If the quality on rights and institutions is weak or does not make sense/ have any substantial meaning to the actors, they will try to circumvent the democratic channels in order to achieve their goals, so called bypass, for example corruption and terror. This is visualized in Figure 2. "It remains to be seen what avenue the Brethren will take to

bypass the most recent restrictions, but if earlier patterns are any indication, protests will remain confined to legally accepted channels.” (Sullivan & Abed-Kotob 1999).

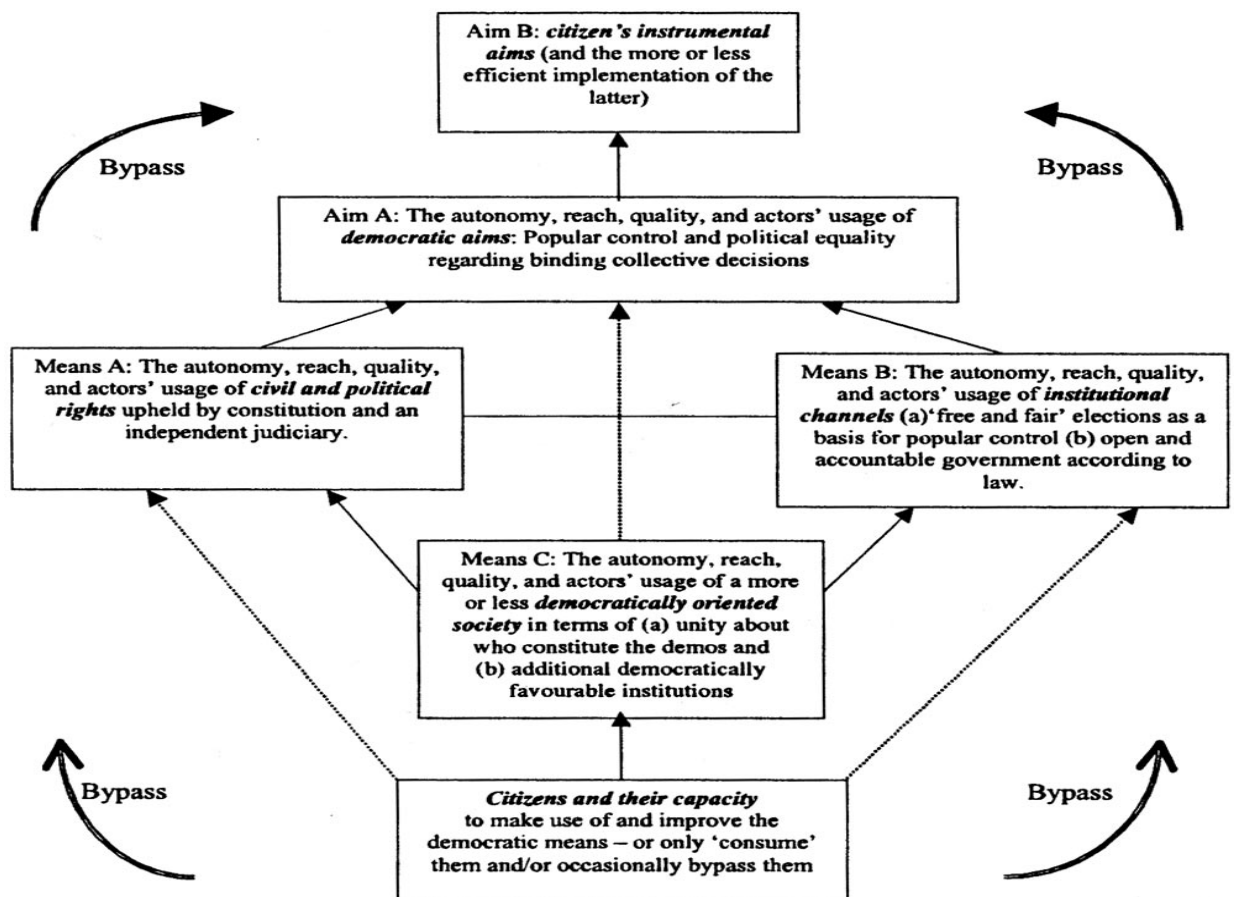


Figure 2. Means and Ends

When studying a political party or movement in a partial autocracy it is necessary to understand the electoral logic; an authoritarian context will alter party behavior and objectives (Mainwaring 2003). As Scott Mainwaring states; “rational party leaders will not make vote maximizing their first priority if votes are not the primary currency of politics.” Further, he argues that many actors hope not only to obtain a change *in* regime, but rather a change *of* regime (Mainwaring 2003). Mainwaring argues that parties in authoritarian regimes play “dual games”: an electoral game with the objective of winning votes and seats, and a regime game. The regime game can either be steady participation with the hope of effecting a transition to democracy or a delegitimation game where parties work to undermine the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime. This reflects the various means in Törnquist’s model; actors can either follow democratic

paths or bypass them. Parties in authoritarian regimes play electoral and regime games simultaneously, with the emphasis on the regime game (Al-Ghobashy 2005c: 376). Al-Ghobashy states that many of the internal factional struggles in parties operating in authoritarian contexts revolve around which games to prioritize and how to balance the regime and electoral games. “Seen in this light, parties are by definition dynamic organizations in perpetual transformation, and religious parties are no exception.” (Al-Ghobashy 2005c: 376). We will return to these internal challenges in chapter 3.

Lust-Okar argues that in divided SoCs, incumbents actually benefit from the existence of radical ideological opponents poised to exploit political unrest. Because incumbents have manipulated the costs of opposition, these groups pose a threat to the legal opposition (Lust-Okar 2005: 173). Lust-Okar writes about the legal moderates and illegal radicals, without looking to reality. It is in the interest of the regime that the illegal opposition promote radical ideology, in order to excuse their excluded position and to gain support from the legal opposition. (Brumberg 2002). That is why the regime:

rejects the distinction between violent extremists and moderates, choosing to ignore all evidence that distorted militant views of Islam can be corrected by reliable centrist understandings of the Faith. It also refuses the notion that the roots of terrorism lie in the despair caused by the failure of polities for economic and social development that leave even educated youth without real prospects. (Baker 2002: 17).

The Muslim Brothers have revealed this effect and therefore they do try not to seem radical even though they are making hard claims on the regime for political change. The MB are working hard to show that they are not radical, but pragmatic and talking of the general interest of the people.

The driving force for the Muslim Brothers and their supporters stems from the fact that “Islamists promoted a new ethic of civic obligation demanding that every Muslim participate in the Islamic reform of society and state, regardless of the benefits and costs incurred by those involved” (Wickham 2002: 15). Because the interest of the nation is bigger than the individuals, they are insistent on enduring the harassments and restrictions.

Theoretical Framework

In Egypt and the Middle East in general, authoritarian elites have cautiously experimented with political reform, permitting the resurgence of independent political activity in some arenas while continuing to suppress it in others, as we saw in Lust-Okar's model. However, the opposition does what it can in order to circumvent these structures made by the regime and invents different solutions. One of Lust-Okar's main propositions is that the legal opposition parties are more willing to keep their legal position and restricted political influence; hence the existing system rather than cooperate with the illegal opposition threatening the regime. Social movement theory suggests that grievances are not sufficient for movements to politicize their interests, opportunity structures must exist in order to motivate for action. In many cases, lack of trust in the political system, as a channel for representing interests, may generate political alienation and abstention (Wickham 2002).

“The persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East may have less to do with culture and tradition than with the political elite's desire to preserve its rule and the nature of other power relations in the society. This does not mean that social groups have failed to mount significant, non-violent challenges to the ruling governments; it may only explain why so few have been successful” (Schwedler 1995: 9)

Operationalization of Approach

The goal of this thesis is to study the political capacities of the Muslim Brothers in the political society. Capacity implies the ability to utilize opportunities. In other words, the capacity, their ability to apply the political system in order to reach their goals, is determined by two factors; the political context that the Muslim Brothers operates in and the political goals and strategies of the Muslim Brothers to take advantage of opportunities in the political context.

First, we will look at the political goals of the Muslim Brothers. According to Mainwaring, there are two dimensions of political goals in authoritarian regimes. The first dimension is change *of* regime (instrumental aims) and the second is change *in* regime. In authoritarian regimes the former goal is prioritized to the latter, in many cases it is even necessary to change the regime in order to make changes in the regime. Strategies are methods to achieve the goals (Lofland 1996), but they are canalized by the political opportunity structures. Therefore, the strategies of the Muslim Brothers are

intertwined with the political opportunity structures. McAdam et al. 2004 claims that social movements must be seen as dynamic actors accommodating their context, and as the context shifts some of the goals might as well be adjusted to their opportunities.

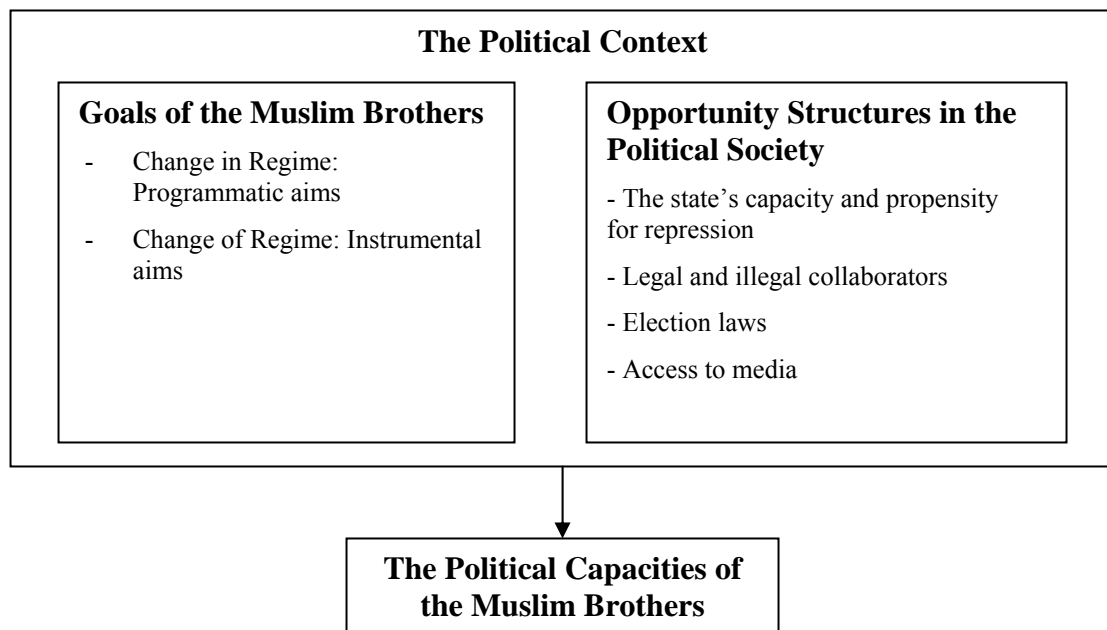
The fundamental question, then, is what social movement analysts call the 'political opportunity structure' - referring to opportunities and hindrances such as the degree of openness of the political field, the presence of allies and the risk of repression. (Harris et al. 2004: 18).

As mentioned earlier, Mc Adam et al. (1996) identify four important dimensions of political opportunity structures; the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, the stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity, the presence or absence of elite allies is determinant to the opportunities and the final factor is the state's capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam et al. 1996: 27). This thesis has operationalized these dimensions into first, the state's capacity and propensity for repression, which means the judicial set of rules to control political parties and opposition movements, as well as the state's use of force as deterrent for further political action. The second dimension is the electoral law which has been constantly changed in the Mubarak era with various forms of party list and independent system. The Muslim Brothers have acted in creative ways to enter the political society this way. Legal and illegal political collaborators are the third dimension. Interestingly liberal, socialist and center parties have and still do cooperate with the Muslim Brothers on various bases. Access to media is the final dimension, which have increased its importance for the political work of the Muslim Brothers and they also target their information internationally through internet in order to spread their messages. I have chosen to focus on three aspects of the political society where these opportunities are most present. These aspects are the parliamentary elections, in parliament between elections and the access to media. The Muslim Brothers have developed various strategies to achieve their goals in line with these aspects of opportunities in the political society.

Research Model of Thesis

The research model is developed to conceptualize the analytical approach of the thesis and incorporate the various dimensions to be explored. The dependent variable is the strategies that the Muslim Brothers changes according to their political opportunities as

well as the goals. In real life, all concepts in this research are dynamic, but for the sake of the analysis, the goals constitute the independent variable in this model. The goals and the agenda of the Muslim Brothers have been changing, but the political manifesto that they represented prior to the election in 2005, will constitute the basis. To explain the insistence of participating in the “center”, which is a highly risky, we need to know their political agenda and goals as well as how they circumvent the hindrances.



Figur 4. Research Model of Thesis

Within this theoretical framework we see a triangle of factors that have a mutual, however not equal effect on each other. This reflects some of the critique of earlier social movement theory that it is too static (Mc Adam et al. 2001). Despite this volatile situation this thesis will look at how the political capacities of the Muslim Brothers in the political society are a result from their goals, strategic choices and the political opportunities. Now we will look at the political goals of the Muslim Brothers which reflects what issues political actors prioritize followed by a chapter on why the Muslim Brothers operate in the center.

3. The Political Goals of Muslim Brotherhood

The overarching goals of the Muslim Brothers remain the same as the initial goals, “a better society for all Egyptians”, but it is evident that the means to reach this state and the idea of this society have changed over time, due to internal and contextual factors. This chapter will present the dynamics of the ideology and program of the Muslim Brothers. Like other reforming parties in authoritarian regimes, the Muslim Brothers have a dual set of goals (Houdaiby 2006: interview 29.04.06), or using Mainwaring’s concepts; they play a dual game. On the one hand they are working for systemic change, or what the Muslim Brothers denotes “development of a political platform”, conceptualized as regime game; the Muslim Brothers want a more open political system in order to represent their political program together with other parties. On the other hand they have a political program based on their ideology and interests, expressed in the electoral game. These two sets of goals are interchangeable, in that they are represented together in the political program. While playing these games they are balancing on a thin edge in order to get as much influence as possible without threatening the regime to such a degree that the regime will suppress them. How this is done in practice is covered in chapter 4.

Since the revival of Islamism in the end of the 1970s, Islamic movements have continuously reconsidered and reinterpreted their own project (Baker 2003; Rashwan 2006). The Muslim Brothers has undergone comprehensive reconsiderations regarding methods, strategies, concepts and ideas to the conventional Islamic thought (Rashwan 2006). It is first and foremost the national political development that has influenced the organizational and ideological change (Wickham 2002, al-Ghobashy 2005c); however international factors have also affected these changes (Rashwan 2006). The Islamic terrorism in Egypt in the 1990s followed by the suppression of all Islamic activism and the 9/11 have made it more pertinent for the Islamic movement to open up dialogue with other parties and propagate democracy (Baker 2003, Hamzawy 2005a, Rashwan 2006). The Muslim Brothers is a huge and complex organization, with disagreements about organization and leadership, ideology, and political visions, which makes it difficult to define and to be general about these aspects.

Political Platform

The goal to change the regime, the systemic goal, is envisioned by the Muslim Brothers in their political platform. In short this platform is a political system where all political parties can freely compete for power. This chapter will discuss general issues and challenges of the Muslim Brothers in accordance with the Political Platform. The Political Reforms that the Muslim Brothers wants to bring about to establish the Political Platform are discussed in the next chapter.

Ideology

The Muslim Brothers is a heterogenic group when it comes to the composition of members' age, profession and geographic background, embracing several ideological camps. As an Islamic movement and political actor, we cannot circumvent a discussion on why and why not Islamism is the ideology of the Muslim Brothers in relation to their political platform. First, I will discuss these internal differences in ideological affiliation and then discuss how the Muslim Brothers relates to Islamism. Finally, various connotations related to Islamism will be briefly presented to shed light on the significance of this notion.

One source to the ideological discord within the Muslim Brothers stems from the various generations within the Muslim Brothers, with various background and experiences (Al-Ghobashy 2005c, Rashwan 2006). The highest executive posts are seated by the Ikhwan elders, the so-called "prison generation", who experienced the ideological polarized Egypt in the 1940s and spent years in prison in the 1950s and 1960s. Organizational change and ideological reform is the mantra of the middle aged Ikhwan professionals who became political aware on college campuses in the 1960s and 1970s. They "formulate policy, act as spokesmen, and represent the groups in Parliament and professional unions". (Al-Ghobashy 2005c).

The organization contains of various ideological "wings", reflecting to a large degree the inter-generation conflicts; arguing for renovation and reconsideration or conservation and tradition. In the 1990s this internal conflict on ideology was one of the main reasons for the formation of the Brotherhood offshoot Hizb al-Wasat, the Centre

Party³⁸, as a reaction to the less reform friendly core of the Muslim Brothers (Ghobashy 2005c: 386). The conservative wing argues that the Muslim Brothers, as the mother of modern Islamic activism, should stick to its traditional ideology and visions (Rashwan 2006). Another wing is the so called “Renovation Trend”, which attempts to reform the Islamic thought and action (Hamzawy 2005a, Rashwan 2006). The main questions are leadership and organizational structure; political visions; and the relationship with the society and the state. Two central actors within the so called “Renovation Wing” are Dr. Essam al-Eryan and Mukhtar Noah, both are former Ikhwan MPs and syndicate board members, in the Doctors’s syndicate and the Bar association respectively. Both have several times been imprisoned by the regime e.g. al-Eryan was imprisoned without trial, a couple of weeks after I met him, in May 2006, for organizing pro-reform protests³⁹. This thesis is concerned mainly with the more reform friendly ideology of the younger generation, as they get more internal influence as well as they interact more with other political and academic actors.

Another source of ideological discord is the intellectual wave of reinterpretation of the so-called New Islamic School (Islamic modernism/ Salafism) which is inspired by the work of thinkers from the late 18 hundred and early 19 hundred; al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, followed by Rashid Rida, and Hassan al-Banna. Contemporary thinkers within this school are al-Qaradawi, al-Ghazzali, al-Bishri, Muhammad Imara, Salim al-Awwa and the recent work of Ghannouchi (al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06). These thinkers brought about the idea of the connection between Islam and politics. With this ideology as their ideological basis the Muslim Brothers get inspiration from contemporary critical literature. Rashwan (2006) argues that there was a remarkable increase of critical studies and research on Islam from the second half of 1980s, which was almost absent before⁴⁰, which the Muslim Brothers adheres to. When it comes to

³⁸ This party is still waiting for a legal status as party. It is a moderate party with both Muslim and Coptic members.

³⁹ He was released in December 2006.

⁴⁰ “Among such critical studies from within the Islamic movement were “On the Self Criticism: the Necessity of Self Criticism by the Islamic Movement” by Khalis Al-Gabali (1985); “The Islamic Renaissance between Inflexibility and Extremism” by Yusuf Al-Qaradawi (1982); “The Crisis of Religious Awareness” by Fahmi Huwaidi (1988); “The Islamic Movement in a Whirlpool: Dialogue on Sayed Qutb’s Thought” by Salaheddin Al-Gurshi (1985); “The Islamic Movement: Future Vision - Papers in Self Criticism” edited and introduced by Abdullah Al-Nafisi (1989), and most of late Muhammad Al-Ghazali’s works such as “The Prophet’s Traditions between Men of Fiqh and Men of Traditions” (1990) and “Our Ideological Heritage between Shari’a and

ideological role models, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is perceived as a political example for many Muslim Brothers:

Erdogan is very intelligent and he has the ability to understand the reality, he has built a model not on illusions and ideas, but on real facts to work with. Some Ikhwan members think that he is not Islamic at all. I think he manages very well; he is doing a very good job” (El Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

Even though the Muslim Brothers is an Islamic movement, we cannot deduce that Islamism is their political ideology, as mentioned in chapter 2. It is commonly held that the core of Islamism is the vision of an Islamic state governed by Shari’ah⁴¹ ⁴²(Ayubi 1991; Utvik 2006). On a general level Islamism is a very wide and disputed notion, encompassing several aspect of political, economic, cultural and social life. Further, Islamists call for the establishment of Islamic states is increasingly a matter of symbolic language and traditional metaphor (Hamzawy August 2005). When it comes to the Muslim Brothers, specifically, their ideology is constantly revised and reinterpreted according to the national and global discourses.

Shari’ah has been central in the political rhetoric of the Muslim Brothers and is also incorporated as a thread through the recent political program of the Brothers. Nevertheless, the focus on Shari’ah and terminology has undergone a subtle shift in recent years. First, the “Renovation wing” of the Muslim Brother argues that on paper Egypt is already ruled by Shari’ah because of the 2. article of the constitution, proclaiming that “Islam is the religion of the state and Arabic its official language. Islamic jurisprudence is the principal source of legislation.” (Egypt State Information). The main concern of the Muslim Brothers then is not that Shari’ah is not incorporated in the national jurisprudence, however the regime does not confirm to it, because, according to al-Erian and al-Houdaiby, the regime is corrupt and lacking Islamic values

Reason”, in addition to some significant symposiums such as 'The National-Religious Dialogue' (1989). (Rashwan 2006).

⁴¹ There are great divergence of views what rules exactly belongs to shari’ah. However, it is agreed that the law is the expression of God’s will for mankind and based on revelation. However, the revelation must go through a human intellectual process before it can become a cohesive legal system for society (Vikør 2005: 1). “Islamic law is no more than a body of sources of revelation and a methodology for making rules from these sources” (Vikør 2005: 1). There are four scholar-jurists who are recognized as the founders of the Sunni legal schools (Waines 2003: 63).

⁴² A more disputed understanding of Islamism is the alternative way of conceiving Islam as “Religion and Muslim Civil Society (Ummah) and not “Religion and Politics”. Gamal al-Banna interprets his brother’s view of Islam this way.

as guidelines for the policy, meaning that they do not act in the interest of the people (Al-Erian: interview 02.05.06, Al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06). One central concern of the Muslim Brothers is the double standards of the Egyptian government:

The Islamic Shar'ia is the principle source of jurisprudence, but still e.g our prime minister said on his visit to US last summer (2005) that Egypt does not allow parties to be based on religion like the Muslim Brothers, because Egypt is a secular country, so he and many others in the government are speaking against the constitution and against the people. (Al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

Second, the Muslim Brothers does not stress to “implement Shari’ah”; instead it calls itself “a civil movement with an Islamic reference (marja’iyya)”. This means that it accepts the civil nature of the political system and that it will draw on Islamic teachings for its positions – but that it will pursue its goals by working through rather than around constitutional and democratic procedures (Hamzawy, Ottaway & Brown 2007). Further, some movement leaders speak of the “goals (maqasid)” of the Shari’ah, implying that Islamic law will provide general guidance to its legislators rather than a set of narrow dictates. According to Hamzawy, Ottaway & Brown (2007) these general shifts in terminology send a message of flexibility, but leave many questions unanswered as to how the Shari’ah will provide guidance of policy. Finally, a third shift in relation to Shari’ah is that the Muslim Brothers are more concerned with political reform than to discuss implementation of Shari’ah. Al-Erian stressed that “first we are concerned with political freedom, second socio-economic issues and thirdly Shari’ah” (Al-Erian: interview 02.05.06).

Towards the end of this chapter the various impressions of Islamism will be brought up. On the one side, dark shadows of the ideology developed by Qutb, results in misunderstandings of the goals and visions of the Muslim Brothers. “Ideologically, one of the most visible byproducts of the Ikhwan’s political engagement has been a decisive move away from the uncompromising notions of Sayyid Qutb (1906-66) as outlined in his tract *Ma’alim fi al-Tariq* (Signposts) and toward cautious reinterpretations of the ideas of founder al-Banna.” (Al-Ghobashy 2005c).

Hassan al-Banna wanted a state that conforms to the principles about the good world mentioned in the Qur’an. He wanted a state with Muslim measuring for things and Islamic political principles, almost equal to democratic principles. He

wanted Shura, a council where elites, scholars, and other social groups were represented. He wrote an article about the political problems of the Egyptian regime from an Islamic point of view, accepting the liberal and democratic constitution of 1923⁴³, based on rule of law. However, he had some reservations about Egyptian politics, accusing the politicians for being solely interested in power and lacking of political visions for the Egyptian society. In addition he was critical of the electoral system, inspired by the critique of a Coptic writer, Meriat Al-Ali. If you read what Hassan Al Banna wrote about political change you will think he is a democratic reformer, he never mentioned what Said Qutb said later about the governance of Allah, never!" (Al Banna: interview 03.05.06).

Wickham (2002) argues that the former research on Islamism explaining the revival due to grievances against the West is wrong. She would rather say that "for most Islamists the main priority is not to confront the West but to stimulate a moral, social, and political renewal of the Muslim community itself" (Wickham 2002). This is true, however, especially after 9/11 and the "War on Terror", criticism of American or Western presence in the Middle East is central in the political rhetoric of the Muslim Brothers, questioning the Western notions of Democracy and Freedom, which they conceive as hypocritical. (Ikhwanweb 29.09.06). On the other side Utvik studies how Islamist groups, Muslim Brotherhood and the Labour party, in Egypt concern themselves with economic problems causing frustration in Muslim societies, and what remedies they pose. "It seems clear that even though the appeal of Islamism as a "symbolic revolution" cuts across classes, the growth in the movement's following is in large part connected to the economic misery and frustrated hopes of educated youth with close ties to sections of the population still dominated by the traditional Islamic outlook." (Utvik 2006: 11). According al-Banna the regime is conceived as very bad and corrupt, so few people support or trust the regime. "Many voted for al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, not because they love the Brotherhood, but because they hate the Mubarak regime (Al-Banna: interview 03.05.06.). Further, as Hamzay argues, the religious rhetoric has a popular appeal:

"Islamists will never use the adjective "secular" to describe the neutrality of public institutions, but they convey identical connotations when they assert the "civility" of the public sphere. Nor should Islamists be expected to drop their rhetorical emphasis that the teachings of Islam should guide all action, because this emphasis maintains the distinctiveness of religion-based political perceptions and sustains to a great extent the popular appeal of the Islamists." (Hamzawy 2005c).

⁴³This constitution was replaced in 1962 by the Free Officers regime.

Islamism cannot be understood as the ideology of the Muslim Brothers, even though Islam is the very basis for their ideology. First, the ideological reinterpretations of the Muslim Brothers leave the question of the role of Shari'ah open for now. Second, the Muslim Brothers is not primarily concerned with this issue as they focus on political reform.

The Islamic ideology and rhetoric of the Muslim Brothers have a dual effect. In secular Western countries and among the secular groups in Egypt their ideology is conceived as conservative and raises uncertainty about their political platform. On the other side, the Islamic rhetoric of the Muslim Brothers is connected to identity awareness illuminating symbolic issues, among many Muslims in Egypt. Further, they are conceived as a modern movement focusing on economic development and political opposition.

Being secular in a Christian society is something different, I do everything for a religious purpose, my ethics are fully religious, I am a management consultant, I do not consulting for companies that sell alcohol or cigarettes, I do not consulting for American firms, that's me. I have my principles. (Al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06)

Organization & Leadership

The Muslim Brothers are concerned with internal structures as well as how the movement appears in relation to the state and society. The appearance is decisive to what kind of strategies they should seek and what goals they can achieve, in addition to their reliability in relation to the political platform. These two elements of the organization, the organizational and leadership structure, and dual role of movement and party, will be discussed.

The organization is illustrative to their relationship to democratic principles. The Muslim Brothers has the last decades had internal struggles on the election mechanisms and the role of the Supreme Guide. This internal structure is origin to much criticism of the Muslim Brothers and their reliability as protagonists for democratic reforms (e.g. Wickham 2002, Hamzawy, Ottaway & Brown 2007). "A secretive and seemingly authoritarian internal leadership structure casts doubts on the Brotherhood's commitment to democratic ideals". (Hamzawy, Ottaway & Brown 2007). The Society of the Muslim Brothers is organized in three fractions. The legislative body, the 100-

member, elected, Shura Council (Majlis al-Shura), is responsible for issuing binding resolutions and reviewing the annual report and budget. The council elects the 13-members of the Guidance Bureau (Maktab al-Irshad), where policies decisions are passed by the Shura Council are executed (Mitchell 1969, Al-Ghobashy 2005c). The highest executive office is that of the General Supreme Guide (al-murshid al-‘amm), who is the chief executive officer and official spokesman of the group (Al-Ghobashy 2005). The General Guide must be at least forty years and is elected by an absolute majority of the Shura Council from candidates nominated by the Guidance bureau (Al-Ghobashy 2005). In 1992 a provision was added for the reelection of the General Guide and terms of office were set at five years, although no term limits were specified (Al-Ghobashy 2005). “Yet because of the Society’s illegal status and attendant security clampdowns, it has been difficult to convene the required institutions in accordance with the bylaws.” (Al-Ghobashy 2005c). The selections of the General Guides in the 1980s and 1990s have been secretive affairs that followed no clear logic of seniority or election. Instead they were shaped by the force of circumstance and internal maneuvering for power. A change followed the death of al-Houdaiby at age eighty-three in January 2004 with the announcement that the next guide would be selected by a majority vote of the Guidance Bureau (Al-Ghobashy 2005c).

During the 1990s the Muslim Brothers experienced various conflicts between the General Guides and the members. The selection of the General guides has cast doubts on the movements’ reform will and ideological revisions, both externally and internally. The leadership issue was another reason for the formation of the Ikhwan breakaway Hizb al-Wasat, the Center party as well as the question of ideology as mentioned in the chapter above. The General Guides have so far been from the “prison generation”, with less will of cooperation with other parties and most focus on Shari’ah. The Muslim Brothers can explain their hierarchic leadership with their illegal status and difficulties to carry out democratic principles for electing the General Guide. Further, the status of the Brotherhood as a banned organization frequently faced with regime repression has imposed a high degree of secrecy in planning and managing political action. However, the movement has not undertaken any serious attempts to explain the internal hierarchy of authority and decision making procedures of the movement.

Another related issue, is the debate on the dual political and religious identity. The Brotherhood has kept its dual identity - religious movement and political actor – under a single organizational umbrella. This is not entirely by choice: the Mubarak regime refuses to allow any Islamist party to register. There are two dimensions of this question. First, the internal dynamics of religious movements are very different than political parties. Religious movements, by definition, deal with absolutes: issues of good and evil, of right and wrong, of faith. They have the right to demand conformity and discipline from their members, as long as membership is voluntary. Political parties however make decisions, or at least participate in decisions, that affect all citizens. Thus, they must respect basic principles shared by all – this is why democratic countries have a constitution. They also need to be tolerant of dissent, willing to accept compromise and above all willing to accept that they need to follow the laws of the country, even if they do not approve of them, that they can only change them by following the established process. (Hamzawy, Ottaway & Brown 2007). The second dimension is under what circumstances the Muslim Brothers would establish a political party. The internal paradox is that they wish to be a legal political party, but not under the strict rules of the Political Parties Committee (PPC)⁴⁴, because that will lead to a co-optation of the organization.

The Muslim Brotherhood operates in two tracts as a party and as a movement. In the 1970s Sadat offered political legality, but they rejected, because as a political party they would be under strict supervision of the state/ government. They felt freer as a movement operating around the mosques and in welfare organizations. (Ibrahim: interview 05.04.06).

They wish to obtain the status as legal political party if they manage to develop a political platform with political pluralism and participation. Rashwan (2006) argues that “the obvious and continuous rejection” of the Egyptian government to allow the Brothers to form a legitimate political party release the movement from an internal discussion on the future of the movement. However, he states that the dominant viewpoint among the “middle generation” is calling for a final decision on the Brothers’ organizational “identity” through a full transformation toward the institutional political work and the formation of a party that constitutes a complete alternative to the

⁴⁴ PPC will be discussed in further detail in chapter 4.

movement and replacing it (Rashwan 2006). According to al-Houdaiby “the MB is not allowed to register as a party according to the party law, it is not our objective“ (Al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.).

Al-Ghobashy (2005c) argues that the Muslim Brothers is transformed from a religious mass movement to what looks very much like a modern political party. This transformation has its roots in electoral politicking that began in the 1980s. Despite the many internal disagreements, the Brothers have a strong outlook and appear as a strong unity in the Parliament, syndicates and unions as al-Houdaiby expressed:

Despite the internal disagreements in the Ikhwan the outlook of the organization is very strong, we act as an organization and we all adhere to our democratic internal procedures. If we agree on something we all agree on this and we act as one, and this is how it is to be a part of an organization, the government knows this so it does not make any change. (al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

A Democratic Platform?

The political platform that the Muslim Brothers is aiming towards is a free and fair political society, where parties with various ideologies can compete for power. The political platform of the Muslim Brothers is based on the ideology of moderate Islamist thinkers; authenticate democracy with Islamic concepts (Al-Ghobashy 2005c). So far we have discussed some ideological and organizational challenges for the Muslim Brothers in relation to this platform. Here some concluding remarks on power and democracy will be illuminated before turning to the political reform.

One central challenge for the Muslim Brothers when they are playing the regime game is the question of power. Because they are in the forefront for regime change they become the main enemy of the regime. These divergent interests results in the tense relationship between the Ikhwan group and the Egyptian regime (Rashwan 2006). The Government accuses the Brothers of being merely “power seekers”, by any means, while the Brothers claim that the ruling regime is seeking to exterminate them. There are attempts on both sides to establish dialogue, but actors from both camps have interests in not solving this tension, but rather adding fuel to the fire (Rashwan 2006). It is not only the regime that is frightened by the regime game played by the Muslim Brothers, many common Egyptians are also unsure about their real intentions, due to both massive scare propaganda from the state-run media, that they are terrorists or that they will found a

new Iran, as well as the religious rhetoric and the vague and sometimes divergent messages from the Muslim Brothers. Al-Houdaiby rejects this scepticism:

Power is not an end. Power is means. It is not our intention to get power. Second, we do not want to impose our agenda, we want to express the will of the people. We are a grassroots movement. The interests of the Muslim majority of Egypt have clearly been expressed since the first elections in the 1980s” (Al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.).

According to Al-Banna this vision has existed since the initial years:

Hassan Al-Banna was not interested in authority or power, but he wanted to spread his idea. He was not interested in who was in power as long as the broad lines of the Qur’an, which is democratic, was followed.” (Al-Banna: interview 03.05.06).

This issue of “the broad lines of the Qur’an” has been interpreted in various ways, as discussed above this can be understood as implementing Shari’ah or in more broad ways as based on Islamic values. This is not yet clear.

The notion democracy is blurred when analyzing the political platform, envisioned by the Muslim Brothers. Because the Muslim Brothers identifies this platform as democratic, at the same time finds this concept difficult. As I have mentioned earlier the concept democracy is not wholly accepted by the Muslim Brothers, even though the system they want equals democracy. Ibrahim al-Houdaiby claims that he understands the concepts of political freedoms and democracy different than in the Western sense; that they are the same procedurally, but not ideologically or philosophically. For instance when it comes to freedom of expression, it is a human right in a Western, Christian point of view. In Islam however it is a religious duty to stand up against tyrants or oppressors and defending the right of the people. Further, he is skeptical to democracy, emphasizing that he was not talking on behalf of the Muslim Brothers; “procedure wise I agree with democracy 100 %, theoretically I disagree”. What he disputed was the procedure of the resolve mechanism. What he finds difficult is the rule of the majority or alliances of certain social classes serving their own interests, leaving the minorities or lower social classes out of the decision making. Further, he argued that this mechanism resulted in growing political apathy in democracies as they became older, expressed by decreasing voter turnout. In contrast, the Shura is not supposed to look for the majority interest or

class interest, it is supposed to look for the interest of the whole society. (Al Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

Another aspect of the criticism of the Muslim Brothers' relation to democracy is that they were protagonists for a one-party system; however this vision was not a rejection of democracy. The argument was twofold, first it was defended on the basis that Egypt needed to establish a common front against imperialism (Lia 1998: 10) second that it would represent "an "objective" ideological programme which transcended all personal and familial interests" (Lia 1998: 283). The Muslim Brothers have moved away from this idea ever since they reentered the political society. Further, they realize that they cannot reach the political platform on their own, both practically and ideologically:

"Political freedom is the best for the entire nation. The problem is the political transition will only take place if the opposition parties are sincere in bringing it about, and are focusing on what they have in common and are building common ground and are acting according to this common ground and are not willing to negotiate an agreement with the regime. When the opposition agrees on the principles, regardless of the outcome, when we agree that we want to have political freedom, when we agree that we are willing to agree with the people on this, this is very important even for the Muslim Brotherhood. If the people choose that it don't want what we stand for, if we agree correctively to these conditions, we will be able to push and to challenge the government agenda, otherwise we wont be able to do so, the government will go to these parties and tell them if you really push for this the Muslim Brothers will come to power and the Muslim Brothers will introduce governance on Shari'ah. You can not claim to have democracy if you are limiting the outcome of the democracy." (Al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

One last issue which the Muslim Brothers has yet to be clear about is the question of citizenship, especially regarding the Coptic⁴⁵ minority in Egypt. Citizenship is understood as equality of rights of all citizens regardless of gender, religion, or race. The Muslim Brothers has been ambivalent on how their political platform will treat the Copts in terms of political rights. If Shari'ah is the source of jurisprudence, other religious groups become second grade citizen. However, the signals lately from the movement are turned towards granting all citizens universal human rights.

Several position papers issued by the Muslim Brothers from the 1990s and onwards document the group's prodemocratic turn, central are revamped views on

⁴⁵ The Coptic Church is one of the earliest Christian Churches in the world, originally Egyptian.

women's rights, parties and political pluralism, the role of Egyptian Copts, and the morality and utility of political violence (Al-Ghobashy 2005c). The vision of the political platform that the Muslim Brothers promotes is a political system close to democracy based on pluralism and political engagement.

“The priority is therefore to revitalize political life so that citizens can join a real debate about the solutions to Egypt's chronic problems and the sort of future we want for our country. We believe that the domination of political life by a single political part or group, whether the ruling party, The Muslim Brotherhood or any other, is not desirable: the only result of such monopoly is the alienation of the majority of the people. Our aim in seeking to win a limited number of seats in parliament is to create an effective parliamentary bloc that, in conjunction with others, can energize an inclusive debate about the priorities of reform and development. Not a single political, religious, social or cultural group should be excluded from Egypt's political life. The objective must be to end the monopoly of government by a single party and boost popular engagement in political activity.” (al-Shatir 2006).

Political Program

The Muslim Brothers has ever since the beginning, in addition to national issues, concerned itself with international and regional questions such as the Western hegemony, the Palestinian question, and the general challenge of the relationship between Islamic movements and regimes in the region (Mitchell 1968; Lia 1998; Rashwan 2006). This thesis is limited to concern issues of national policy, based on their political program developed prior to the parliamentary elections in 2005.

The dual agenda, of programmatic goals and systemic change, is expressed together in the political program of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brothers has divided their political program between three pillars, which they call “visions” and that is describing, because the program is so comprehensive and mixes both visions of a better society as well as programmatic and issue based goals. The three pillars are Revival, Development and Reform. Since this thesis is most concerned with the efforts of the Muslim Brothers to make use of the political system in order to make political change this thesis will focus mainly on the political reform preceded by a brief review of the Revival and Development pillars. All through the program quotations from the Qur'an are used to emphasize the linkage between their political visions with the Islamic worldview.

Revival & Development

One of the main political issues of the Muslim Brothers is to fight against corruption, which is a huge hindrance for democratization and economic development, and to combat political apathy because most Egyptians have lost faith in the political system. These issues are embraced by the more general notions of Development and Revival.

In the political program of the Muslim Brothers the notion revival is understood in broad terms. It is not only a revival of Islamic values, but it includes a vision of freedom, human rights, rights of citizenship, moral values, culture, development of man, media, youth, women, and children.” (Ikhwanweb 09.05.06). The Muslim Brothers claims that revival and engagement is the key to change of the political system.

The program illuminates four dimensions of Revival. First, dimension is freedoms, human rights and rights of citizenship. The Muslim Brothers argues that these freedoms and rights have been neglected in Egypt for a long time and the Egyptian people have lost their freedom and independency, but according to the Qur’an these are the rights of every people. Values, culture and development of man constitutes the second dimension of Revival. The Muslim Brothers argues that source of underdevelopment in Egypt stems from the “weakness of the culture of belonging and bad manners”. One of their main arguments is that the moral values have to be revived in order to bring about change and reform. The third dimension focuses on the role of women. The Muslim Brothers are considered to be modern in their views on women. For instance they were the only party that had a female representative running for the parliamentary election. The program states that women are equal to men, and that she is independent financially. However, according to the Qur’an women are different from men and hence she has her special rights as woman, of which some might seem limiting in a Western point of view. The last dimension is media. Beside education, media is the means that creates ideas, implants values, strengthens the bases of nation and determines the priorities of the society in a specific period. The last few years witnessed great development in the field of media, which led the media to have a great influence in forming the ideas and determining common values. Thus, the Muslim Brothers believe that the main message of the media is to urge the society, especially the youth, to adopt the values of liberty,

and sense of belonging to home, which are considered to be the base of a serious foundation, then to adopt the values of development, justice and good citizenship.

The Muslim Brothers have a considerable focus on sustainable development. The program has a comprehensive list system focusing on their goals for development, the policies and the strategies needed to achieve development. National ownership over resources, self-development and technological development are central. The Muslim Brothers want to improve the industrial development in environmental friendly ways; to produce competitive goods for export, increase the self-sufficiency and decrease unemployment. In addition they have a thorough program for rural development, focusing on local management, developing more efficient methods for irrigation, reducing use of fertilizers and encouraging local and foreign investments. The program also considers something called constructional development referring to the improvement of infrastructures and buildings. Finally, they have a long list on education, scientific research and native development of technology, since this constitutes the first step in development and progress.

The pillars on Revival and Development demonstrate the Muslim Brothers concern for socio-economic development. Yet, in order to bring about their political goals, change in regime, they need to focus on change of regime expressed in their visions for political reform.

Reform

The reform program has concrete proposals for immediate adoption of a series of *policies and constitutional amendments*. Their political reform program want to repeal the emergency law, lifting limitations on political and associational freedoms⁴⁶, providing guarantees for the independence of the judiciary, activating the parliament's role and provide for rotation of power in a democratic manner (Hamzawy & Brown December 2005). Further, the Muslim Brothers wants to change the system from presidential to parliamentary democracy, to decrease the power of the president and to enhance their own prospects to bring about change. The Brotherhood also demands the

⁴⁶ Ongoing debate on the Political Parties Law (Al-Ahram. Ikhwanweb), discussed in chapter 4.

protection of *public freedoms*, including those of belief, opinion, and expression. (Hamzawy & Brown December 2005, al-Sayyed Habib 2006).

The Muslim Brotherhood's election platform is characterized by some notable internal tensions, some of which come in the context of its stress on its Islamic marja'iyya (source of reference point). The platform states that "the marja'iyya upon which we base our program for change is an Islamic one with democratic means in a modern civil state". Elsewhere the movement calls for "a civil state founded to implement the Shar'iah and govern within the boundaries established by the Islamic religion." The platform does not expand on this conception of an Islamic marja'iyya when it treats the issue of political reform, nor does it do so when it discusses the traditional issue stressed by the Brotherhood in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the application of the Islamic Shari'ah and the Islamization of public life. By its use of very broad but seemingly pragmatic terms, the Brotherhood provokes some genuine doubts. The question about how much its principle of an Islamic marja'iyya remains in tension with its acknowledgement of the civic nature of the state is crucial and cannot be left to unspecified statements.

The Muslim Brothers realize that they cannot reform Egypt alone; they want to bring about reform based on cooperation with other parties and public debates.

The priority is therefore to revitalize political life so that citizens can join a real debate about the solutions to Egypt's chronic problems and the sort of future we want for our country (Al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

Hamzawy (2005c) argues that the reform initiatives of the Muslim Brothers are bridging the Islamist-secular divide and is a prerequisite for broad alliances for democracy. This will increase the second opportunity structure, cooperation with legal and illegal actors in order to reach their goals, political reform (fig. 4).

"The Muslim Brotherhood's program for the parliamentary elections of 2005 is based on the reference that our method of change stems from. It is the Islamic reference and the democratic mechanisms of the modern civil state. As the Islamic method has the constituents of reform, it has the mechanisms of reforming humans in order to let the high moral values prevail; thus, each man wishes for others what he wishes for himself and faith increases. Consequently, man's conscience comes to life and everyone feels Allah's Presence; thus, the rates of corruption in society decrease on economic, political and social levels."(IkhwanWeb)

The 2005 electoral program of the Brotherhood clearly expresses the priority of political reform (Hamzawy & Brown December 2005). This corresponds with the theory of Mainwaring (2003) that political parties in authoritarian regimes usually will choose to focus on political change or change of regime.

Focusing on political reform provide great challenges for the parties concerned for two reasons. First, internally because issues of more immediate concern have to come in the shadow, as al-Ghobashy argues:

“Many of the internal factional struggles in parties operating in authoritarian contexts revolve around which games to prioritize and how to balance the regime and electoral games. Seen in this light, parties are by definition dynamic organizations in perpetual transformation, and religious parties are no exception.” (al-Ghobashy 2005c: 376).

Nevertheless, the political program is very clear on the priority on political reform. According to al-Houdaiby:

“Right now we are focusing on the political platform, which is the space for political contestation that everybody agrees upon. The platform is supposed to be neutral, fair, and inclusive. When we, Egypt, have this platform, we can compete with our political agendas. We are trying to set forth this platform and implement it and then we will have real democracy and we can compete having the rules of the game set” (Al houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

The second challenge is that the reforming parties become enemies of the regime, as mentioned earlier. That result in massive efforts to limit the reform activity, in Egypt the regime use in addition to widespread political restrictions, violent measures. “Despite continued containment and exclusion during the past few years, moderate Islamists have not questioned their strategic choice of gradual political reform.” (Hamzawy 2005c). This is the only way that they can prove that they are serious political actors, towards the regime, the constituents and internationally.

We would like to let our people know that they are dearer to us than ourselves and that if someone is required to sacrifice their life, it is desirable for us to sacrifice ourselves for their honor, glory, dignity, religion and hopes. It is this emotion that controls our hearts led us to stand for elections. It is very hard for us to watch all these dangers surrounding our people, then surrender to humiliation and despair. We are working for the benefit of the people for the sake of the Almighty, more than we are doing for ourselves. We are working for you only, and we will never be against you one day. (Ikhwanweb)

Summary

Several observers argue that there has been a marked tendency in the Brotherhood's rhetoric towards political reform and democracy the last couple of years (Al-Ghobashy 2005c, Hamzawy & Brown December 2005).

“A crucial issue at stake is the fact that calling for democratic reform is becoming a central component of the Islamist agenda as well, if not its determining principle, one which transcends the others.” (Hamzawy 2005a).

How do political obstacles and opportunities in the formal political system affect and shape the goals and strategies of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt? The Muslim Brothers are playing a dual game, electoral game to make changes in the regime as well regime game to make changes of the regime, prioritizing the latter. They want to bring about political freedom in order to bring about their political program for socio-economic development The Muslim Brothers has ever since the beginning focused on political reform; “evolution not revolution” (al-Banna: interview 03.05.06.). This means that the regime game played by the Muslim Brothers is based on peaceful change from within the system, even though they meet substantial resistance from the regime. The means to change the regime is in other words democratic, but what can we say about the ends, the political platform?

The Muslim Brothers is faced with some challenges when it comes to the credibility of their vision of the political platform. The Ikhwan is not easy to categorize ideologically, however they resemble a religious social-democratic party, in how they focus on socio-economic development in their program and their efforts on democratic reforms.

“I think the most important fact that people should realize is that MB is not a religious group, trying to impose a religious agenda on people. MB is a good and benevolent movement enjoying overwhelming popular support, the political program stems from the culture of the people, and appeals to the people. The program realizes the changes taking place in the world, being able to preserve the Islamic identity without closing or shutting down ourselves from the rest of the world. The focus is on interaction with the world, believing in the necessity of having a balanced dialog with other civilizations including the Western civilization, for the well-being of the humanity at large and for the Islamic civilization. Believing in human rights, and the necessity of having truly democratic societies, where human rights and civil rights, freedom of expression, freedom of choice exists” (Al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

Thus, the Muslim Brothers still struggles in finding their ideological basis and what principles to guide their political reform and establishment of political platform. However, the Muslim Brothers are clearer in terms of the procedures; in how they bring about the change discussed in the next chapter.

4. Opportunity Structures in the Political Society

How is the Muslim Brothers operating in the limited political society to bring about their political goals? This chapter will look at the capacities of the Muslim Brothers in utilizing the political opportunity structures open to them, and circumventing the obstacles; in the elections, in Parliament and in media. First, a short introduction of the context, the multiparty system, in the political society will be presented.

Egypt's Multiparty System

The multiparty system is judicially consolidated by the Political Parties Law of 1977⁴⁷ and currently Egypt has 20 active and legal political parties (Egypt State Information). However, the law excludes parties based on class, religion, or regional affiliation. “The practical result (and, most likely, the unstated intention) was to bar the two groups with the greatest capacity for popular mobilization – The Nasserist and the Muslim Brotherhood – from forming their own parties.” (Wickham 2002: 65). Further, to ensure state control, the Committee for the affairs of Political Parties, known as the Political Parties Committee (PPC), was established by Sadat, within the guidelines of the Political Parties Law, to regulate party activities as well as license new parties. The PPC remains unaltered under the Mubarak presidency (Kassem 2004; Majed 2005). The result is that the legal opposition parties with the exception of Neo-Wafd⁴⁸ have been established on conditions made by the regime (ICG 2005). The Political reform of Sadat limited political participation to a small and rather artificial set of parties and restricted their right to political expression, which hindered the parliament to develop into a site of independent power. Kassem (2004) argues that because the multiparty arena was created from above, with stringent conditions preventing the emergence of popular and potentially challenging groupings, “Sadat’s objective was to ensure a transition from a weak single-party system to an equally weak multiparty system.” (Kassem 2004: 54). Majed (2005) states that the scope of the multiparty system has remained limited, “to the

⁴⁷ Law 40 of 1977

⁴⁸ Hizb al-Wafd al-Jadid. Nationalist liberal party. Established in post World War 1 to achieve the independence of Egypt. Dissolved in 1952 by the Free Officers Regime. Reestablished in 1983 as the New Wafd Party. Follows almost the same party-lines as the original party. Will be referred to as Wafd.

point where the system is closer to being a one-party state”. (Majed 2005: 12). Al-Houdaiby expressed it this way:

The opposition parties that are legal are only legal because they are weak. A couple of days ago a new conservative party was created, but no one knows about them or their agenda. There will be no strong legal party, because of the control of PCC (Al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.).

Shortly after assuming power, Mubarak declared that the multiparty system that he inherited from Sadat would be the cornerstone to build a democratic system of rule (Kassem 2004). However, the personal authoritarian rule continued under the government of Mubarak. “At Mubarak’s take over the political field was characterized by ideological, socioeconomic, and political disillusionment in Egypt, and this was a huge challenge to the personal rule as well as the newly constructed multiparty arena.” (Kassem 2004: 26). Mubarak projected the image of being an advocate of democracy in order to legitimize his position and consolidate his power (Kassem 2004). This is reflected in the name of the President’s political party, the National Democratic Party, and all official websites refer to the democratic system of Mubarak, which is constantly reforming towards more democracy. However, what Mubarak did was to institutionalize a dominant party system, “which consists of a large government party (NDP) in the centre and an array of small opposition parties on its left and right.” (Abdelrahman 2004: 108). NDP has no ideological basis, “it is willing to accommodate any political or social force, including Islamic, that is willing to be absorbed by it” (Kodmani 2005), except from maintaining firm political control (Kodmani 2005; Majed 2005). NDP holds most seats in the legislature and dominates the media (Kodmani 2005; Majed 2005). In 2005 the National Democratic Party won 311 seats or 68.5 % in the Parliamentary election.

In addition to the strict Political Parties Law and the PPC, controlling the forming and activities, the opposition parties have a weak popular and financial base, as well as membership is declining and many lack internal democracy (Lust-Okar 2005; Majed 2005). Furthermore, in the second half of the 1990s the opposition political elite sought contact with the ruling elite in order to guarantee seats in Parliament, and this process caused lack of clarity about the roles of the opposition and government (Lust-Okar 2005; Majed 2005). Majed (2005) argues that the opposition parties also suffers from brain drain from the political society to the civil society because the prospects to set the

agenda are less controlled, at least for some issue based NGOs. Political parties suffer from a lot of internal disputes, as they also play dual games; to please the regime or stick to their ideology (Kassem 2004). According to the ICG report “the legal opposition parties can rather be denoted as technocratic formations without inner dynamics or appeal to humans with political commitment” (ICG 2005). ICG, also reminds us that the opposition parties cannot be regarded as political parties in a Western sense, when dealing with the multiparty system in Egypt (ICG 2005). These factors have led to political apathy among Egyptians.

By restricting participatory rights, with the Political Parties Law and the PPC, Wickham argues that “the regime created a new category of political actors, those groups and movements whose existence was tolerated but were denied formal legal status.” (Wickham 2002: 65). First and foremost she refers to the Muslim Brothers, however the last couple of years the protest movement Kifaya⁴⁹ and the judges constitutes a real opposition to the regime. Kifaya is a grassroots movement composed of leftist activists, earning support from some Islamists, liberals and nationalists, and its main activity is organizing protests and creating engagement against the existing regime. It does not have a political program; however in 2005 they established a manifesto that lists seven goals divided in two sections, the first section focuses on countering Western/ US presence in the Middle East and the Zionists in Israel. Second is to change the regime towards substantial democracy. They are criticized for not being a serious actor and that they focus their critics almost solely on President Mubarak (ICG 2005, Hamzawy October 2005). The judges on the other hand is making claims for more political freedom from the regime, however they are internally divided between regime friendly and opponents (Hamzawy October 2005). These groups are among the excluded groups in Lust-Okar’s model and they are not attempting to get influence through the electoral channel as the Muslim Brotherhood does.

What does illegal mean? It is a real political dilemma; the regime gives legal status to unpopular parties and popular parties are illegal. Why? This is a strategy from the regime, not to have opponent parties that constitute a real threat. In any society combined together, are the people and the law. In democratic societies the law is protecting the people; in Egypt the law is protecting the regime. Some parties have their legitimacy from the law others from the people. I am not only talking about

⁴⁹ Kifaya means Enough! They are also called Egyptian Movement for Change.

the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Wasat, Al-Karama, Kifaya, all these movements and parties are illegitimate but they are popular (Al Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

The Egyptian multiparty system is characterized as controlled pluralism in the sense that political reform is decided from above and executive authority dominates all political life, which again preserves the authoritarian regime by enhancing its capacity to contain and moderate dissent (Wickham 2002, Kassem 2004, Majed 2005). Wickham (2002) argues that the formal multiparty system together with the state of emergency, has limited the formation of party cadres in two ways; by hampering outreach by legal opposition parties and by altering the cost-benefit calculations of potential recruits. Further the Parliament is merely a rubber stamp institution, because the power is in the hands of the president and NDP. Members of various political parties in Parliament have the last couple of decades drafted bills, submitted questions and interpellations, and raised issues for debate. Yet, the control of the opposition parties, the dominant position of NDP in parliament and the executive power over the legislative branch, has made the role of the opposition limited to that of “parties of opinion” with no real influence over state policy (Wickham 2002, Kassem 2004, Majed 2005). This situation has resulted in that Egypt’s opposition parties have failed to develop into effective vehicles of interest aggregations and representation, and then again raised political apathy and lack of interest in politics on popular basis.

Parliamentary Elections

In the Mubarak era there have been three different electoral systems which have altered the opportunity structures for the Muslim Brothers. First, in 1984 it was the List Proportional Representation (PR) system – a party centered proportional representation system. Second, a Parallel System with party lists and 48 single-member districts was the system in 1987 and third, the candidate-centered Two-Round system (the 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2005 (three-round) elections), still in effect to day. Each system has had an impact on the country’s entire process of political interaction, the effectiveness of the legislature, the supervisory role of the People’s Assembly, and the relations between different parties and political forces (Majed 2005).

Electoral Laws & Muslim Brotherhood's Electoral Strategies

The 1983 Election Law⁵⁰ decided that the 1984 parliamentary election, the first real parliamentary election, was a party-list or “proportional representation” system (Kassem 2004, Al-Ghobashy 2005c, Majed 2005). Further, if a party gained less than eight percent of the nationwide it could not be represented in the People’s Assembly and the votes went automatically to the largest party, the NDP (Kassem 2004, Al-Ghobashy 2005c). Hence, in the 1984 elections the Political Parties Law and the Election Law put strict restrictions on party formation, eliminated independent candidates, and strict barriers were set for parliamentary access. The electoral rules excluded not only independent candidates, but also all the legalized opposition parties apart from Neo-Wafd, which formed an electoral alliance with the Muslim Brothers to gain a combined total of fifty-eight parliamentary seats or 15.1 %. Why did the Muslim Brothers negotiate an alliance with the liberal, secular Wafd? First, the Wafd provided a legal channel while the Ikhwan offered a popular base. They were both eager to enter the political scene after long state-enforced absence. Second, only the Wafd-Ikhwan alliance overcame the threshold of 8 percent (Al-Ghobashy 2005c, Kandil: interview 06.04.06, Al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.).

After pressure from the political opposition the 1983 Electoral Law, the party-list system, was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) for discriminating against independents. The government passed a new Electoral Law⁵¹ which maintained the 8 % threshold and the party list system, but cancelled the automatic transferring of votes to the majority party and reserved forty-eight of Parliament’s 448 seats for independent candidates (Kassem 2004, Al-Ghobashy 2005, Majed 2005). The president decided at the end of 1986 to approve the amendment of the existing electoral law, dissolved the People’s Assembly, and set a premature election date in spring 1987 (Kassem 2004, Al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.). The Muslim Brothers created an electoral alliance, the “Islamic Alliance” with the Labor Party, Hizb al-A’mal, and the Liberal Party, Hizb al-Ahrar (Al-Ghobashy 2005, Al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.). In the 1984 alliance with the Wafd, the Brothers had limited

⁵⁰ Law 114 of 1983

⁵¹ Law 188 of 1986

political influence and possessed a junior-partner role together with the established and ideologically coherent Wafd. The Brothers soon took the leading role in the “Islamic Alliance” as the other parties were weaker and ideologically flexible, and together they adopted the political slogan “Islam is the Solution” (al-Islam huwa al-hall). The Al-Ahrar virtually became the Muslim Brothers, which the regime did not approve of and in the mid 1990s the regime froze the party (Kandil: interview 06.04.06). The alliance won 17 % of the national vote, translated into fifty-six seats, thirty-six went to the Muslim Brothers (Al-Ghobashy 2005, Al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.).

The opposition returned to the SCC questioning the constitutionality of the 1986 Election Law based on the same arguments presented against the 1983 Election Law. The SCC declared the Electoral Law unconstitutional and the ruling pressured President Mubarak to issue a decree abolishing the party-list system. In 1990 Law 201 was issued, based on a candidate-centered system, giving all qualified people the right to declare their candidates without any constraints. (Majed 2005; Kandil: interview 06.04.06). Kassem (2004) argues that the President’s decision to abolish the party-list system was a political tactical choice; first by abiding by the court decision the President was highlighting his respect for the rule of law, an aspect he has persistently attempted to utilize as a legitimization platform for his rule. Second, the party-list law united the opposition, as reflected in electoral alliances, as well as the court challenges and condemnation of the government-imposed rules; all indicate that “Mubarak realized that the party-list system was not as conducive to containing political opponents as originally intended” (Kassem 2004: 61). Another aspect of the independent candidacy system is that it made it more difficult to secure representation for political parties and in particular the weaker ones (Majed 2005), discouraging the opposition parties in general to compete for power (Kassem 2004). Further, Al-Houdaiby (interview 29.04.06) argues that voting for individual candidates in elections are easier manipulated or the votes are “pushed down” which means “excluding the votes from someone and including other votes for the NDP. Welcome to Egypt!” (El Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.). In addition, the legal opposition parties complained about structural and procedural elements that further hindered free and fair elections. On the one side the opposition continued to object to the prevalence of emergency law and its hindrance on political participation.

On the other side, they opposed the Ministry of Interior's tradition of supervising polling stations and the ballot count and called for full judiciary supervision of elections. This overall discontent with the election law and the election process made the opposition parties decide to boycott the 1990 legislative elections, except from the Tagammu' Party.

The 1995 election is characterized by the opposition's poor electoral gains in comparison to their achievements during the 1980s. While Tagammu' managed to maintain five seats, Wafd gained only six. The Nasserists, the Liberals, and the Muslim Brothers all gained one seat each. The Labor party did not obtain any seats. The elections during the 1990s reflect the political polarization between the secular parties, supporting the NDP and the Islamist opposition parties. Indicative of this was the fact that throughout its electoral campaign Tagammu' adopted the campaign slogan "al-din lillah wa al-watan lil jami'" ("religion is for God and the nation is for all"). Neo-Wafd adopted similar tactics; its campaign posters depicted an imam and priest in their respective religious garbs alongside a peasant at work under the slogan "al-Wafd al-jaded: hizb al-wahda al-wataniya" ("the Neo-Wafd: the party for national unity"). Not all of the opposition parties were supporting the regime's anti-Islamist campaign. The Labor party maintained its Islamic overtones and cooperation with the Muslim Brothers, even Muslim Brotherhood's slogan "Islam is the Solution" was used by Labor party members. On a less involved level, the Nasserist Party questioned the logic of excluding the Muslim Brothers from legitimate political participation. While opposition parties such as Tagammu' and Neo-Wafd incurred electoral losses in the 1995 elections due to the adoption of platforms similar to that of the government, the lack of electoral success for Labor and the Nasserists is linked to their encouragement of Islamist views. The polarization of the opposition parties across religious lines placed the secular parties, both right wing and leftists on the same side and made them ideologically weaker (Hinnebusch 1990; Abdelrahman 2004).

In the 1995 election Muslim Brotherhood decided to have members running as independents, as they also did in 2000 and 2005. The regime has reversed its earlier tolerance after the Brothers chose to run as independents (Sullivan & Abed-Kotob 1999). The elections with independent system have been characterized with more

violence and imprisonment of candidates, as the regime's desperate effort to control the opposition. Mubarak's approach to the nonviolent Islamist opposition during the 1980s stood midway between accommodation and exclusion. The Muslim Brotherhood maintained its own national and regional offices; issued public statements; and published its own journal, but it was barred from forming its own party. Although it technically remained an illegal organization, the Brotherhood was allowed to participate in the 1984 and 1987 elections in alliance with the Wafd and Labor Parties (Wickham 2002). In both elections with party-list system, alliances with the Muslim Brothers received more votes than all the other opposition parties combined, indicating their capacity to mobilize (Wickham 2002) as well as making strategic choices to enter Parliament. In addition the Muslim Brothers has been the only opposition movement in Egypt capable of mobilizing substantial support for an ideological program distinct from that of the Mubarak regime (Wickham 2002).

Electoral Surveillance

Prior to the 2000 election, a historical ruling by SCC provided hope of a potentially advantageous electoral procedure for the opposition. (Kassem 2004; El Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.). The SCC declared that according to constitution complete judicial supervision of legislative elections is necessary. "The implementation of full judiciary supervision in the 2000 legislative elections brought revived hope for both contestants and voters in regards to Egypt's ailing twenty-year democratic experiment." (Kassem 2004: 74).

During the 1990s an ongoing legal conflict between the opposition and the government had been going on. The government defended its position on practical arguments such as the lack of judges for overseeing all the ballot boxes. For years the constitution was interpreted in various ways e.g. having a judge in each district, not each polling box or polling station, or the judges were responsible for counting the polling boxes, without any control of procedural matters (Kassem 2004; El Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06, Brown & Nasr 2005). The SCC justified its ruling by noting that the judiciary is an impartial entity and that judicial supervision must be substantive not merely formal (Kassem 2004). Kassem (2004) states that the verdict and the equally powerful comments of the SCC left the government with little room for maneuver. Further,

ignoring the verdict of the nations' highest court would have undermined the President's respect for the rule of law, which has been the main legitimization tool for the president's authority. (Kassem 2004).

Contrary to producing more free and fair elections the new electoral rules for judiciary surveillance produced new forms of constraining tactics. First, the Ministry of Interior maintained its control over registered voter lists which meant that certain obstructions and disruptions continued. (Kassem 2004; al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06).

There are many examples on how the regime is forging the election results and it is a whole process of manipulation from campaigning to the actual election. It is for instance been observed that non-existing people are registered as NDP voters. My grandfather was the general guide of the Brotherhood and he votes for the NDP (!), according the voter list. (Al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06).

Secondly, after 2000, elections are marked by more violence because the government has less control over the electoral process in the new electoral framework (Kassem 2004; El Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.). Because the government could no longer control the activities inside the polling stations, they had to control them from outside and preventing some of the voters from entering the stations (Al-Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06.). The security forces apply various violent and manipulative methods in order to bar voters from casting their ballots, both in urban and rural areas. Here I will give one example on how voters are physically hindered to vote, also referred to in Kassem's book (2004).

I have a video tape from the Election Day 2000. In the Doqqi constituency of Cairo, my grandfather, Ma'moon al-Houdaiby, a senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood and its official spokesman was competing against Amal Osman, a former long serving minister and senior member of the NDP. The security forces was lined up with rifles and tear gas canisters in front of the polling station and they made sure that nobody was allowed inside, until a bus filled with NDP supporters came and they let them into the polling stations My grandfather and other Muslim Brotherhood supporters were not allowed to enter the polling station by the security forces. They took his camera and broke his hand. (El Houdaiby: interview 10.04.06).

According to Kassem (2004) the Doqqi case was a sensitive issue for the government, "it would be highly embarrassing if the Doqqi voters were to give preference to a senior Brotherhood leader over a competitor of equal seniority in the ruling party given that Al-

Houdaiby was a popular candidate. Al-Houdaiby's popularity may not have been simply a consequence of the political support he derived from the Muslim Brotherhood, but also a consequence of his Doqqi family origins and hence presumably his status as a "local son" (ibn al-hay)." (Kassem 2004: 69).

A third feature of the elections post 2000, is more intensive use of clientelism, vote-buying and threats. Al-Houdaiby said that some government officials go to different stores and factories and threaten the owners and the staff, saying that if they do not vote for the NDP, they will close their place. This is not only a personal business; it will harm the whole business and the family. As well as more interruption of political campaigns, with imprisonment. (Al-Houdaiby: 29.04.06.).

"Never undermine the Egyptian people; a well-known phenomenon in the last election was that people took money from the NDP candidate and vote for a MB candidate. The NDP gave 50 EL to make people vote for them, but many people took the money and voted for MB instead and this happens a lot. This example shows that people are not so easy to buy, we got a phone call at the HQ from a bus driver and he told us that he got an envelope with 50 EL to vote for Mustafa Selab (the NDP candidate), and he said; we took the money and voted for you! He just called to deliver the message and then he hung up" (Al-Houdaiby: 29.04.06.).

The Muslim Brothers have got more legal/ structural opportunities to participate in elections with the electoral candidate-system and the judicial supervision of polling stations; however the regime has intensified its control and use of force to limit the scope of the Muslim Brothers activities. Nevertheless, the Brothers are determined to not give in and continue their insistent work within the political society.

The 2005 Reform & Election

The political reforms in 2005 lifted some of the strict limitations on freedom of association and expression. Further, judicial surveillance of the elections gave hope for a more free and fair election. The election campaigns saw freer discussion and media coverage, freedom to expression had undoubtedly expanded since the last elections. However, the regime showed far less tolerance for freedom of association. Further, Egypt witnessed limited but real willingness to accept some domestic monitoring, discrete arrangements for international observers, and the creation of at least the form of an independent election commission (Hamzawy & Brown December 2005).

These developments combined created a sense of opportunity among Egypt's diverse opposition groups. None of Egypt's political actors expected that parliamentary elections would result in anything other than a victory for the NDP, but the extent of that victory, the nature and size of the parliamentary opposition, and the ability of the regime to prevent meaningful reform were all open to question. Some new political actors, most notably the Kifaya movement, sprang forward. Kifaya is not a political party with any real political program; however they are challenging the regime, especially in terms of pushing the limits on freedom of expression.

The sense that change was possible created strong incentives for opposition groups to join forces in the United National Front for Change and Reform (UNFCR) to confront the regime. Since the rebirth of a multiparty system in Egypt in the 1970s, opposition parties has periodically discussed a united front but attempts generally collapsed because of deep ideological and personal divisions. Not only were legal opposition parties included but also the Kifaya movement and respected nonpartisan public figures. The formation of the UNFCR united most major opposition movements around a detailed program of political reform and an agreement to coordinate in the parliamentary elections. The Muslim Brothers cooperated with this front, but chose to run independently (Hamzawy & Brown December 2005). But by displaying respect for its pluralism even as it contained secular forces, the Brotherhood managed to situate itself in the heart of the movement for political reform. Indeed, it defended the rights of its secularist reform allies.

As mentioned in the introduction NDP won its expected victory, obtaining a total of 311 out of the 444 seats in parliament, guaranteeing a comfortable majority on 70 percent. The Muslim Brothers secured 20 percent of the seats, other opposition parties won 3.5 percent of the seats, and independents won 6.5 percent of the seats. Abaza (2006) argues that the regime improved the margin of freedom to the Muslim Brothers prior to the elections, releasing Muslim Brothers' activists from jail and allowing movement leaders access to the state media. Though, when it became clear that the MB was by far Egypt's largest opposition group, the regime reversed its policy of tolerance and resumed its intimidation of the MB during the second and third rounds of balloting. Having the MB as the largest political opposition in parliament offers a pretext to voices

within the regime who justify authoritarianism on the grounds that the alternative is total control by Islamists. Yet the low turn-out – around 25 percent – proves that neither the ruling party nor the MB reflects the will of the Egyptian people (Abaza 2006). The Muslim Brothers obtained 88 seats in Parliament, and was by far the strongest opposition party. “Other opposition groups performed very badly. Indeed, the Brotherhood’s calculations regarding the opposition coalition weakness proved extremely accurate. The National Front for Change and Reform was unable to mount effective campaigns in most districts and won only twelve seats.” (Hamzawy & Brown December 2005).

The Muslim Brothers submitted only 150 candidates for election, officially independents, even though they could have submitted more, because they did not want to frighten the regime, and appear as a real threat to the regime (Ibrahim: interview 05.04.06, al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.). Besides it is a general opinion that if the elections were not forged, more than 88 Muslim Brotherhood members would have won a seat in the parliament. Even the Egyptian Prime Minister said on an interview on BBC after the 2005 elections that “If it were not for the security interference in elections, MB candidates would win extra 40 seats” (Ahmad 2006, al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06., al-Banna: interview 03.05.06.). The Muslim Brothers might have strategic reasons for running a certain number of candidates, and the regime, might have open up to a certain degree in order to show the West, the Islamic threat to the regime.

What characterize the political reform of President Mubarak in 2005 is the multi-candidate election and that the parliamentary elections were “significantly fairer and more transparent than in the past, although marred by violence” (Michele Dunne 2006). The political reforms in Egypt were a result of external pressure and the legislative amendments prior to the election did not represent any substantial change of the system (Hamzawy February 2005, ICG 2005). The legislative amendments are described as “cosmetic” and have only taken the attention away from the need of extensive changes, and are in no way sufficient so that the opposition can challenge the power monopoly of NDP. The parliamentary election was considered a possibility for the regime to show its seriousness about political reforms. However, as I will return to, even though the opposition does get a certain degree of influence in parliament, the main problem is the

parliament's lack of power. Until now, the legislative assembly has merely functioned as a rubber stamp organ for decisions taken by the executive power. Even though Egypt denotes it self a democracy, it is evident that democratic institutions is not sufficient. Egypt is under immense pressure from national liberal opposition groups, Muslim organizations and from external actors to put an end to the 50 years old authoritarian regime and to introduce substantial democracy. The regime defends its reluctance to carry out substantial political reforms, arguing that political openings will result in political instability (Abaza 2006). Abaza (2006) and others argues that the only reason that Mubarak carried out political reforms in 2005, was to show that the only serious political opposition is the Islamists, and that the regime will gain support internationally and from many internal actors to maintain the status quo.

After the parliamentary elections in 2005, the Egyptian political system has emerged as sharply bipolar. On the one hand stands a semiauthoritarian regime, centered on the institution of the presidency. The regime shows some cracks and divisions as well as initial signs of a succession crisis, but it still has an overwhelming ability to dominate and structure public life. On the other hand stands the Muslim Brotherhood. As mentioned above other political actors – most notably a host of political parties and movements that form the secular opposition – performed quite poorly in the elections. (Hamzawy & Brown December 2005).

The Political Opportunities in Parliament

Participating in elections is only interesting if it has any political influence in Parliament. After a short introduction of the Muslim Brothers status in Parliament, this chapter will discuss how the Muslim Brothers cooperate with other parties and their performance in parliament. I have not information about all electoral periods, so this chapter will focus on the last two election periods.

Muslim Brothers in Parliament

The Muslim Brotherhood has chosen to invest in the formal political system in hope of reforming the political system from within. So how is the status of the Brothers in Parliament?

Because the candidates in Parliament are voted as individuals they are not denoted as parties, but blocks. The Muslim Brothers in Parliament are recognized as the Muslim Brotherhood Block or the Islamic Block, other times they call them the religious trend or the Group of 88 (independents). (Al Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.). Some candidates are independent and they are called by their name, but most belongs to a party block and this shows the paradox of the multiparty system; that the Muslim Brothers are in the Parliament even though they legally are prevented from forming a party.

In official documents their names are registered as independents, but if you see the slogans of the different candidates they have been elected as “the candidates of the Muslim Brotherhood” on poster, flyers, banners and so fort. We made this a point that all our parliamentarians were elected on the basis that they were members of the Muslim Brotherhood. When the regime says that MB is an outlaw organization, MB refuses and says that they have been elected in Parliament as member of the Muslim Brotherhood. The regime says that the parliamentarians are elected as independents, however the parliamentarians says no, we were elected by people knowing that we are not only members, but candidates of the MB. (El Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

Even though the Muslim Brothers is the biggest opposition block in Parliament, the NDP are trying to control their performance. Al-Houdaiby said that “in many cases the Speaker of the People’s Assembly refuses to give the speech (floor) to a Muslim Brotherhood member and sometimes this leads to verbal or physical fighting. The Muslim Brothers are represented in all 19 committees of the parliament.

Nevertheless, the Muslim Brothers have increased their confidence in Parliament and have become more offensive. In November 2006 the Muslim Brotherhood decided, for the first time, to field candidates for the posts of parliamentary speaker and deputy speakers. The Muslim Brothers candidates did a good election, nevertheless the NDP veteran Fathi Surour, won the post of speaker. It is not clear whether Brotherhood MPs will also run for the chairmanship of the assembly’s 19 committees. Since emerging as a major force in parliament the Brotherhood has been keen to play down any conflicts with the NDP over key parliamentary posts and has refrained from fielding its own candidates. That the tactic has now been scrapped is a reflection of the worsening relationship between the government and the largest opposition group in parliament. The strong position of the Muslim Brothers in Parliament has intensified the tension between the government and the Islamic movement. This tension is also been taking place on

other levels as well such as random imprisonment of Ikhwan members, limiting their activities prevent the group's candidates standing in labor and university union elections. In response the Brotherhood is aiming to make parliament the arena for the ongoing battle. Referring to a Brotherhood press conference, Al-Ahram, notes that the main reason for the new "confrontational stand" is to send several messages to the NDP. First, it should abandon its tactic of ostracizing the opposition and accept that it must share power and positions in parliament. The 2005 elections, he argued, significantly altered the status quo: with opposition and independent MPs now occupying 25 per cent of seats in parliament, it is no longer viable for the NDP to continue its monopoly of key assembly posts (Al Ahram 9 - 15 November 2006 Issue No. 819).

Cooperation with Other Parties in Parliament

Other opposition parties in Parliament constitute less than 10 percent. This makes it less important for the Brothers to cooperate with other parties. In Parliament their dual goals complicates their relation to other parties. On the one hand they want broad support to bring about political change, which many are willing to. On the other hand most of the opposition parties, which are secular, disagree with their programmatic goals.

One of the most important issues that the Muslim Brothers focuses on for reform is to remove the Emergency Law. On this issue a broad specter of parliamentarians have joined forces:

"An alliance called Parliamentarians against Emergency Law was established a couple of weeks ago and the Muslim Brotherhood is in this alliance. It is collecting signatures of parliament members opposing the extension of the Emergency law. So far the opposition parties, independents and different government members have signed and three NDP members have signed and they are also making a list of people who agree on extending the law three years. They are planning to go to the districts and tell the people there, that members of the Parliament, their representatives, are responsible for the extension of the Emergency law for another three years, to suppress your freedoms and limit your freedoms. I think this is a very good way of working with other parliamentarians. The Minister of Justice will get troubles, we have the things right now, the focus right now is empowering the society and this is what we want" (Al Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

“We cooperate for election, but we put our members on our individual lists, but cooperate with them. In parliament we cooperate with many of them” (Al Erian: interview 02.05.06)

Muslim Brotherhood Performance in Parliament

Since 2000 the People’s Assembly has witnessed a strong participation on the part of Muslim Brotherhood representatives (Raswan 2006). During the first months in Parliament (2006) MB MPs succeeded to block a trade agreement with Denmark, “the Muslim Brotherhood’s MPs lobbied the parliament Committee of Economics not to endorse an agreement with the Danish government as consequence to its inadequate reaction to the offensive cartoons published by a Danish newspaper depicting Prophet Muhammed.” (Ikhwanweb: 01.02.06). The NDP candidate, Mustafa el-Salab and deputy chief of the Economic Committee, even supported the MB and their arguments. (ibid).

Since the election in 2005, the Muslim Brothers keeps regularly summaries of their own performance in Parliament, published on Ikhwanweb, their official website. In general they showed a high attendance rate in parliamentary sessions throughout 2006. First, their legislative performance are scrutinized, the Bloc’s members represented 38 draft laws and proposals; many of which are related to their reform program; e.g. on the judicial authority, penalty laws, political parties and freedom of press. Second, is the Muslim Brothers monitoring of the government’s performance. The Brothers has presented more than 3000 enquiries and questions and less than half of them were answered orally. Further, they also presented 28 requests for hearing, only seven of these were discussed in parliament, and they were of a more issue-based character and not related to reform.

The Muslim Brothers Bloc have offered a memorandum to show the vision of the bloc about the constitutional amendment that included 13 cancellation and 23 amendments in the legislative authority and its relations to other authorities particularly the executive authority by virtue of the parliamentary system that based on executive authority's dualism, in order not that the President of the state will have separate specifications and decisions without the approval of the ministers and the concerned ministers, who are wholly subject to be questioned by the parliament. The amendments

included the independence of the judicial authority through a united judiciary system that has the jurisdiction's right and completely prevent the interference of the executive authority in the issues of the judicial authority; also the amendments included the relation between the President and other authorities. In addition they have an international agenda, participating in parliamentary delegations and in other international interactions. They have been in meetings with representatives from Western embassies and delegations to Egypt.

It has been observed that in order to reduce some of the political issues of the Muslim Brothers, NDP copies them in order to appear as reform friendly. Al-Houdaiby expressed:

Take them, implement them! We hope they do, we do not care who brings about reform, we care if it is a real reform. The government is not willing to reform, it is not because they lack ideas, they are not reforming because they are corrupt. Many political parties have ideas of freedom and human rights. This is what we do in Parliament, we represent our ideas, please take them, we do not care if I represented them or you represented them or the devil represented them! (Al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

Further he said that most of the time the government does not listen to the critics, most of the critique from the Brothers are on corruption, however, sometimes they listen in fear of public opinion (Al Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

Nationally, in the recent parliament, the movement's small bloc, which began with seventeen seats in 2000 and declined to fifteen when the government successfully overturned the election of two deputies, did put forward a series of parliamentary questions and interpellations of ministers that focused on the compatibility of some laws with the Islamic Shari'ah as well as a set of moral and cultural issues. But the Brotherhood deputies also expressed concern about economic and social issues, especially corruption and unemployment. In the final two years, they joined the trend to give priority to political reform and to confront the NDP's legislative agenda in the field of political rights, political parties, and amendment of Article 76 of the constitution (governing presidential elections) when the ruling party's initiative lacked a democratic basis.

Access to Media

Access to media is the last aspect of the political opportunity structures. This is not directly related to the political society, but this chapter will focus on how the Muslim Brothers use media to express their political goals and to appear as a serious political actor. In the Muslim Brotherhood assessment of the parliamentary performance, referred to in the previous chapter, one chapter is dedicated to an analysis on their media strategy, illuminating the importance of this aspect for the Muslim Brothers.

State Control of Media

A number of laws restrict media and the freedom of expression. In addition, there are indirectly structural conditions that further complicate political parties to recruit support. This chapter will look at the juridical and structural hindrances for political expression, followed by a discussion on the changes of the media during the last election.

The Egyptian media is restricted by at least three factors; first, media is totally co-opted by the regime, the Egyptian constitution put strict restrictions on freedom of expression and finally the Emergency Law gives the regime the opportunity to interfere when it finds it necessary. First, opposition parties' outreach to the Egyptian public occurs under the watchful eye of the authoritarian state. The Law on the Union of Radio and Television put media under complete government control, so that opposition parties can not use them to publicize their programs and positions to the general public, while the ruling party enjoys wide-ranging opportunities to do so. The ownership and activity of state-owned papers, or so-called 'national' papers, is controlled by the Shura Council, which functions according to government directives and appoints the chairmen and editors-in-chief of these newspapers. Again, opposition parties can not use them to put forward their political positions or explain their positions to the public at a time of important political developments. The same applies to mass cultural activities and to media centers in the various governorates; with the government and the ruling party monopolizing the mass media, the average citizen do not enjoy the right to obtain information and statements from different sources which would allow him or her to judge events and take the appropriate positions from a choice of alternatives. Citizens learned of different alternatives by way of the government's position on them in the

mass media, which usually distorted these alternatives (Shukor 2005: 48). Emergency laws augment the state's authority to monitor, arrest, and detain those suspected of activities deemed threatening to national security. They also restrict the exercise of the freedom of speech and assembly guaranteed by the Egyptian constitution in ways that hinder party efforts to recruit support." (Wickham 2002: 71).

In addition, the opposition media face a number of structural limitations. First, they confronted supply-side constraints, such as the lesser quality of the newsprint available to them and their reliance on advertising revenues (rather than state subsidies) to cover printing costs. In addition, there were pressures to engage in self-censoring and instances of harassment and detainment of newspaper staff by state security agents. Although the opposition parties were allowed to express their views in print, various laws restricted their access to "the street". "The Ministry of Interior also prohibited the distribution of opposition literature in public places, thus limiting citizens' familiarity with them (Wickham 2002: 72).

Increasing calls for media independence are evident in Egypt; such calls were particularly strong regarding media coverage of the 2005 elections (Al-Fegier 2006). Media conduct during the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005 showed some positive developments in contrast to previous elections, in which the media were completely partial. In particular, new independent Egyptian newspapers distinguished themselves by professional, objective coverage of opposition candidates and platforms "and greater criticism of the government than has been seen in half a century." Egypt suffers from the lack of a legal framework regulating media's role during elections. In the case of the Egyptian parliamentary elections, the electoral law is silent on the role of media coverage, in which case the matter is outside the authority of the electoral commission and therefore left to the Ministry of Information. Egypt, like other countries in the region, lack regulations for paid advertising, with no supervision of advertising expenditures and no unified price structure for campaign advertisement (Fegier 2006).

Government media in Egypt, gave all candidates free air time to present their electoral programs, an unprecedented and positive development, however, the larger picture favored government candidates and candidates from illegal parties were

excluded, i.e. the Muslim Brothers. First, outside the framework of this free time most public media outlets showed unconcealed partiality toward government candidates on news broadcasts and talk shows. Second, despite the quantitative balance in presentation of the candidates on public television, at the qualitative level coverage was characterized by monotony and repetition as well as deliberative avoidance of controversial issues. Third, for the most part electoral committees either had no way to stop media-related violations during elections campaigns or did so inconsistently. “Subordination of media to politicians more than to professional standards was a problem observed in Egypt. Government officials are accustomed to treating media as institutions for political propaganda and readily use them to defame electoral opponents; such as Ghad Party leader Ayman Nour, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Most media outlets, especially television channels, lacked objectivity in their take on events. Furthermore, opportunities for media coverage of independent candidates were nearly nonexistent (Al-Fegiery 2006). “Among the useful lessons from the parliamentary elections in Egypt is that political movements cannot rely on media to build constituencies. Despite the fact that secular movements had a greater presence in the Egyptian media and Islamic movements were widely defamed, the Islamists made impressive electoral gains in both countries (Al-Fegiery 2006).

Despite, improved access to the media during the elections the Muslim Brothers were cut off from these benefits. The Muslim Brothers are only allowed to perform in media that covers only a small group of the population, either in English newspapers or on satellite TV. According to al-Houdaiby:

[On Al-Ahram weekly] English outlets have more freedom and are less censored, because they do not target the nation the same way as Arabic newspapers. The government members might talk in less negative terms about the brotherhood for instance in English newspapers. Al Jazeera used Essam al-Erian from Muslim Brotherhood in a debate program once. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood are never allowed on national TV, they are not allowed to appear to the masses. Even though Al Jazeera is in Arabic it is not for the masses, not everybody can afford satellite TV” (Al Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

The Muslim Brothers have never had their own newspaper or media outlet to express their political program; this is another paradox considering that the Muslim Brothers is the biggest opposition party in Parliament. This can be explained by two factors; first the

cooperation with other parties and second, the new media strategy of the Muslim Brothers to make use of new technology and the internet. In addition to these two factors it has been explained that all the negative publicity and attack on the Muslim Brothers in newspapers helps spreading their message and also increasing curiosity driving more people to find out more about them.

Cooperation with Other Political Parties

In the Mubarak era, the Muslim Brothers has mainly relied on their political allies in order to publish their political messages and program. Both the Liberal and Labor parties provide a media platform for the Brotherhood, disseminating the Islamist message. In the 1980s several independent Islamic periodicals emerged. Foremost among them was al-Sha'b, the weekly newspaper of the Labour party, which became increasingly Islamist in tone as the Labour party allied with the Muslim Brothers. In addition the Muslim Brothers write articles in Al-Haqiqa and Al-'Usra al-'Arabiyya, both operated by the Liberal Party.

In the early 1990s, Islamic newspapers and journals available on the Egyptian market spanned a wide ideological spectrum, from the government-produced newspaper al-Liwa' al-islami, to the Brotherhood journals Liwa' al-islam and al-I'tisam, to the eclectic al-Sha'b, the mouthpiece of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party. Despite their different orientations vis-à-vis the regime (which ranged from supportive to sharply critical), Wickham observes that regardless of its source, the printed media tended to promote a socially conservative version of Islam, in part as an outcome of Saudi influence". (Wickham 2003: 135).

Many of the newspapers that the Muslim Brotherhood publishes articles have been shut down, and new ones started. A couple of weeks before I went to Egypt Afaq Arabya, al-Ahrar newspaper, was shut down, it was not officially published by the Muslim Brothers, but everybody knew that it was a Brotherhood newspaper, of the Hizb al-Ahrar, the Liberal party. Al-Houdaiby argues that so far the Muslim Brothers press has been very traditional and conservative "not in terms of not liberal, but not confrontational. It is not confrontational, not really critical of the regime, and this is

what the people want right now, people want someone to tell them don't be afraid" (Al Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.)

The Muslim Brothers Media Strategy

The Muslim Brothers are far from invisible in the media despite the restrictions on their access to media, especially since 2005. First, as mentioned above that the government and other critical of the Muslim Brothers spend much time and space in the media to condemn and criticize the Islamic movement, giving the Brothers free attention. But even more, the Muslim Brothers is strategically using the limited opportunities open to them.

The first strategy is that the Muslim Brothers have made themselves very accessible to the media, both nationally and international, they are more than willing to be interviewed in newspapers and on TV. They see this as a golden opportunity to express their reform program and to communicate their performance in parliament. I saw many interviews with the Muslim Brotherhood General Guide Akif in glossy English magazines during my fieldwork. In relation to this, the Muslim Brothers also publish articles in regional and international newspapers in both Arabic and English, as a second strategy. The Muslim Brotherhood also has dialogues with for instance Carnegie. They made 47 interviews in al-Jazeera, al,Arabia, Dream, orbit, al-‘Alam and al-Hurra channels and distributed 163 periodicals through the members' premises in the governorates. In addition they released 352 articles to foreign and national newspaper.

The second strategy is to arrange pressconferences and publish press releases in relation to their parliamentary performance. In 2006 the Muslim Brothers held press conferences on cases in the Parliament e.g. when the emergency law was expanded for another two years, on the government reactions on the bird flu disaster and on the authority of the judicial authority.

The final strategy is extensive use of internet, both in producing and actively using webpages, in Arabic and English, and lately, many Ikhwan members have established internet blogs to state their political opinions and participating in political debates on the internet. The Arabic webpage, www.ikhwanonline.com, has a popular image to appeal to common Egyptians, in terms of use of Islamic symbols and colors – green. Prior to

the elections in 2005 the Brothers launched an English website www.ikhwanweb.com. It is observed that these sites “put anything else by any other political force in Egypt to shame, including anything produced by the government” (Al-Amrani 2005). The design reminds of the webpages of the BBC, with breaking news running over the screen. They cover all aspects of the political activities of the Muslim Brothers.

On these pages they publish their political program and their focus on reform. Interviews of their members published in other newspapers are also published here. All kind of comment of their activities from criticism and complimentary articles are published, from national and international media, written of intellectuals, academics and politicians. In these days they publish an ongoing debate between the Carnegie Foundation and themselves on their own Islamic project. “Exploring the Grey Zones”. They show that they are willing to discuss and argue for their political program and strategies. This webpages gives the impression that the Muslim Brothers is, and want to be considered, serious and professional, dynamic and modern.

In addition to signal to the world that they are serious and not secretive movement with real visions for Egypt and that they are dynamic adjusting to and interfering with the rest of the world. According to al-Houdaiby (interview 29.04.06.) this new media strategy is also to eradicate fear, both of the Western observers to understand their message and the Egyptians that they should not be afraid when the Muslim Brothers is increasing their confrontational strategies towards the regime.

Summary

In the Mubarak era the Muslim Brothers has made strategies in order to gain access to the political society, without compromising existing rules, even tolerating nonexistent democratic principles for power rotations and pluralism. This chapter has focused on three main strategies; parliamentary elections, performance in parliament and the use of the media. In this chapter I have tried to answer the second sub-question of the problem statement: *why do the Muslim Brothers, despite political and judicial hindrances, work within the formal political system?* This question encourages the researcher to look beyond the formal political structures. The question implies that there must be some kind of opportunity structures in the political society or else it would be futile. I have

operationalized four opportunity structures that are determinant to the various strategies of the Muslim Brothers.

First, the state's capacity and propensity for repression means the judicial set of rules to control political parties and opposition movements, as well as the state's use of force as deterrent. The Egyptian regime's propensity for repression is very strong. The overarching emergency law gives the Egyptian regime authority to regulate most political activity. The capacity is another question, when we look at the success of the Muslim Brothers. First, the Muslim Brothers has decided to not consider themselves illegal, this complicates the regime's capacity to control to a certain degree. According to al-Erian

We do not consider our self illegal, at all. We work according to law and the constitution, we participate in every election we can according to the rule. On the other side, the Government, off course, considers us as outlaw. We have had an ongoing debate over thirty years in the Administrative Council about this. Till now the debate is not ended, we have a case, but they do not want to have a verdict in this case (Al Erian: interview 02.05.06.).

Nevertheless, there are three more factors that further obscure the regime's capacity for control and repression; the electoral laws, the cooperation with other parties and the use of media.

The second dimension is the electoral law which has been constantly changed in the Mubarak era with various forms of party list and independent system. Despite the political parties law restricts the number of legal parties; the election laws have made opportunities for illegal parties to take part in elections, to a limited degree. Without the help of other parties the Muslim Brothers would not succeed in the elections in the 1980s. Over the past twenty years a series of court decisions has forced the regime to constantly shift its methods. Parties denied a license, with the Muslim Brothers in front, have sometimes successfully appealed to administrative courts to win legal recognition. Egypt's Supreme Court has ruled that political independents have a right to compete for office, thus invalidating electoral systems based on party lists. This ruling has undermined the ability of the regime to keep some parties out of electoral competition; it has also weakened the control of the regime's National Democratic Party (NDP) over its own members; those denied party nomination have regularly sought election as

independents and then successfully gained readmission to party anxious to retain its parliamentary majority. Convinced that the rules were stacked against them, most opposition parties lost interest in parliamentary elections, with boycotts becoming common over the part decade. For the 2000 parliamentary elections, the regime was hit with a particularly inconvenient judicial ruling. The Supreme Constitutional Court held that the constitution mandated full judicial supervision over the balloting itself. This ruling necessitated voting to be spread out over a period of weeks (because of the limited number of judges). It also forced the regime to move some of its most heavy-handed techniques outside the polling place. “The methods were so extreme that the elections did little to enhance the regime’s democratic credentials” (Hamzawy & Brown December 2005). In these days, the regime feels threatened by the strong showing of the Muslim Brothers that it is considering to change the electoral system back to the party list system. In addition a revision of the political party law is also considered to restrict formation of parties to not only based on religion but also with religious references (marjyy’a), but nothing is yet decided.

This brings us to the third dimension which is legal and illegal political collaborators. Interestingly liberal, socialist and center parties have and still do cooperate with the Muslim Brothers on various bases. The Muslim Brothers would have more trouble finding collaborators if it did not have a strong negotiation basis, it enjoyed and enjoys popular support and has organizationally skilled members. With the strong presence in the Parliament, the Muslim Brothers has proved more independent in elections; however it is still dependent on the opposition parties to bring about political reform. Further, if the regime decides to tighten the election laws, the Muslim Brothers has to make new alliances for taking part in the elections. The judiciary has also proved to be an important collaborator for the Muslim Brothers when it comes to changing the election laws in favor of the Muslim Brothers.

The fourth dimension is the access to the Media. Again in theory the Muslim Brothers are banned to express themselves in media, but with cooperation with other actors they find opportunities to get visible. New technology and the internet have eased their access to the broad masses, even though the regime makes efforts to block the internetpages, the Muslim Brothers find alternative channels.

What can we learn from these findings? *Why do the Muslim Brothers, despite political and judicial hindrances, work within the formal political system?* First, despite the structures of a partial semi-corporate autocracy, the regime does in fact provide opportunity structures, which makes it unnecessary for the Muslim Brothers to circumvent the political system to realize their political goals. Further, at present the opportunity structures does only open up for competition for the parliament for the Muslim Brothers. The Parliament, under control of the president and the government, is merely considered a rubberstamp organ; however the Muslim Brothers has realized that it is nevertheless a place to make public statements and to get indirect influence. Last, but not least, operating in the political society gives the Muslim Brothers an opportunity to show that they are serious in their work to bring about reform and that they in general are sincere actors playing by the rules.

5. Conclusions

Before we make concluding remarks on the political capacities of the Muslim Brothers, a brief summary of the relationship between the context and case, political society and the Muslim Brothers will follow.

Looking back at the relationship between the Muslim Brothers and the Egyptian state in the Mubarak era, we can divide this time span in at least three stages. The first stage is most of the 1980s, from the assassination of President Sadat, in 1981, until about 1988. The state wanted to break the ice with Islamic actors in society, and the Muslim Brothers were tolerated, but disregarded. The Brotherhood was enjoyed to a large degree free movement and expression, without being granted any official acknowledgement of the legitimacy of its existence. In this period the Muslim Brothers made cautious efforts to participate in the political society, running with other parties in the Parliamentary elections, and in the semi-political society, such as professional syndicates and student unions.

The parliamentary election in 1987, uncovered the political potential of the Brotherhood, in alliance with both Al-Amal (Labor) and Al-Ahrar (Liberals) parties, under the banner of “Islam is the Solution”. The second phase of the Brothers’ relationship to the state began, now the state became more wary of the political potential of the Muslim Brothers and this uncertainty resulted in friction between the two, as the state started trying to interrupt the advance of the Brotherhood inside the professional syndicates through freezing some of them, and raising problems inside others, while the Brotherhood started acting as a semi-legitimate power in the country.

In 1992 the Brotherhood took hold of the Bar association board which during history has been a bastion of the liberal and governmental trends, which led the state to get alarmed. Later the same year, the most aggressive wave of Islamic violence, which was carried out by both “Islamic Group” and “al-Jihad” broke out, during which the state blamed the Brotherhood for not condemning them. These two events worsened the relationship between the Brotherhood and the state, leading to the next stage, which started in the beginning of 1993 and has continued until now, a period characterized with

deterioration and clash. The rest of the 1990s the Muslim Brothers kept a low profile, due to the harsh clampdowns by the regime. In the parliamentary elections in 2000, the Muslim Brothers won 17 seats, which was the more than the other opposition parties combined. Followed by the 9/11 in 2001 the Egyptian regime intensified its campaigns against the Muslim Brothers. Nevertheless, increased repression in terms of detentions and persecution did not prevent the Muslim Brothers to become the biggest and most serious opposition party in parliament.

How can we understand the political capacities of the Muslim Brothers in this political context?

The Political Capacities of the Muslim Brothers

The political capacities of the Muslim Brothers are understood as the abilities and opportunities of the Muslim Brothers to operate in the political society. In this thesis ability is related to their political goals and strategic choices. Opportunity is the openings in the political system to apply the strategies to gain influence to achieve their goals. The capacities are the abilities to apply the opportunities.

The first sub-question of the problem statement is: *how do political obstacles and opportunities in the formal political system affect and shape the goals and strategies of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt?* In authoritarian regimes, the political opportunities are volatile and unanticipated, and contextual factors have a considerable impact on the goals and strategies of political actors, which will also adjust their goals according to what they can expect to achieve, in a short-term and long-term perspective. In chapter 3 the political goals of the Muslim Brothers were represented. The goals are divided between the programmatic goals and the systemic goals, reflecting what Mainwaring (2003) defines as “election games” and “regime game”. Mainwaring defines various regime games, but the Muslim Brothers have focused, especially the last couple of years, on the “democratic transition game”, which means participating within the political process in order to bring about political reforms. They have also attempted on “delegitimation game”, boycott of elections to delegitimize the political system, but they realized that they can actually achieve more inside than outside the system.

In an authoritarian regime, the context is decisive to what goals and strategies to prioritize. The Muslim Brothers program reveal that socio-economic and moral-religious issues are important political goals, however to achieve these goals they need to make an effort to change the regime. The regime game is the means to reach an end which is their vision of the political platform. Many years in the political game, experiencing ups and down, the Islamic movement has adopted a long-term policy and the Muslim Brothers has shown that they are patient and pragmatic in order to reach their goals. In an authoritarian regime with an illegal status, the goals of the Muslim Brothers are to change the system from within without threatening the regime.

Despite very limited political rights the Muslim Brothers have recognized that it is worth playing the regime game in the core. This leads us to the next sub-question: *why do the Muslim Brothers, despite political and judicial hindrances, work within the formal political system?* The political opportunity structures of the Muslim Brothers were analyzed in chapter 4. Even though the regime has the propensity to repress the Muslim Brothers, they are not fully capable of controlling them, because of various reasons. First and foremost the regime denies the Muslim Brothers legal status as a political party and put restrictions on their activities as a movement. Nevertheless, according to al-Erian:

The illegal status affects our work in two ways, both positively and negatively. Positive because it creates sympathy with us, because the people here do not believe in the accusations and charges against us and they feel strongly about supporting us. Negatively, the illegal status is preventing us from having open head quarters, offices or publishing magazines or news papers or having list for membership and invite people to join us openly.” (Al Erian: interview 02.05.06.)

Further, the judicial system has provided opportunities for participating in the political society, because of the changing electoral laws and the law on electoral surveillance. This finding contradicts the theory of Lust-Okar, which defines the partial liberalized system in Egypt as very stable. The election laws have been changed several times from pressures both from the opposition parties as well as the judiciary. Another aspect of the regime game is not only that they choose to operate in the political society they even choose to do so despite the violent efforts to demotivate the Muslim Brothers:

One of the basic strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood is its insistence of not giving up and continues its work even though it faces a lot of resistance from the regime.

A lot of violence erupted in the wake of the Parliamentary elections, explained by several observers as a result of government panic at the success of the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Shatir 2006). “But provocations of a corrupt, oppressive government -backed by the most powerful countries in the world – will not intimidate either our organization, which has survived for 77 years, or the Egyptian people, who have increasingly come to trust us.” (al-Shatir 2006).

Thirdly, there are other actors in the political society that are willing to cooperate and ease the access to the political society. Again, the Lust-Okar’s model fails. In the 1980s the Wafd cooperated with the Muslim Brothers, later the socialist and liberal parties. During the last two elections the Brothers has not been dependent on other parties to win seats in the People’s Assembly, however they are interested in having as many allies in bringing about the political reform. Finally, the regime has not eased the Muslim Brothers access to the media, however due to globalization, they can express themselves in regional and international media as well as they can have their own webpages publishing massive information.

There are at least three reasons for why the Muslim Brothers operates in the restricted political society. First, to bring about reform they need to position themselves within the political system. Second, to be considered serious political actors and reliable replacement of the existing regime, they have chosen to operate in the political society. Finally, the Muslim Brothers operates in the political society because there are opportunities to get access to the political society by strategically circumventing certain rules and to ally with other political actors.

Now that we have answered the sub-questions we can return to the main research question: *How can we understand the political capacities of the Muslim Brothers?*

First, on the contrary to what many argue, the partly liberalized system has actually provided opportunities for the Muslim Brothers. It seems to be challenging for the regime to balance between liberalization and control. They have a self-made image of embracing democracy; however they have huge problems in living up to this image. The state has considered the political and syndicalistic activities on the one side and the harsh wave of Islamic violence, as two aspects of the same phenomenon. This is strategic choice because the state considered the banned group as a growing political danger threatening its control of ruling in the country, in syndicates and the political

society. In contrast to what Wickham argues, that the Muslim Brothers have chosen to operate outside the political society and focus their political engagement in the socio-political society, I have showed that the Muslim Brothers have incentives, both in terms on opportunities as well as ability to work in the political society.

Second, the Muslim Brothers has proven that they are serious political actor playing by the rules. Until now, the Muslim Brothers have concentrated on the People's Assembly, well aware of the fact that it has very limited political power, because the President and his government are the real power holders in Egypt. Nevertheless, they have managed to become the most influential opposition party in the parliament, with an accomodationist approach cooperating with the other political parities on many political issues. However, the Muslim Brothers has not yet achieved any substantial changes towards reform. The Muslim Brothers are balancing on a thin edge, trying to get as much influence as they can without threatening the regime too much, which will be a self destroying act, as it was in the 1940s and 1950s. Working from within the regime, playing by the rules it becomes more difficult for the regime to accuse the Muslim Brothers of being merely power seekers.

In his studies of various political movements in Southeast-Asia, Törnquist argues that one of the reasons for why these movements failed to “transform their activities into votes, good governance, and general political significance” (Törnquist 2002: 135), is that they are fragmented and that they do not transform interests and single-issues in to political programs. When it comes to the Muslim Brothers it is exactly these elements, the elaborated political program and the organizational structure, that are one of the movement's strengths.

There are two interesting outcomes of the Muslim Brothers political capacities. First, the political activities of the Muslim Brothers are seemingly a democratic learning process. Their illegal position has made them call for democracy and the insistence on playing by the rules, gives them useful insight and experience with the democratic game. Second, mainstream crafting of democracies has proved insufficient and at times counterproductive (Törnquist 2002: 142), hence democracy from within has proved to

be more stable and substantial. Therefore, the political reform efforts of the Muslim Brothers seem interesting and promising.

During the process of writing this thesis the Egyptian regime has tightened the control on the Muslim Brothers again. Al-Houdaiby has written an article where he expresses his fear of the security forces' "3 am knock on the door" (Al-Houdaiby 2007), because of the intensification of detention of active Muslim Brothers members. Nevertheless, they are determined to sustain the repression efforts by the regime for their cause, according to al-Houdaiby:

We are willing to pay the price and take the risks, not only for ourselves, but for Egypt. At the moment there is nobody except the Muslim Brotherhood that is willing to pay the price for fighting for political freedom. Official parties, or the legal parties, are not willing to pay the price. I know some of them, some of their leaders and some of their members, saying they are willing to pay the price, but not to go to prison. We are willing to do anything for this country, so this is the difference between Muslim Brotherhood and other parties. This is also one of the reasons, that people love the Brotherhood more than they love other parties, because they see our sincerity, calling for the peoples' rights and not our rights, we are paying our price for the people willingly, we are not demanding anything in return. Now people vote for us, we want the people to enjoy their rights, and when they enjoy their rights they will make conscious decisions of what they want. We have been used to paying the price for opposing the regime, in 1954, 20 000 members were detained in 30 minutes. The organization is always growing stronger, because we are sincere in what we are doing. We really want the well being of our people, we are not part of the political plot which use everything to come to power of personal interest, we really love our people and , and we are willing to pay the price to see our people live a happier life." (Al-Houdaiby: interview 29.04.06.).

The Way Ahead

At present, excluding non-violent Islamist from the political sphere only serves to weaken the chances of democratic transformation in the region. Today, the Muslim Brothers is a force for serious political reform in Egypt, but also one that need to be clear about questions related to their religious agenda, especially questions on Shari'ah, their dual political and religious identify, organization and leadership, citizenship and women (Hamzawy, Ottaway & Brown 2007).

However, the impact of the Brotherhood on the Egyptian political system depends in large part on how the regime decides to respond to the movement's further moves. The shape of politics and the fate of political reform will be determined in no small part

by how the Muslim Brothers uses its position as well as the relationship that develops between the movement and the regime (Hamzawy & Brown December 2005). During the last months, the Muslim Brothers assurance and offensive performance in parliament as well as in the student and labor unions have become a trouble for the Egyptian regime. According to Hamzawy and Brown:

At least for the next five years, Egyptian politics will be dominated by the relationship between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood's rise can support Egyptian democratization, but only if the regime and the Brotherhood leadership avoid full confrontation." (Hamzawy & Brown December 2005).

The uncertainty about Islamic parties becoming legitimate democratic actors stems from limited experience. The only Islamic parties gaining power democratically is AKP⁵² in Turkey and Hamas⁵³ in Palestine, and the experience is still recent. Historically Islamists have come to power with undemocratic means and not democratic rule, as in Iran, Sudan and Afghanistan. (Hamzawy, Ottaway & Brown February 2007). However, there are many examples on Islamic participation in politics, usually as opposition groups, respecting the rules governing their participation in politics, even if these rules are restrictive and unfair. The Middle East and Egypt in particular is a dynamic scene for political change and it is necessary to regard Islamic movements and parties as serious actors in democratization processes. These processes have important impact on the general development in the region, and it is exciting to follow the further progress.

⁵² The Justice and Development Party, a moderate Islamist, right-wing, conservative party, in power since 2002. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is the leader.

⁵³ The Islamic Resistance Movement, in power since 2006.

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