Egypt's Islamists: A Social Movement Theory Approach to the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

By

Éva Csecsődi

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Abstract

The present thesis provides an analysis of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's evolution completed from a perspective that is inspired by two major theoretical frameworks: the social movement theory approach towards Islamism; and the theory of 'cultural hegemony' framed by Antonio Gramsci. The review of the literature on Islamism reveals that existing theoretical frameworks rarely embrace the complexity of Islamist movements, hence researchers are in need of alternative approaches. Therefore the major aim of the present thesis is to offer an alternative, plausible narrative on how the organization of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood operates and achieves popularity. The fusion of the above mentioned two theories serve as the theoretical framework of the thesis, while the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is chosen as a case study for testing the validity of the theory.

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Introduction

In the current research the focus is placed on Islamist movements, in particular on the ideological, organizational and operational character of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, as in the light of the recent political events, they currently represent the most powerful, politically and socially supported force in Egypt. In the broader geographical context, Islamists have won the recent democratic elections not just in Egypt, but in Tunisia and previously in the Gaza Strip, as well, therefore it can be concluded that the democratic support of the population for Islamic governments in the concerned region is growing. One of the heavily debated questions in the literature is whether these governments will remain true to democratic principles[1], or they will ultimately become as authoritarian as their predeccesors[2], since – as reflected in the traditional Orientalist perspective [3]– Islam is not compatible with democracy. The current research aims to provide an analysis of the evolution of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, completed from a perspective that was inspired by two major theoretical frameworks: the social movement theory approach towards Islamism; and the theory of 'cultural hegemony', framed by Antonio Gramsci.

Scholars have already argued that Islamism is not exclusively a political or religious movement, but has several elements in common with social movements[4]. On the contrary a group of scholars[5] state that Islamism in its character is a political movement with a strong

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[1] Baker, Raymond William. 2003. *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[2] Tibi, Bassam. 2009. "Islamism and Democracy: On the Compatibility of Institutional Islamism and the Political Culture of Democracy." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, 2 (September)

[3] For a concise summary of this position see Kedourie, Elie. 1992. *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*. p. 4. Washington D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

[4] Singerman, Diane. "The Networked World of Islamist Social Movements" pp. 143 – 163. in ed. Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. AND Ismail, Salwa. "Islamist Movements as Social Movements: Contestation and Identity Frames" pp. 385-402. in *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*. 2004. 30, 3 (Fall)

[5] For a sophisticated approach that avoids common stereotypes, see Waterbury, John "Democracy without Democrats? The Potential for Political Liberalization in the Middle East" in Ghassan Salamé (ed.), 1994. pp. 23-47. *Democracy Without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*. London: I.B. Tauris. Also see Yahya Sadowski's criticism on current Orientalist notions in "The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate" in (eds.) Benin, Joel and Joe Stork. 1997. *Political Islam, Essays from Middle East Report*. I.B. Tauris.

religious character. The latter group of scholars share the view that 'Islam and democracy' are hardly compatible with each other, since Islamic principles contradict democratic ones, therefore it is feared that the movement's ultimate goal is the acquisition of totalitarian power[6]. In their view the possibility of a democratic system sustained by Islamists is low[7]. This thesis seeks to contribute to this debate with a case study of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. First, Islamism will be conceptualized as a social movement, then within the Gramscian framework, social and political processes that led to the Muslim Brotherhood's popular support in Egypt will be traced and analyzed, primarily through revealing the ideological basis, organizational structure and operational methods of the movement.

The theory of cultural hegemony framed by Antonio Gramsci will be tested on this case along with a social movement theory approach. The aim of applying this combination of theories is to reveal that the popular support of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood does not derive exclusively from the political and religious ideologies it promoted, but rather from its operational style which has a number of commonalities with social movements in general. It will be argued that the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has established and sustained a social movement that has successfully challenged and conquered the ruling hegemon by establishing a strong, alternative ideology and power. Furthermore, the application of Gramsci's theory with a social movement theory approach on the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, will also hopefully result in useful contributions to the ongoing debate on the overall nature and aspirations of Islamist organizations.

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[6] Tibi, Bassam. 2009. "Islamism and Democracy: On the Compatibility of Institutional Islamism and the Political Culture of Democracy." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, 2 (September)

[7] Krämer, Gudrun "Islamist Notions of Democracy" in (eds.) Benin, Joel and Joe Stork. 1997. *Political Islam, Essays from Middle East Report.* I.B. Tauris.

1. Theoretical Overview

1.1. Literature review: Perspectives on the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

The most vivid debates in the academic literature in the subject of political Islam deal with the general profile and aims of Islamist movements as well as with the compatibility of Islam and democracy. The growing influence of Islamists throughout the Muslim world has greatly heated this ongoing debate and in the same time has disproved several of the former theories on the credibilities of Islamist organizations.[8] The gaps and contradictions between the reality of recent events and the academic perspectives require further investigation as it clearly shows that existing theories regarding the development and aims of Islamist organizations do not provide sufficient explanation on the subject. The academic debate reveals that scholars tend to be divided based on their optimistic or pessimistic perceptions on the democratic nature of Islamist organizations.[9] Also there is a lack of consensus and a strong fragmentation in the conceptualization of Islamist movements. Scholars' views differ greatly on whether the success of Islamist movements lies primarily in their political, social or religious character.[10] The present literature review aims to present the views of those experts[11] who tend to avoid focusing overwhelmingly on the political aspirations of Islamist movements and seek to conceptualize them in alternative ways. As the present thesis aims to take a social movement theory approach towards Islamism, the views of those scholars who share this alternative approach in analyzing Islamist movements will receive primary focus.

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[8] see eg. Saad Eddin Ibrahim's 1995 study on the expected electoral achievements of Islamists.

[9] Sadowski, Yahya "The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate" p.33. in (eds.) Benin, Joel and Joe Stork. 1997. *Political Islam, Essays from Middle East Report*. I.B. Tauris.

[10] ed. Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. pp. 1- 27. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

[11] see eg. Charles Tilly, Quintan Wiktorowitz, Glenn E. Robinson, Diane Singerman, Charles Kurzman in ed. Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. pp. 1- 27. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

One of the major obstacles to theorizing Islamist activism is the lack of a shared research agenda among scholars of multidisciplinary fields. As pointed out by Asef Bayat the fragmented nature of contemporary social movements, including Islamism, needs a plausible narrative that takes account of the heterogeneous layers of perceptions, discourses and practices within a given movement.[12] In spite of this, the publications on Islamism tend to follow narrow sets of research questions, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies, each determined by a particular disciplinary focus. [13] Researchers of religious studies for instance primarily focus on the religious ideas that inspire and utilize Islamist movements; historians are pre-occupied with introducing the origins and historical development of Islamist groups; social scientists prefer to look into the demographic background of the members of Islamist organizations, while political scientists primarily deal with Islamist movements' impact on state and politics. As an outcome of this disciplinary fragmentation certain elements of Islamism have been thoroughly, however separately analyzed that leaves researchers without a theoretical framework that could embrace all elements of Islamist movements. Hence researchers are in need of inclusive and interdisciplinary analyses of Islamist movements. As pointed out by Quintan Wiktorowitz a co-operative research agenda would produce a set of shared working questions, concepts and lines of theory that help provide a comprehensive, interconnected understanding of Islamism.[14]

Another obstacle in the research on Islamism is that scholars[15] tend to ignore developments in social movement research and claim that Islamist movements should be considered as exceptions that can not be explained by existing theories. In case researchers use

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[12] Bayat, Asef. 2005. p. 905. "Islamism and Social Movement Theory" *Third World Quarterly*, 26, 6.
[13] ed. Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. pp. 1- 27. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
[14] ed. Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. pp. 1- 27. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
[15] ed. Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. pp. 1- 27. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

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comparative analysis it is mostly limited to the comparison with fundamentalist religious movements that focus on the ideological similarities between these movements and not on their "mechanisms of activism".[16] As a result of this, several relevant aspects of Islamic activism are left unexplained. Furthermore as pointed out in relation with the development of social movement theory by Doug McAdam "the new comparative riches available to movement scholars are based, almost exclusively, on research rooted in core liberal democratic polities…if our understanding of collective action dynamics has benefited as much as we contend by comparing cases across this relatively homogenous set of polities, imagine what we are likely to learn from broadening our perspective to include those set in very different times and places".[17]

The complex nature of Islamist movements offers a chance to broaden the previously mentioned narrow perspectives on social movements. The literature review on social movement theory reveals that it has emerged as a middle ground approach in analyzing episodes of contentious collective actions, falling between structuralist and rational choice schools. [18] One of the major differences between the analytical approach of these three schools is that they do not use the same units of analysis for explaining collective actions. Structuralists typically work with large units of analysis, such as the state or the international system[19], whereas rational choice theorists stand at the other end and use individuals as the primary unit of analysis. [20] On the contrary social movement theory uses groups as the unit of analysis and emphasizes the importance of volunteerism in carrying out collective actions.[21] It is because social movement

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[16] Antoun and Hegland 1987; Lawrence 1989; Sivan and Friedman 1990; Kepel 1994; Marty and Appleby 1995 (see bibliography)

[17] Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly. 1997. "Toward and Integrative Perspective on Social Movements and Revolution." In ed. Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S.Zuckerman. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[18] Robinson, Glenn E. p. 113. "Hamas as Social Movement". in Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

[19] see eg. a well-known example: Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[20] see eg. Taylor, Michael. 1988. *Rationality and Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[21] Wiktorowizc, Quintan. 2001. p. 35. *The Management of Islamic Activism*. State University of New York Press.

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theorists realize that individuals do not make their choices irrespective of the outside world, but they are part of a community and are influenced by groups, relations and changing contexts. The approach taken by social movement theorists seems to be more suitable for the analysis of Islamist movements for at least three reasons. In case of the Muslim world informal politics, family relations and generally the strong communal spirit play an influential role in the public and political life[22], therefore taking the group as the primary unit of analyis appears to be a right choice. Furthermore the element of volunteerism will be significantly important from the perspective of the current thesis, as it is one of the driving forces of Islamist movements, and in addition it can also reveal the democratic capabilities of Islamist organizations. Finally, social movement theory tends to utilize three variables in its case studies: the impact of changes in political opportunity structures; mobilizing structures; and 'cultural framing' that is not used by the previously mentioned two schools[23], while incorporating the 'cultural' element is important in case of Islamist movements due to the cultural pecularities of the Muslim world.

Last but not least, in order to be able to form a complex, interdisciplinary view of Islamist movements it is beneficial to include the views of those scholars who emphasize the importance of incorporating the pecularities of the Muslim world's social, religious and political life into an analysis on the subject. An important factor to be taken into consideration is that contrary to the Western order, religion, politics and social life in the Muslim world can hardly be sharply separated from each other. This characteristic can be one of the causes of the obstacles analysts face in theorizing Islamist movements, as it is difficult to differentiate between the social, political or religious character of the movements rooted in the mentioned region. The ways how ideologies are spread within the population show significant differences, as in the Muslim world

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[22] Singerman, Diane. "The Networked World of Islamist Social Movements" pp. 143 – 163. in ed. Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. AND Ismail, Salwa. "Islamist Movements as Social Movements: Contestation and Identity Frames" pp. 385-402. in *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*. 2004. 30, 3 (Fall)

[23] Robinson, Glenn E. p. 116. "Hamas as Social Movement". in Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

for instance informal social networks[24] and religious gatherings constitute an important part of the political life. As pointed out by Maróth, a number of relevant differences can be traced between movements and notions rooted in the Western and Muslim civilizations.[25] One practical and basic example of this phenomenon can be the difference between the interpretation of politics in the Western and Muslim world.

Contrary to the West, in the Islamic world the fusion of politics, religion and social issues is a widespread phenomenon that is socially and politically widely accepted. Perhaps the most expressive form of this phenomenon is the *ḫuṭba* (Friday sermon). Throughout the Islamic world the first, rather long part of the *ḫuṭba* always deals with issues related to public life and actual politics. In fact, the *ḫuṭba* is one of the most important tools to address the public, form its opinion and establish a channel for political communication. In many cases its importance and influence is greater than that of the media's. According to Maróth, the explanation for the reasons behind this phenomenon can be also found in the meaning of the Arabic word *siyāsa* (politics). [26] The word *siyāsa* derives from the verb, *sāsa*, which carries the meaning of leading and morally educating in the same time. As pointed out by Maróth, interestingly this meaning can not be traced in the non-Islamic interpretations of this word.[27]

The major difference between the meaning of *politics* in the Islamic and in the Western context is that in the latter one it refers to the arrangement of state-related issues and administration and it does not carry the meaning of moral education and leadership.[28] Whereas in the Islamic context it is related to the leading and moral education of the Muslim community. Furthermore contrary to the Islamic practice of *ḫuṭba*, the Christian sermons restrict their content

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[24] see a great contribution on the topic by (eds) Singerman, Diane and Amar, Paul. 2006. *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East*. American University in Cairo Press.

[25] Maroth, Miklos. 2009. The Political Theory of Islam (*Az Iszlám Politikaelmélete*). Piliscsaba: Avicenna.

[26] Maroth, Miklos. 2009. The Political Theory of Islam (*Az Iszlám Politikaelmélete*). Piliscsaba: Avicenna.

[27] Maroth, Miklos. 2009. The Political Theory of Islam (*Az Iszlám Politikaelmélete*). Piliscsaba: Avicenna.

[28] Maroth, Miklos. 2009. The Political Theory of Islam (*Az Iszlám Politikaelmélete*). Piliscsaba: Avicenna.

to religious topics and are based primarily on Biblical texts. The well-known phrases "Islam is a religion and a state" (*al-Islām dīn wa dawla*) and "Islam is a religion and a world in itself / way of life" (*al-Islām dīn wa dunyà*) also derive from this perception.

1.2.   The theoretical overview and aims of the current research

As mentioned previously, the present thesis has been inspired by those group of experts who analyze Islamism with a social movement theory approach. A unique publication[29] on the subject edited by Quintan Wiktorowitz that brings those scholars together who take a social movement theory approach towards Islamism served as an essential basis for the current thesis. Inspired by these authors, in the followings it will be argued that the key of the Muslim Brotherhood's success lies in its ability to embrace the operational style of social movements through which they have successfully managed to promote their religious and political ideologies.

A further crucial inspiration for the current thesis comes from Thomas J. Butko's publication[30] in which he tested Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony on the case of Islamist movements. He analyzed the movements primarily within the context of political science and completed a textual analysis on the works of Islamist leaders. Butko's research reveals that Islamist movements strove to form a counter-hegemonic bloc that aimed to challange the political order imposed by the ruling hegemon, in this case the secular governments of Middle-Eastern states. In Butko's interpretation, Gramsci's theory primarily deals with the struggle for political power, therefore he has analyzed the evolution of Islamist movements from a political point of view. However Gramsci's theory seems to suggest more than that. He states that the successful formation of a counter-hegemonic bloc involves complex social processes, in which

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[29] Wiktorowicz, Quintan (ed). 2004. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
[30] Butko, Thomas J. 2004. "Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 31(1), pp. 41–62 (May).

the whole moral order of society is being transformed. Led by the belief that the operational sytle of social movements is more suitable for generating processes that are able to transform the moral character of social groups, although greatly inspired by Butko, contrary to his approach this thesis seeks to conceptualize Islamist activism as a social movement and explain its evolution and success with the help of Gramsci's theoretical framework. This idea will be then tested on the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

Based on the research conducted on Gramsci's notions, and on the comparison of Butko's analyis and the publications of those scholars who took a social movement theory approach towards Islamism, it seems plausible that social movement theory combined with Gramsci's analytical framework can be ideally applied for analyzing the aims, organizational character and operational methods of Islamist movements. Furthermore it was pointed out by Ald Gunvald Nilsen, that Marxism is a body of theory that emanated from and was crafted for social movement, paradoxically it does not contain a theory that specifically explains the emergence, character and development of social movements.[31] It is therefore also an initial attempt to show that Marxist theories – in the current case the theory of cultural hegemony framed by Antonio Gramsci – hold high potential for explaining social movements.

1.3.   Islamism, social movement theory and the Gramscian framework

The idea of a 'third face of power', or 'invisible power' has its roots partly, in Marxist thinking about the pervasive power of ideology, values and beliefs in reproducing class relations and concealing contradictions[32]. Antonio Gramsci the Italian Marxist linguist, philosopher and social and political scientist, who has been imprisoned by Mussolini for a long period of time has elaborated and extended these ideas in his enfamous Prison Notebooks.

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[31] Nilsen, Alf Gunvald. 2009. p. 109. "'The authors and the actors of their own drama': Towards a Marxist theory of social movements". *Capital & Class* (Autumn) 33, 3.

[32] Heywood, Andrew. 1994. p. 100. Political *Ideas and Concepts: An Introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan.

In his Prison Notebooks, Gramsci warned of the difficulties of revolutionary struggles and pointed out that a 'war of attack' can only be successful if it is preceeded by a successful 'war of position' that constitutes of a struggle over ideas and beliefs that help to establish a new 'hegemony'[33]. The political and practical implications of Gramsci's ideas were far-reaching because he warned of the limited possibilities of direct revolutionary struggle for control. He claimed that the 'war of attack' could only succeed if it is preceeded by a 'war of position' in the form of struggle over ideas and beliefs[34]. Gramsci's views on how power can be obtained through spreading new, counter-hegemonic ideas and transforming the existing ones not by force but through consent have been inspirational for social and political movements alike[35]. His ideas have also had an important impact on the debates about civil society. Those who criticized the common liberal concept of civil society have used Gramsci's concept for arguing that civil society can also be a public sphere where political struggle and competition over the dominance of ideas and norms take place[36].

Gramsci has built his theory primarily on the ideological struggles and differences between the capitalist and communist state and saw the former one as a system in which two spheres, the political and civil society overlap. He claimed that the political society rules through force, whereas the civil society rules through consent. This is a remarkably different view of civil society that of today's, which sees it as a sector where voluntary and non-profit organizations operate without the interference of political struggles and the state. On the contrary, Gramsci saw civil society as a sector that closely cooperates with the (burgeois) state and reproduces and maintains the 'hegemony' of it in the public life through education, religious life and the media in

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[33] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[34] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[35] Heywood, Andrew. 1994. p. 101. Political *Ideas and Concepts: An Introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[36] Heywood, Andrew. 1994. p. 101. Political *Ideas and Concepts: An Introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan.

order to 'manufacture consent' and support the legitimacy of the state. [37] However Gramsci focused on the ruling hegemon's maintenance of power, with his notion of civil society he showed the influence of this sector in manufactoring consent. Social movement theory shows an important overlap here with the Gramscian notions as pointed out by Bayat, "social movements may also succeed in terms of changing civil societies, behaviour, attitudes, cultural symbols and value systems which, in the long run, may confront political power."[38] Furthemore this aspect is also particularly important in the case study of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as they have carried out a large part of their activism within this sector.

Perhaps the best known theoretical framework proposed by Gramsci is his theory of 'cultural hegemony'. This theory will be significant in our research as well, therefore it is important to first conceptualize the term 'hegemony'. One can find a great deal of inconsistency in the academic literature regarding the definition of hegemony.[39] The problem with most of these definitions is that they tend to focus on the present ruling class only and neglect Gramsci's observations on alternative forces that aim to achieve hegemony, or in other words the so called 'counter-hegemonic forces'. In this sense hegemony should not be exclusively defined as the ruling class's maintenance of power, but also as a process through which social groups aim to expand and maintain their power. In case these social groups manage to form their own hegemony through creating new universal principles, in Gramsci's phrasing this is when a 'historical bloc' comes to existence. [40]

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[37] Heywood, Andrew. 1994. p. 100-101. Political *Ideas and Concepts: An Introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan.
[38] Bayat, Asef. 2005. p. 898. "Islamism and Social Movement Theory" *Third World Quarterly*, 26, 6.
[39] For instance Martin Clark in his 1977. *Antonio Gramsci and the Revolution that Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press has defined hegemony as "how the ruling classes control the media and education." This is one of the narrow interpretations of hegemony, however it is relevant in a sense, that it shows the common conception of it, namely that the ruling class controls the institutions as well as peoples' thoughts.
[40] Gramsci, Antonio. p. 353. 1995. *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gramsci has also had a deep ethical concern for how these alternative forces develop and strive to achieve hegemony. Gramsci states that there is a qualitative difference between the operation of these forces: they can be regressive, authoritarian groups on the one hand, or progressive social groups on the other hand.[41] At an ethical level, Gramsci was above all else an anti-dogmatist who believed that truth can not be imposed from top to down, but it should be established through concrete and sympathetic dialogue with people. As pointed out by him, regressive hegemony involves imposing a set of non-negotiable values upon the people, mainly through the use of coercion and deceit, whereas a progressive force and its hegemony will develop by way of democratically acquired consent in society.[42] Gramsci's description of progressive, counter-hegemonic forces show important commonalities with the pecularities of social movements, including Islamist ones. Among them the most relevant ones are the bottom-up approach that all of them tend to take and the democratically acquired consent and volunteerism that are fundamental elements of both Gramsci's progressive counter-hegemonic struggle, and generally that of social movements.

Another important element of Gramsci's theoretical framework is his conception of 'common sense', that can be defined as a complex system of ideologies or values that determine individuals' general perception of the world as well as their actions. In terms of their ideological value, Gramsci does not see a difference between the 'common sense' promoted by political theorists and philosophers and that of ordinary people. He claims that "all men are philosophers, having at least a spontaneous philosophy".[43] In his view these two types of 'common senses' only

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[41] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[42] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[43] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. p. 323. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

differ in their degree of homogenity, coherence and logic with which they are expressed.[44] What is important he states is that "one must...distinguish between historically organic ideologies...and ideologies that are arbitrary, rationalistic, or willed".[45] The phrase 'organic' is widely used in Gramsci's theory, not just in terms of ideologies, but namely in his conceptions of 'organic intellectuals' or 'organic crisis'. In Gramsci's notion those ideologies are 'organic' that are able to reach people on the level of feelings, contrary to the unorganic ideologies that operate through verbal manipulation, public performance and rational calculation. Gramsci states that only organic ideologies are able to become active guiding forces that have a real effect on the world. Translated to the level of real life events, Gramsci's theory implies that in case the aim is to influence people's way of thinking and their actions it is not sufficient to act only on the level of theories and rhetorics. The movement must find ways to make its new ideology become 'organic' through incorporating it into people's everday life and through promoting it as an active guiding force for them. Social movements are highly suitable for this purpose, as their operation is fundamentally based on the involvement and actions of social groups. Furthermore the ideologies social movements promote are able to operate on the level of feelings, that is shown by the fact that social movements highly rely on volunteerism, that inherently derives from individuals' faith in the importance of the movement. In the case of Islamist movements these manifest for instance in members' and sympathizers' voluntary involvement in educational and charity activism.[46]

Importantly, Gramsci points out that not all social movements can become 'organic'. Those that manage to do so gain the support of the masses and succeed in establishing their own

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[44] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. p. 347. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[45] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. p. 376-7. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[46] see eg. Singerman, Diane. "The Networked World of Islamist Social Movements" pp. 143 – 163. in ed. Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

'organic' culture, whereas the most obvious sign of a movement's failure in becoming 'organic' is its inability to generate a mass movement and the lack of intellectual or artistic works that were born under its influence. As Gramsci frames it, an organic movement is "irresistible..it will find its artists" otherwise "the world in question was artificial and fictitious"[47]. In his view an 'organic' ideology operates on the level of feelings, "from deep within"[48] that generates the movement's intellectual and artistic development. Gramsci names 'organic intellectuals' those who are able to create an organic ideology that is able to "change, correct or perfect conceptions of the world…and thus to change…norms of conduct".[49] It is the 'organic intellectuals' task to "construct an intellectual moral-bloc which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass".[50] Gramsci also points out that this process requires an educational relationship between the masses and the 'organic intellectuals' as it is the aim of the movement to complete the 'intellectual and moral reformation' of the people. This means the process of changing the existing beliefs without subordinating to the actual dominant 'common sense'. As it will be elaborated later on, for Islamists, educational relationship or in Gramsci's words the 'intellectual and moral reformation' of the masses has meant one of the cornerstones of their movement.

In relation with Islamist movements, it was first pointed out by Thomas J. Butko[51] that Gramsci's notions of 'hegemony' and his framework on the means of creating a 'counter-hegemonic bloc' can be well-traced in the case of Islamists. As highlighted by Butko, Gramsci states that in order to create a successful revolutionary movement that aims to create a new type of 'hegemony', a 'counter-hegemonic' bloc that constitutes of three pillars should be established. These pillars are: the creation of a coherent ideology, a unified organization and a long-term

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[47] Gramsci, Antonio. p. 197. 1985. *Selections from Cultural Writings*. London:Lawrence and Wishart.

[48] Gramsci, Antonio. p. 207. 1985. *Selections from Cultural Writings*. London:Lawrence and Wishart.

[49] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. p. 344. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[50] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. p. 332-3. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[51] Butko, Thomas J. 2004. "Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 31(1), (May).

strategy. According to Gramsci, a counter hegemonic ideology must be able to bring "into being a new form of State", "construct a new intellectual and moral order", and "create a new type of society".[52] This is indeed a highly complex process that can involve several aspects of human life, not exclusively political or economic ones, but also social and spiritual ones. The well-know phrases 'Islam is the solution' (*al-Islām huwwa al-ḥāl*) and ' Islam is a religion and a world in itself/ way of life' (*al-Islām dīn wa dunyā*) can be well-understood within the Gramscian context as it inherently realizes the ideological and social complexity of counter-hegemonic movements. Ḥasan al-Bannā, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood has also repeatedly emphasized "the holistic nature of Islam"[53] and as the development of the organization shows, he managed to transform the movement from a solely religious organization into a movement with clear political and socio-economic aims.[54] al-Bannā also wrote that "we believe that Islam is an all-embracing concept which regulates every aspect of life, adjucating on every one of its concerns and prescribing for it a solid and rigorous order". [55]

An extended analysis of the Gramscian framework that besides the theory of 'hegemony' has also included least used aspects of it, such as the concepts of 'common sense', 'organic ideologies and intellectuals' and 'intellectual and moral reformation' combined with a social movement theory approach seem to be suitable for explaining the mentioned complex processes behind Islamist movements. In the following chapter this theoretical framework will be tested on the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

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[52] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. p. 388. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart. IN Butko, Thomas J. 2004. p. 50. "Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 31(1), pp. 41–62 (May).

[53] Butko, Thomas J. 2004. p. 50. "Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 31(1), (May).

[54] Ismail, Tareq Y. and Ismael, Jacueline. 1985. p. 63. *Government and Politics in Islam*. London: Pinter

[55] Wedel, Charles. trans. 1978. p. 46. *Five Tracts of Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906-49): A Selection from the Majmu'at rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid Ḥasan al-Banna*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

2. The Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

2.1. A brief history of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

The history of fundamentalist movements in Egypt dates back to the 1920s, when the Islamist organization of 'Brothers' (*Iḫwān*) has been established by Ḥasan al-Bannā. He has been a devoted anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist, yet in the same time blamed the Egyptian religious and political leadership for the country's subordinate and defenseless situation. al-Bannā believed that Egypt has lost its 'pride' and became impoverished because of the unconditional acceptance and borrowing of the Western cultural and value system and the negligence of Islamic teachings. Led by this belief and motivation he has established the organization of the Muslim Brothers in 1928. This organization has been the product of that civilizational dialogue in which the colonizers, the king and the elites have attempted to transform Egypt based on a European model. Al-Bannā has critcized Europe for its atheism, decadence and materialism, however he has also been aware of the deep developmental gap between Egypt's and the West's technological advancement. His widely known phrase "*al-Islām huwwa al-ḥāl*" (Islam is the solution) addressing that Islam can solve all the problems of Egypt and the entire mankind is often used among Islamists until today.[56]

Later on, in 1939 the *Iḫwān* has officially become a political organization and from this point took an active role in the resistance movement against the British influence. For instance, at the outbreak of the second World War, al-Bannā has sent a secret letter to Hitler and Mussolini requesting help in Egypt's fight against the foreign occupation and the corrupt regime of King Fārūq. His letter however has been left without answer.

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[56] Aboul-Enein, Youssef H. 2003. p. 27. "Al-Iḫwān Al-Muslimīn: The Muslim Brotherhood". *Military Review.* (July/August) 83, 4.

Perhaps the most contradictory and agressive step taken by the Muslim Brothers has been the establishment of the Special Forces (*al-Tanẓīm al-Ḫāṣ*) around 1940, that has been the semi-military branch of the organization conspirating against the British forces and the Egyptian king. From this point, tensions between the organization and the regime have increased, and the Brothers were finally banned from participating in the political life.

At the beginning of the 1950s, they could temporarily operate legally and again, they got fully engaged in the resistance movement against the British presence in the country. They were present during the 1952 demonstrations against the 'colonizers' and in the same time assured Gamal Abdel Nasser's Free Officers resistance organization of their loyalty and support. Muhammad Naguib and Nasser have successfully seized power on July 22nd 1952.

By 1954 the relationship between Nasser's regime and the Brothers has come to a turning point. The ideological differences between them became more crucial, as the Free Officers, who have been made up mainly of Coptic Christians and secularists started to see the Brothers' activism as a threat to their political and ideological power. The Brothers have criticized Nasser for his weak foreign policy, mainly pointing at his Israel-politics and his treaty signed with the British in the case of the Suez Canal. It is interesting however, that led by his deep desperation, al-Bannā has even visited the Egyptian British Embassy and offered the services of his organization in the de-stablization efforts against Nasser's regime.[57] The tensions between the Brothers and the regime continued to grow and ended in the imprisonment of thousands of the Brothers by Nasser. In 1957 Nasser went even further and ordered the brutal execution of several imprisoned Brothers.

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[57]Aboul-Enein, Youssef H. 2003. p. 29. " Al-Iḫwān Al-Muslimīn: The Muslim Brotherhood". *Military Review*. (July/August) 83, 4.

During the prison years, a new influential figure of the Brothers has appeared. Sayyid Quṭb has provided a new ideological foundation for the movement, incorporating the new political circumstances into his thought. Quṭb has criticized not only the Western moral decadence, but also the Eastern regimes for their corruption and spoiled secularism. His trip to the United States of America had a great influence on his ideas. The West's liberalism has shocked Quṭb. The excessive consumerism of alcohol, the violence on the streets and the widespread racism that he witnessed during his stay have all encouraged Quṭb to join the Muslim Brothers at his return to Egypt and write his most famous work, the Milestones.[58]

Quṭb's theory on democracy and the state has been particularly relevant in the ideological evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood. His interpretation of democracy is basically the anti-thesis of the Western type of liberal democracy, what he considers to be completely alien from Islam. His thought carries certain radical and fundamentalist characteristics that can be traced in his general perception of the world. Quṭb described a bipolar world, where the "good" and the "evil", Allah and the Satan are in constant conflict with each other. The "good" are those communities that follow Islamic principles, while the rest and the "evil" were ignorants (ǧāhil), those who did not follow the true path of Islam. In Quṭb's reading the ideal state is exclusively based on three[59] pillars: the *tawḥīd* (divine unity), the *šūrah* (consultation) and the execution of the šarīᶜah (Islamic law).

Even though Quṭb's teachings have significantly inspired all Islamist movements, it should be noted that during the second half of the 20th century his ideologies were interpreted in several different ways. As for the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, the organization has certainly

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[58] Csicsmann, László. 2010. pp. 167-208. "A Mubárak-rezsim liberalizációja és deliberalizációja." (The liberalization and de-liberalization of the Mubarak-regime) in Csicsmann, László (ed.) *Iszlám és modernizáció a Közel-Keleten. Az államiság eltérő modelljei.* Budapest: Nemzetközi Tanulmányok Intézet, Aula Kiadó, Budapest, 2010.

[59] Stacher, Joshua A. 2002. p.11. *"*Post-Islamist Rumblings in Egypt: The Emergence of the Wasat Party". *The Middle East Journal.* (Summer) 56, 3.

not remained united behind the same ideas during the 20th century. There were several breaks within the organization due to ideological disagreements. In spite of this, perhaps it is still largely because of these contradictory ideological foundations that the majority of Western politicians and scholars perceive the Brothers' activism as a threat to democracy.[60]

In spite of the fact that in the second half of the 20th century the Muslim Brotherhood has undergone several ideological changes and also faced a number of challanges in its relation with the state, it remained to be the major representative of Islamism in Egypt. The success of the organization lies in the political, social and judicial reforms they have carried out as well as in their charity and other social activism. Especially from the 1970s, they have successfully managed to operate in those civic spheres in which the state has been unable to act efficiently mainly due to the lack of financial resources. On the contrary, schools, institutions, hospitals and other non-profit organizations established by the Brothers sustain the needs of the population until today.

In his 1995 study, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Egyptian-American sociologist and Egypt's leading human rights and democracy activist, dealt with a significant and widely debated question. He has attempted to measure the success of Islamists in case of free and democratic elections. He estimated that Islamists should expect to gain only 15% of the votes.[61] His prediction has proven to be wrong first in the 2005 elections, which implied that in case of transparent and democratic elections the Muslim Brotherhood would in fact be able to take power. Finally the democratic elections of 2012 showed the real popularity of the Brothers and disproved former predictions. The Freedom and Justice party staffed by members of the Muslim Brotherhood with Muhammad

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[60] and see *Journal of Democracy* 19/3 (July 2008) a symposium consisting of eight contributions on political Islam and democracy.

[61] Makram-Ebeid, Mona. 2001. p.42. "Egypt's 2000 Parliamentary Elections". *Middle East Policy*, (June) 8, 2.

Morsi as its presidential nominee, won the elections by gaining 51.73% of the votes. In the Arab world, Muhammad Morsi became the first democratically elected Islamist head of the state.[62]

2.2. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as a counter-hegemonic bloc: coherent ideology; unified organization; long-term strategy

As pointed out by Gramsci, the struggle for hegemony starts with the 'war of position' that aims to ensure the dominance of particular ideologies, 'knowledge' and a 'new type of intellectuality'. It is during the 'war of position' when a 'counter-hegemonic bloc' must come to existence in order to spread a 'new type of knowledge'. Gramsci states that a 'counter-hegemonic' bloc constitutes of three important elements: a coherent ideology, a unified organization and a long-term strategy. Regarding the operational methods of the 'counter-hegemonic bloc' Gramsci also notes that power should only be obtained and maintained "through consent and not by force"[63], however this can realize only in case the society is ready to embrace and comply with the promoted new ideology. In this sense the first, essential step in the evolution of a 'progressive' counter-hegemonic bloc is to form and spread a new, coherent ideology.

Since its foundation, the Muslim Brotherhood had a strong social agenda to promote[64] that constituted an important part of their ideology. The early writings of Islamists show a deep interest in revealing the economic and social inequalities that characterized the Egyptian society in the first half of the 20th century. They saw the solution for these issues in radical land reforms that would deprive land owners from their excessive power. They also strongly opposed

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[62] El Deeb and Keath, Sarah and Lee. "Islamist claims victory in Egypt president vote". Associated Press. Retrieved 18 June 2012.

[63] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[64] see eg. Sisi, ʿAbbas Ḥasan. 1978. *Ḥasan al-Bannā: Mawāqif fī al-Daʿwah wa al-Tarbiyah*. Alexandria, Egypt: Dar al Daʿwah.; and (eds) John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito. 1982. "Ḥasan al-Banna, "The New Renaissance" Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives". New York: Oxford University Press.; and Shepard, William. 1996. *Sayyid Quṭb and Islamic Activism*. London, New York, Köln: Brill.

corruption and the mechanisms of the state bureaucracy and in the same time urged the establishment of effective social networks and the reform of the education and healthcare systems.[65] The Brothers saw the means of successfully promoting their ideology and agenda through the deepening of individuals' religious faith. They believed that Muslims who receive a proper moral and religious education will automatically make the right decisions in relation with choosing the right partner and bringing up their children in a religious manner, thus ensuring the existence of those processes that Islamize all segments of society and complete an 'intellectual and moral reformation' within them. In the long term these religious individuals and families would be the ones who lay down the foundations of a greater Muslim community, the Muslim state and finally the united Islamic world. [66]

Besides the religious principles the Brotherhood has promoted, the way how this "intellectual and social reformation" has been accomplished should be also sought in the Brothers' social activism. On the one hand they could proficiently organize and mobilize groups within the civic spheres, while on the other hand they have been generally transparent in their modes of operation[67] that can be best observed in their activism within students' and workers' unions.[68] The quality of social services provided by the Brothers have far exceeded the quality of those provided by the state, since the latter one has always shown a greater interest in securing its own survival than ensuring the welfare of the population.[69]

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[65] Utvik, B. O. 1995. "Filling the Vacant Throne of Nasser: The Economic Discourse of Egypt's Islamist Opposition". *Arab Studies Quarterly*. (Fall) 17, 4.

[66] Aboul-Enein, Youssef H. 2003. p. 30. *"Al-Iḫwān Al-Muslimīn: The Muslim Brotherhood". Military Review.* (July/August) 83, 4.

[67] Walsh, John. 2003. p. 34. "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood". *Harvard International Review*. (Winter) 24, 4.

[69] Ghobashy, Mona al-. 2005. p. 380. "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 35, 3. Cambridge University Press.

It was mainly during the presidency of Anwar as-Sādāt and Muḥammad Ḥusnī Sayyid Mubārak that as a result of liberal economic policies (e.g. fostering privatization) the quality of social services has significantly decreased. This has opened a window of opportunity for Islamist organizations to show their credibility in sustaining the needs of the population. [70] By the end of the 1980's Islamist non-profit organizations – the majority of them sustained by the Muslim Brotherhood – gave one-third of the nearly 13.000 civic organizations operating in Egypt.[71] These organizations offered better services at lower prices or at no cost. In case of the Brotherhood's organizations, the role of the *zakāt* [72](alms-giving) has been a key contributing factor as it ensured the stabililty of their budgets. Besides the contributions of individual Muslims, from the 1990's onwards the Brothers have also received large sums of *zakāt* from wealthy Egyptians who emigrated to the Gulf-states.[73] In the same time the government has realized that without the assistance of the Brothers' organizations in providing social services, it would be difficult to neutralize or hide the negative effects of the ongoing liberal economic reforms.[74] While the Brothers have been successful in fighting poverty, unemployment and other urgent social issues, the government has been unable to do so. Led by this recognition, with the passage of time the state has voluntarily given up on fulfilling its duties within the civic spheres.[75]

Events that have clearly shown who has been the dominant power within the civic spheres were for instance the 1992 earthquake in Cairo and the flood of 1994 in Lower Egypt. While the government has not been able to take immediate actions, the Brothers were able to act

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[70] Bayat, Asef. 2007. p. 35. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn.* Stanford University Press.

[71]Bayat, Asef. 2007. p. 35. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn.* Stanford University Press.

[72] The practice of charitable giving by Muslims based on accumulated wealth.

[73] Bayat, Asef. 2007. p. 43. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn.* Stanford University Press.

[74] Sullivan, Denis J. and Abed-Kotob, Sana. 1999. p. 24. *Islam in Contemporary Egypt: Civil Society vs. the State.* Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder.

[75] Goodson, Larry P. and Radwan, Soha. 1997. p. 13. "Democratization in Egypt in the 1990s: Stagnant, or Merely Stalled?" *Arab Studies Quarterly.* (Winter) 19, 1.

promptly and save the lives and valuables of thousands of people. After the earthquake, they have built shelters, and medical tents, distributed clothes, blankets and food among the victims, furthermore their financial resources also allowed them to donate an amount equal to 1000 US dollars to all those families whose homes have been destroyed. [76]

In the light of the complexity of the movement, that embraces social, religious and political aspirations likewise, it is problematic to claim that "the ultimate aim of the Borthers has been to achieve political power".[77] The Muslim Brotherhood's Islamists had aims that go further than obtaining political power. It can be traced in their ideological background and social activism that their ultimate goal was instead to create a 'new moral order' that is based on Islamic principles and is able to challange the values proposed by the ruling hegemon. Even though the movement had clear political goals, its ideological background shows that their primary and most important goal has been the moral transformation of society in an Islamic manner which could be best accomplished through a social movement that is able to reach all segments of society. Through their civic and religious activism the Muslim Brotherhood has been able to transform the moral order of wide segments of the Egyptian society and started certain automatisms within it that had the ability to impact the morals and the 'common sense' of future generations as well. A solely political movement is less-likely capable of accomplishing such goals since it does not include civic and religious activism in its scope, neither does it aim to transform the 'moral order' of the society. Supposedly for the same reason the Brothers have been postponing the establishment of their own political party for a long period of time. [78] Eventually their activism in the civic and religious spheres enabled them to gain widespread popular support that ensured the

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[76] Walsh, John. 2003. p. 34. "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood". *Harvard International Review*. (Winter) 24, 4.

[77] Butko, Thomas J. 2004. p. 50. "Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 31,1 (May).

[78] "The Muslim Brotherhood is a movement, not a political party, but members have created political parties in several countries, such as the Islamic Action Front in Jordan and Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank and the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt. These parties are staffed by Brotherhood members but kept independent from the Muslim Brotherhood to some degree, unlike Ḥizb ut-Taḥrīr which is highly centralized" in Fuller, Graham E. 2003. p. 138. The Future of Political Islam. Palgrave MacMillan.

success of those political parties that are officially independent from the organization but promote Islamist principles and are staffed by Brotherhood members. "[79.]

According to Gramsci, the second important element of a counter-hegemonic bloc is a unified organizational structure. [80] Butko interprets Gramsci's notions of the organizational structure exclusively from the political aspect, however the framework is also suitable for a social movement theory approach. Gramsci speaks of three components revolutionary movements need to have in their organizational structure: the 'principal cohesive', 'intermediate' and 'mass' [81] elements. Butko translates these to the components typical of all political organizations by saying that they are equivalents of the concepts of leadership, vanguard and individual members.[82] The three Gramscian components however can also be traced in case of social movements' organizational structure. As pointed out by Bayat, "social movements possess various layers of activism and constituency, leaders, cadres, members, sympathizers, free riders, and so on…at the same time, social movements usually possess an animating effect in that they inspire and unintentionally activate fragmented sentiments, sympathies and collectives outside, often on the periphery, of social movement organisations, usually with little or no structural linkage between them.".[83] There is an overlap that can be traced between the organizational structure the Gramscian framework and social movement theory offer. They both talk about a 'principal cohesive' power that constitutes of the founders and 'leaders' of the movement, an 'intermediate' element that includes the 'members' and activists participating in the movement, and third 'the masses' who are 'symphatizers', but not necessarily members of the organization.

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[79] Gramsci, Antonio. p. 109. 1985. *Selections from Cultural Writings*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
[80] Gramsci cited in Butko, Thomas J. 2004. "Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 31(1), (May).
[81] Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. pp. 152-153. Selections *from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, eds. & trans. London: Lawrence and Wishart. Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks.
[82] Butko, Thomas J. 2004. p. 51. "Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 31(1), (May).
[83] Bayat, Asef. 2005. p. 900. "Islamism and Social Movement Theory" *Third World Quarterly*, 26, 6.

In the Muslim Brotherhood's organizational structure these three levels of the organization can be clearly distinguished. The organization is characterized by a bottom-up structure as it strongly relies on informal community relations. The smallest units of 'the masses' or the 'symphatizers' are individuals, families and typically neighbourhoods that are in close-knit relationship with each other. It is crucially important to actively interact with these masses as the movement first of all needs to 'reconstruct a hegemonic apparatus for these formerly passive and apolitical elements.'[84] Their continuous awareness of and loyalty to the movement is ensured for instance through the organization of small, local Islamist study groups (ḥalqa) and through larger regional gatherings where individual, non-member symphatizers of the movement have the chance to discuss actual social, political and religious issues. Besides, symphatizers are also provided with opportunities to participate at seminars, courses, conferences or trips that serve to strengthen the community spirit among them.[85] Another important platform where the movement interacts with and has an opportunity to gain the support of the masses is in the civic sector. The Muslim Brotherhood is well-known for its educational and charity activism, that also largely contributed to their popular support and ability to mobilize the masses. [86]

With regards to the 'intermediate element' or 'the members', three of the ideological founding fathers of the movement, al-Mawdūdī, Quṭb and al-Bannā, shared the view that a "coalition of committed individuals" is necessary in forming the core and the "vital organic cell" of the Islamic movement.[87] Given the important role the 'intermediate element' plays, becoming a member of the organization is not an easy process to go through. There are a number of pre-conditions and criteria for joining the movement, and membership also comes with serious

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[84] Joll, James. 1977. *Gramsci*. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins.

[85] Aboul-Enein, Youssef H. 2003. p. 30. "Al-Iḫwān Al-Muslimīn: The Muslim Brotherhood". *Military Review*. (July/August) 83, 4.

[86] Clark, Janine A. 2004. *Islam, Charity, and Activism: Middle-Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen.* Indiana University Press.

[87] Haddad, Yvonne.1983. p. 87."Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival", in (ed) Esposito, John. *Voices of Resurgent Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press.

responsibilities. Members are organized into four hierarchical levels[88] and mobility between these levels can only be achieved through the individual's continuous efforts to deepen his knowledge of Islamic doctrines and principles.[89] Members receive continuous education in various fields and are generally expected to be "obedient". As al-Bannā framed it "listen and obey your leaders both in duress and comfort, in good times and bad, for this is the token of your conviction and the bonds of solidarity among you"[90] or as a member of the organization said, the motto of the Brotherhood could be "Listen and obey!".[91] Yet it is important to point out that al-Bannā and Gramsci had both realized that individuals can not be coerced into giving obedience, such adherence must be granted freely and willingly. [92] This notion also shows parallelity with social movements that are inherently based on the element of volunteerism.[93]

In terms of the leadership Gramsci states that it is the most important element of the movement. He writes that "the question (of leadership) becomes even more complex and difficult in wars of position, fought by huge masses who are only able to endure the immense muscular, nervous, and physical strain with the aid of great reserves of moral strength. Only a very skillful leadership, capable of taking into account the deep aspirations and feelings of those human masses, can prevent disintegration and defeat."[94] Gramsci saw the cohesion and devotion of the leadership as a pre-condition of the movement's success. As pointed out by Butko the same concept can be traced in the case of Islamist movements as "the principal Islamic theorists

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[88] Trager, Eric. 2011. "The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood: Grim Prospects for a Liberal Egypt". *Foreign Affairs* (September-October) available at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-unbreakable-muslim-brotherhood-grim-prospects-for-a-liberal-egypt

[89] Rostoványi, Zsolt. 1998. p. 352. *Az iszlám a 21. század küszöbén*. Budapest: Aula Könyvkiadó.

[90] Wedel, Charles. trans. 1978. p. 37. *Five Tracts of Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906-49): A Selection from the Majmu'at rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid Ḥasan al-Banna*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[91] Leiken, Robert S. and Brooke, Steven. 2007. p.110. "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood". *Foreign Affairs*. (March/April) 86, 2.

[92] Joll, James. 1977. p. 64. *Gramsci*. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins. and Nemeth, Thomas. 1980. p. 16. *Gramsci's Philosophy: A Critical Study*. Brighton Sussex: Harvester Press.

[93] Wiktorowitz, Quintan. 2001. p. 35. *The Management of Islamic Activism*. State University of New York Press.

[94] Butko, Thomas J. 2004. p. 52. "Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 31(1), (May).

focus on leadership as the single most important criterion in determining the cohesiveness and, hence, potential success of their 'revolutionary' movements."[95] In case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's leadership one can see a complex and generally democratic and transparent system that ensures the mentioned cohesiveness of the leadership. On the top of the leadership stands the supreme guide (*muršid*) who is elected with absolute majority from the candidates of the so called Guidance Committee (*Maktab al-Iršād*) by the Šūra Council (*Maǧlis aš-Šūra*). The candidates must be at least 40 years old and in the same time members of the Šūra Council. The Šūra Council can be considered as the Muslim Brotherhood's legislative body, that constitutes of 100 members who are delegated by the 29 regional offices of the organization. Its decrees are valid and executed within the organization, furthermore it has the authority to revise the annual budget. Ideally the committee gathers twice a year, its members must be at least 30 years old and they term can be maximum 4 years long. The Šūra Council is also responsible for electing the members of the Guidance Committee, that holds the responsibility of executing the Council's legislations. However the major executive power remains in the hands of the *muršid*.[96] It is clear that the movement operates with a highly organized leadership that aims to achieve and maintain its cohesiveness through strict hierarchy and transparency. Furthermore as pointed out by Trager "the Brotherhood's unique organizational capacity is allowing its leaders to communicate with its members nationwide -- with reasonable certainty that orders will be obeyed, given the immense commitment that becoming a Muslim Brother entails."[97]

However it should be noted that in order 'to operate on the level of feelings' and gain the support and devotion of the masses, as well as, to preserve the cohesiveness of the leadership, a

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[95] Butko, Thomas J. 2004. p. 52. "Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies.* 31(1), (May).

[96] Leiken, Robert S. and Brooke, Steven. 2007. p.110. "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood". *Foreign Affairs.* (March/April) 86, 2.

[97] Trager, Eric. 2011. "The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood: Grim Prospects for a Liberal Egypt". *Foreign Affairs* (September-October) available at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-unbreakable-muslim-brotherhood-grim-prospects-for-a-liberal-egypt

charismatic leader (*muršid*) is important in the movement's evolution. As pointed out by Richard Mitchell "Ḥasan al-Bannā was regarded as the prototypical modern leader, both charismatic in character and competent in adapting the Islamic movement to its circumstances." Since the 1950s one can trace a high fragmentation within the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. Several members broke with the movement due to ideological differences, and in several cases took more radical paths. This has also been due to the lack of a charismatic leader as argued by Rubin "Al-Bannā's value to the Brotherhood is perhaps no more apparent than the fact that since his assassination in 1949 no other leader has been able to unite the Brotherhood nor duplicate his success in terms of either popular support or political influence".[98]

The third component of the counter-hegemonic bloc is its long-term strategy. It has been a clear aim of the Brothers to first educate the masses in order to create a new type of 'common sense' that can challange the one represented by the ruling hegemon. As pointed out by Trager, "re-establishing the core principles of Islam within the individual has been a cornerstone of the twentieth century Islamic movement since Ḥasan al-Bannā".[99] Given the religious ideologies that characterized the movement, the involvement of religious leaders and doctrines were crucially important. Educational institutions established by the Brothers have closely cooperated with the mosques.[100] Besides the general curricula, education focused on raising self-confident and integrated religious personalities, who would ensure that future generations will be raised in the same manner and will be able to continue the Islamisation of the society. In the same time, as an

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[98] Rubin, Barry. 1990. p. 12. *Islamic Fundamentalism in Egyptian Politics.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

[99] Butko, Thomas J. 2004. p. 57. "Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies.* 31(1), (May). and for other examples see Ayubi, Nazih. 1991. p. 132. *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World.* London; NewYork: Routledge. and Mitchell, Richard. 1969. pp. 15. and 308. *The Society of Muslim Brothers.* London: Oxford University Press. and Sana, Abed-Kotob. 1995. p. 323. "The Accomodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt". *International Journal of Middle East Studies.* 27.

[100] Simms, Rupe. 2002. pp. 576-578. "Islam Is Our Politics": A Gramscian Analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood (1928-1953)". *Social Compass*, 49, 4.

additional positive outcome, members of the Brotherhood who undertook a teaching career have largely contributed to reducing the level of illiteracy in Egypt. [101]

Another important element of the Brother's long term strategy has been their charity activism. As pointed out by Roy, "Islamists have a strong history of social service work and have developed the institutional network to support that work…(they) are structured, well-organized and in many cases more highly institutionalized than their secular counterparts".[102] The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has always maintained active ties with the poor, which is particularly important in case of Egypt where nearly 20% of the population lives under the poverty line[103] and where previous governments have been unable to provide essential social services. The Borthers have realized the importance of well-functioning institutions in their long-term strategy. These institutions could deliver essential social services to the population, that ensured the popular support for the movement.

During the 'war of position' the Brothers have successfully created a coherent counter-hegemonic ideology that masses could embrace 'on the level of feelings'. The reason why this ideology could become 'organic' can be explained by the fact, that it has not only been a political one, but it also included a strong social, moral and religious agenda. As the movement has been able to respond to the social and moral challanges of its era, people perceived it as a powerful alternative to the existing 'common sense'.

The movement had aims of carrying out the 'intellectual and moral reformation' of society that could only be achieved through consent and volunteerism. The operational methods of social movements are the most suitable ones for carrying out such monumental plans as they

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[101] Simms, Rupe. 2002. pp. 576-578. "Islam Is Our Politics": A Gramscian Analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood (1928-1953)". *Social Compass*, 49, 4.

[102] Roy, Sarah. 1995. "Civil Society in the Gaza Strip: Obstacles and Reconstruction," in Norton, Richard ed. *Civil Society in the Middle East*. Volume 2. Brill.

[103] http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=MDG&f=seriesRowID%3A581 period between 1996 – 2008.

are able to reach and involve all segments of society. The role of the 'unified organization' has also been crucial in keeping the movement in motion. As it was described above, the leadership has carefully selected and educated members of the organization, furthermore it maintained active ties with the sympathizers of the movement through religious and other regularly held local and regional gatherings.

Lastly, the 'long-term strategy' of the movement focused on creating a network of social and educational services. As the Brothers were able to assist the population in sustaining their daily needs, it seemed that the ideology and morals they promote in educational institutions, mosques, unions, civic organizations, etc. are credible. The well-functioning institutions established and/or sustained by the Brothers have played an important role in conviencing the masses to give their support and loyalty to the movement, thus ensuring the success of its long-term strategy.

2.3. The Brothers' Electoral Success and Future Aspirations

After decades of civic and religious activism, it was finally in the political sphere where the democratic elections of 2012 in Egypt revealed the real popularity of the Brothers. The Freedom and Justice party staffed by members of the Muslim Brotherhood with Muhammad Morsi as its presidential nominee, won the elections by gaining 51.73% of the votes. In the Arab world, Muhammad Morsi became the first democratically elected Islamist head of the state.[104] In the light of the findings of the present thesis the explanation for the Brothers' political success lies in their ability to generate and maintain a social movement that embraced and gained the loyalty of wide segments of the Egyptian society. In the followings a few concluding remarks will be made in relation with the Brotherhood's possible future aspirations and the ongoing scholarly debate in this subject.

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[104] El Deeb and Keath, Sarah and Lee. "Islamist claims victory in Egypt president vote". Associated Press. Retrieved 18 June 2012.

It is not a recent phenomenon that Western as well as Muslim scholars and politicians turn towards Islamists with a high level of scepticism. Many perceive those Islamists who run on democratic elections in the Middle East as potential sources of threat to the democratic future of the region.[105] These experts from the Western and Muslim world emphasize that Islamists only pretend to follow democratic rules, however in reality their long-term aim is to create an anti-democratic and totalitarian system. This widespread scepticism and fear towards Islamists has been the most beneficial for the region's previous authoritarian rulers.[106] They often emphasized the existence of the 'Islamist threat' that helped them gaining and keeping the support of the Western governments that preferred to maintain the *status quo* of the region instead of risking to deal with Islamists in power.

Another widely used argument against Islamists' credibility to form democratic governments is that the internal power relations within Islamist organizations and the structure of their leadership are not based on democratic principles.[107] However the history of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood reveals that the organization has always respected electoral results during their activism in workers' and student unions, as long as the electoral process remained transparent. Even in those cases when the outcome was not beneficial for them. In case they succeeded, they remained true to democratic principles as leaders of the concerned organization.[108] Furthermore even though their organizational structure is strict and highly hierarchical, as it was argued previously, its operational methods are generally democratic and transparent.

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[105] Csicsmann, László. 2010. p. 252. "A Mubárak-rezsim liberalizációja és deliberalizációja." (The liberalization and de-liberalization of the Mubarak-regime) in Csicsmann, László (ed.) *Iszlám és modernizáció a Közel-Keleten. Az államiság eltérő modelljei.* Budapest: Nemzetközi Tanulmányok Intézet, Aula Kiadó, Budapest, 2010.

[106] Ibrahim, Saad Eddin. 2007. "Toward Muslim Democracies". *Journal of Democracy.* 18, 2.

[107] Farahat, Mohamed Fayez. 2009. p. 22. "Liberalizing the Muslim Brotherhood: Can It Be Done?" *Arab Insight.* 2, 6. and Vidino, L. 2005. pp. 25-34. "The Muslim Brotherhood's Conquest of Europe", *Middle East Quarterly.*

[108] Hamzawy, Amr and Brown, Nathan J. 2007. p. 7. "What Islamists Need to Be Clear About: The Case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood". *Carnegie Papers.*

It is also common among experts to provide blurry descriptions of the Muslim Brotherhood and make it equivalent to radical Islamist groups.[109] The spokesman of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior has argued in December 2006, that the Muslim Brotherhood's "ideology is still based on the teachings of Sayyed Qutb and the incident[110] at al-Azhar just proved that they still do not refuse the use of force".[111] It is true, that the Muslim Brotherhood served as an ideological platform for the emergence of militant Islamist groups and that it does not condemn the acts of Palestinian and Iraqi suicide bombers. However it is important to emphasize that these arguments tend to ignore the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood is most criticized by these militant groups for its moderate ideological path.[112] Militant Islamists heavily criticize the Muslim Brotherhood for a number of issues, including that they misinterpret the meaning of jihad and cooperated with previous 'corrupt' (and non-Islamist) regimes.

Sheri Berman's and Tarek Masoud's insights are also important contributions to the subject as they offer valuable responses to those sceptics, who are concerned about the democratic credibilities of Islamist organizations/govrnments. Based on the history of radical, European political parties, Berman concluded that democratic institutions can transform radical views into moderate ones. Berman's conclusion is based on three key factors: 1. Participation in democratic elections fosters the process of moderation, as the group is forced to realize that the majority of the population does not symphatize with radical ideas. In order to gain wider support, they will be in need of reforming their political agenda and follow a moderate path.[113] 2. They

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[109] Langohr, Vickie. 2001. p. 591. "Of Islamists and Ballot Boxes: Rethinking the Relationship between Islamisms and Electoral Politics". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 33.

[110] In 2006, Al-Tayeb, a former member of the now-dismantled National Democratic Party (NDP), condemned a military-style parade by Brotherhood students on campus in his capacity as the then president of Al-Azhar University, charging that they had worn black facemasks "like Hamas, Hizbullah and the Republican Guard in Iran".(source: al-Ahram; see eg. http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/2224/17/Conspiracy-at-Al-Azhar-.aspx)

[111] Black, Jeffrey. 2007. pp. 20-23. "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood in Crisis". *Middle East*, (July) Issue 380.

[112] Abed-Kotob, Sana. 1995. p. 330. "The Accomodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 27, 3.

[113] Utility theory holds that voters are generally risk-averse and reward centrist parties over the extremist ones, which implies that in order to achieve electoral success, parties need to promote moderate political agendas. see e.g. the

need to fulfil the practical conditions of political participation, such as creating campaigns, opening offices and successfully maneuvering in the world of bureaucracy. Therefore their resources for underground and illegal activities will decrease. 3. They need to find credible solutions for real economic and social problems, that also requires them to give up on their radical views.[114] Importantly, Tarek Masoud completes Berman's theory with some additional comments. He argues that Berman's analogy that is based on European experiences can not be entirely applied to the Middle East, as the region's Islamists have already been active in the civic spheres and successfully managed to solve crucial problems of the society. They have already achieved an organizational structure that can be transferred to and used in the political spheres. After all, Masoud shares Berman's view that Islamists would not promote radical ideologies in the Egyptian parliament. The Brothers have already proven that they do follow democratic principles in the political life.[115] In other words, the Brothers aim to be part of the existing political system and not its Islamic alternative; they do not wish to start a revolution, but to reform the current institutions from within.[116]

What kind of reforms will these be and more importantly how will they be carried out? The theoretical framework presented in this research has been an attempt to combine theories and bring views of different schools together in order to be able to percieve Islamism in its complexity, hence to be able to form plausible answers for such difficult questions. In the present thesis it was argued that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's activism has exceeded the limits of religious movements and has developed into a successful popular movement with clear social and political aims. Although the Brothers' ideological background shows that they perceive Islam as a

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case of Hamas's 2006 electoral success in Haboub, Wael J. 2012. pp. 57-79. "Demistifying the Rise of Hamas". *Journal of Developing Societies.* (March) 28, 1.

[114] Berman, Sheri. 2008. "Taming Extremist Parties: Lessons from Europe". *Journal of Democracy*. 19, 1.
[115] Masoud, Tarek. 2008. pp. 22-23. "Are They Democrats? Does It Matter?". *Journal of Democracy*. 19, 3.
[116] Abed-Kotob, Sana. 1995. p. 330. "The Accomodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 27, 3.

universal, all-inclusive system that offers solutions for various issues, regardless if they are social, political or economic ones, their political agenda can not be regarded as a rigid one that accepts exclusively Islamic principles, but rather one that is based on universal values.[117] In terms of the movement's operational methods a number of relevant characteristics have been pointed out. It was argued that the movement's success lies in its ability to operate as a social movement, that was able to accomplish a 'moral reformation' within the society. The Gramscian framework helped to show further details of the movement's operational methods and to reveal its 'counter-hegemonic' characteristics. The application of these two theoretical approaches seemed beneficial in terms of broadening the scope of the research on the subject.

The fusion of these theories showed that the movement sustained by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has a number of commonalities with social movements. Among them the most important ones were the bottom-up approach that characterizes Islamist and social movements alike as well as the element of volunteerism that is also a cornerstone of both of them. As it was argued, the Muslim Brotherhood has had remarkable achievements on the field of charity and other types of social works that mainly rely on voluntary efforts and alms-giving. Another important element that contributed to the success of the movement has been the Brothers' educational and religious activism that aimed to generate the 'moral and intellectual reformation' of the society. As it was argued before in terms of their ideological basis and operational methods, neither political, nor religious movements are credible to initiate such complex transformations within the society.

On the other hand, bringing the Gramscian framework into our analysis has allowed to incorporate further characteristics of the movement. Gramsci's theory on 'hegemony' is a complex system of notions that explains how power relations form, develop and change within

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[117] Stacher, Joshua A. 2004. p. 10. "Parties Over: The Demise of Egypt's Opposition Parties". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. (November) 31, 2.

communities. His ideas on 'counter-hegemonic forces' were the most relevant ones for the current thesis, as for decades the Muslim Brotherhood has operated as an organization that has been officially banned from participating in the political life. This exclusion has left the Brothers' with no other options than forming a 'counter-hegemonic bloc'. Social and charity activism has served as a window of opportunity for them in gaining the support of the masses, since – as it was argued previously – governments were in several cases unable to sustain the essential needs of the population. Although Gramsci's notions are mostly applied for explaining the political aspirations of certain movements, his framework appears to be broader than this. In case of the Muslim Brotherhood we could witness, that a 'counter-hegemonic bloc' could achieve its goals not only through political, but through civic and religious activism, as well. Furthermore in terms of its 'coherent ideology', 'unified organization' and 'long-term strategy' the Muslim Brotherhood corresponds with Gramsci's description of a 'counter-hegemonic bloc'.

In the light of the findings of the current research, it seems plausible to state that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has generated and sustained a social movement through democratic means that embraced wide segments of society and accomplished an 'intellectual and moral reformation' within them that ensured their future political success, as well. Their decades long interaction with the disadvantaged segments of Egyptian society as well as their status as a 'counter-hegemonic force' had a strong impact on the movement's profile. The operational methods of the movement revealed that the Brothers' are capable of gaining popular support through democratic means, what points at their ability to follow democratic principles in their political activism.

Conclusion

Based on the literature review conducted in the subject of Islamism, it appeared that existing theoretical frameworks rarely embrace the complexity of Islamist movements, therefore their contribution to the subject is in some aspects limited. There is a high disciplinary fragmentation in the research conducted on Islamism. It is because of this fragmentation that scholars might find it difficult to form complex and plausible theories on the nature and future aspirations of Islamist movements.

The major aim of the present thesis was to offer a new plausible narrative on how Islamist movements operate and achieve popularity. The conclusions and contributions of the present research can be summarized in two levels. First, analyzing Islamism with a social movement theory approach has pointed at the limitations of those publications that primarily approach Islamism as a political or religious movement. As it was argued, Islamist movements are highly complex in their nature, incorporating political, religious and social aspirations alike, therefore rigid categorizations do not seem to be beneficial in their analysis. Social movement theory on the other hand has provided a broader and more inclusive theoretical framework for the analysis on the operational methods of Islamist movements and has been suitable to reveal a number of important reasons behind the movement's popular support. This theoretical approach has allowed to incorporate the social, political and religious characterists of the movement, while emphasizing that its success has primarily lied in its ability to operate as a social movement.

Second, complementing the social movement theory approach with Gramsci's notions on 'hegemony' has helped to form a finer picture of the movement's ideological foundations, organizational characteristics and strategy. Gramsci's theory has been suitable for explaining those processes through which 'counter-hegemonic forces', as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, can eventually achieve hegemony.

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The present thesis has attempted to broaden the existing perspectives on Islamist movements by creating an alternative theoretical framework and applying it to the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. It is hoped, that further alternative approaches will emerge in the subject. Such developments in this field of research would enable scholars to interpret Islamist movements in their entirety and to understand how these movements have managed to become successful. Furthermore it is also needed for forming plausible narratives on the future aspirations of Islamist movements.

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