

## THEORY OF THE ISLAMIC STATE IN HASAN AL-BANNA'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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*The goal of this paper is to analyse the political discourse of one among the most influential thinkers of Islamic resurgence movement, Hasan al-Banna, who is frequently considered the father of contemporary radical movements advocating the must for the Islamic state what is due to extra-legal activities of his created Islamic organization "The Muslim Brotherhood" which was often taken as an organizational model by subsequent Islamic groups. The theoretical analysis, however, of the major principles that Hasan al-Banna employs in constructing foundations of the legitimate Islamic state reveals that his political theory is compromising and open to the basic values of Western democracy. This article seeks to show how Hasan al-Banna reconstructs Islamic political theory by reworking the meanings of its basic foundations.*

### Introduction

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed the rising of Islamic resurgence movement, commonly called Islamic fundamentalism or extremism, which is the focus of interest for political observers and policy-makers all over the world. The reasons for a widespread attention to the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence may be derived from the rejection of the nation-state paradigm in the ideology of Islamic resurgence, which extends its complaints and aspirations worldwide.

The focus of numerous articles and studies that examine the peculiarities of this powerful contemporary and future phenomenon, however, still revolves around the "terrorist" activities of Islamic movements and the incompatibility of the Islamic religion with the Western political thought. As a consequence, the results of such kind of studies usually just reflect the fear of perceived dangers in the ideas of Islamic movements for the established principles of Western political forms, failing to grasp the significance of more accurate ideological aspects that movements of Islamic resurgence advocate. Therefore, the tendency of some scholars to view future world conflicts in terms of inherent contradictions between Islam and Western democracy does not cease to prevail in the perception of Islamic revivalism, which can be attributed to the general lack of sufficient theoretical studies of the political ideologies of Islamic resurgence.

Therefore, seeking to dispel many erroneous and imprecise notions concerning Islamic resurgence movement in-depth studies of political ideologies of Islamic resurgence on the theoretical level are necessary, which would contribute to foreseeing the future development process of the movement and its relation to Western democracy that could put an end to escalation of future conflicts concerning Muslim countries.

Given the need for theoretical research, this study focuses on the textual analysis of the political discourse of one among the most influential thinkers of Islamic resurgence, Hasan al-Banna, whose political discourse is of high significance, having in mind that he was the first who formulated the contemporary theory of Islamic state and thus transferred the Islamic resurgence thought into a new political dimension. The discourse of Hasan al-Banna is important for both Muslims and Western politicians convinced in the universality of democratic values and inevitability of their implementation in Muslim countries. Proponents of Western democracy consider al-Banna's political discourse to be a successful attempt to harmonize Islamic religion with democratic values which, in their view, are an extremely positive act that counters the authoritarian nature of politics prevalent in Muslim countries.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, it was Hasan al-Banna who created the first Islamic political organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, through which the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence has developed into an active political movement calling for the establishment of an Islamic state in Egypt. A number of Islamic societies engaged in political activities that have intensely flourished throughout both the Muslim world and European countries in the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries till now base their political ideology on Hasan al-Banna's political discourse and copy the Muslim Brotherhood's organizational model in creating the structure of their own societies.

The major aim of this article is to examine al-Banna's discourse on the foundations of the legitimate Islamic state, the main goal of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and elsewhere. The article is organized into two major chapters. The first chapter sets forth the historical review of the development of Islamic resurgence in Egypt, marking the main turning-points of the ideas of the movement in order to develop a better understanding of the theoretical roots of Islamic resurgence in a comprehensive socio-political context.

The second chapter concerns theory of the Islamic state elaborated by Hasan al-Banna in his open letters and publications. This chapter is divided into two parts of which the first one outlines the basic al-Banna's conclusions on the necessity of setting up the Islamic state. The second part examines al-Banna's principles, which he employs in formulating the major foundations of the legitimate Islamic state.

The methodological formulation used in the study is composed of historical and linguistic analytical methods.

The system of transliteration employed here is that of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. The sign 'stands for *ayn*, the sign' for *hamza*.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e. g., Moussali S. Ahmed, *Moderate and Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999, 14.

## **The Development of Islamic Resurgence**

### *The Birth of Islamic Modernism*

The roots of the Islamic resurgence movement stem from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the viceroy of the Ottoman Empire, Muhammad 'Ali, initiated a number of radical reforms that laid down the socio-economic and political foundations of modern Egypt. His reforms were primarily aimed at creating the economically and militarily independent state of Egypt within national borders; thus, he was the first to deny the significance of the caliphate institution which united all Muslims on the basis of religion.

Egypt's transformation was instigated by integrating the country's economy into the world's market. As a result of frequent contacts with European countries, the people of Egypt were exposed to a political as well as to cultural Western influence. Furthermore, a need arose for officers with technical, scientific backgrounds, so a secular educational system was created, which contributed to creation of a new secular and pro-Western Egyptian middle class.

Muhammed 'Ali's successors continued developing the infrastructure, but the drastic modernization reforms put Egypt heavily into debt for Great Britain, which caused economic crisis and British control over the country. Thus, the creation of Egypt within national borders initiated by Muhammed 'Ali was further continued by the British who in turn considered their mission to modernize the country.

One may distinguish two forms of divergent world-views produced by the British political, economical and cultural influence, which later resulted in two oppositional political forces in post-colonial Egypt.

As a result of imported schools based upon European learning, new secular elites emerged, which equated development with westernization in their implementation of reforms. Consequently, secular outlook gradually spread in the society that restricted religion to personal life of a Muslim while turning to the West for development models in public life. The secular way of modernization offered by the British was absolutely accepted as it was seen to be the only possible method of change. Similar to Orientalists of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century who held that religion by its essence was a major hindrance to the progress and change and that transformation of society was possible only by separating religion from politics, i.e. restricting the practice of Islam to the private sphere of a Muslim life, Egyptian ruling elites also tended to regard Islam as an obstacle to the progressive change while sciences and technologies were seen as powerful aids in the process of modernization.

However, the British presence and influence in the Muslim society threatened its time-honored beliefs and practices. Therefore, another reaction to progressive secularization in the society emerged, which raised the question: is the process of modernization caused by the scientific inventions possible in a Muslim society while safeguarding its religiosity?

The answer was given by the religious and intellectual movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, known as Islamic modernism, which proposed that Islam is not a static and essentially anti-progressive religion, but rather is able to provide Muslims with their own home-grown method of modernization and progress, thus there is no need to follow the Western patterns of development.

One of the first molders of Islamic modernism was Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani who preached the message of Islamic renewal and urged Muslims to learn their religion anew in the light of modern sciences and technologies by freeing Islam from medieval traditions and interpretations. In the view of al-Afghani, Islamic jurisprudence, elaborated by great Muslim jurists in the Middle Ages, was no more than temporal meanings of the Qur'an produced in accordance with the medieval Muslim situation and their needs. Blind imitation of traditions (*taqlid*<sup>2</sup>) caused the decline and backwardness of Muslim countries, according to al-Afghani, and only the return to pure Islam by 're-opening the doors of *ijihad*'<sup>3</sup> and reinterpreting Islamic sources in the light of modern Muslim experience would rescue the religion. In the perspective of Islamic modernism, Qur'anic principles are designed to suit all ages and nations and their interpretation must be renewed in accordance with the changing situation and people's demands. Hence, al-Afghani called for incorporation of Western science and achievements into Islamic thought in order to rescue Muslim countries from ignorance and decline.

A follower of al-Afghani, Muhammed 'Abduh, focused more on the intellectual and educational dimensions of Islamic modernism. Being professor of the highest religious institution of Egypt, al-Azhar University, and later the Grand Mufti of the country, Muhammed 'Abduh devoted his energies to reforming the courts and issuing legal opinions (*fatwas*) on social issues. Also, he developed several Islamic political concepts which were later employed by Hasan al-Banna in the construction of his theory of the Islamic state. A student of 'Abduh, Syrian Muhammed Rashid Ridha, further propagated ideas of Islamic revival in his journal *al-Manar*, which called Muslims to return to the example of the first Muslims called *salaf*. However, Rashid Ridha energetically opposed the proposition of al-Afghani that Muslim power can be revitalized through appropriation of Western sciences and technologies. Rather, Rashid Ridha argued that uncritical imitation of the West leads Egypt to a position of a higher weakness and dependency. What Egypt needed was not westernization but modernization, which meant for Rashid Ridha the mastering of modern knowledge independently of Western culture.<sup>4</sup>

All three Islamic modernists, al-Afghani, 'Abduh and Rashid Ridha, outline the basic dimensions of the development of Islamic resurgence. Al-Afghani was inclined to accept and adapt the new philosophical and scientific knowledge that would promote the well-being of Muslims. On the political level, it meant the appropriation of Western political ideas and institutions, which would rescue Muslim countries from political crisis. 'Abduh and Ridha has endorsed different aspects of al-Afghani's discourse: while 'Abduh tended to accept the utility of Western influence, Ridha instead called to return to Islamic foundations independently of Western achievements. Such a

<sup>2</sup> lit. 'necklacing' – uncritical adoption and imitation of a particular school of Islamic jurisdiction established in the Middle Ages.

<sup>3</sup> lit. 'effort' – independent judgement in a legal or theological question, based on the interpretation and application of the Qur'an and the Sunna, as opposed to *taqlid*. Today the only accepted rulings are those of four schools of thought (*mazahib*) in Sunni Islam, because the practice of *ijihad* was stopped by scholars in the 9<sup>th</sup> century (according to Schacht).

<sup>4</sup> Ahmad Boozid, *Man, Society and Knowledge in the Islamist Discourse of Sayyid Qutb*, Blacksbourg, Virginia, 1998, 29.

turn in the thought of Islamic resurgence may be explained by the political situation of Muslim countries: al-Afghani and 'Abdu wrote at a time when the Ottoman Empire was still a reality and Muslims had a Caliph to carry on the moral leadership. In this context, the political dimension of Islamic modernism was not fully developed. Namely Rashid Ridha's idea that Muslims by themselves must find the way from the decline independently of Western science mostly influenced Hasan al-Banna who concluded that Islam in itself contains the means to attain the power of Muslims. Thus, a new approach to religion was born, which aimed no longer to modernize Islam but rather to islamize modernity.

### **The Raising of Political Islam: Hasan al-Banna**

The fathers of Islamic resurgence argued that Islamic religion, if reinterpreted in terms of modern achievements, can fully satisfy the moral, social, economical, and political needs of Muslims. Yet the ideas of Islamic modernism elaborated by specific religiously educated scholars circulated exclusively in the intellectual circles, being far from uneducated grass-roots who continued living in the midst of sometimes traumatic onslaught of modernity without concrete answers to their everyday questions raised by the changing reality.

Contrary to early thinkers of Islamic modernism, al-Banna was not trained in classical Islamic learning and with the help of his publications written in a simple, unapologetic and persuasive language and by the popular organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, brought the ideas of return to Islam to a common Egyptian. In fact, Hasan al-Banna was the first to express the ideas of Islamic resurgence in the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, which became a prototype that most Islamic movements tried to imitate. The Muslim Brotherhood started its activities by preaching in mosques, clubs and other popular meeting places and soon created a wide-ranging self-supporting net of welfare services all over Egypt and also in the whole Muslim world, thus acquiring the name of a "state within the state".

Furthermore, while Islamic modernism focused rather on the philosophical and intellectual dimension of Islamic religion and its appropriateness to Western ideas and institutions, al-Banna was the first to emphasize the political aspect of Islam and create a complete theory of the Islamic state. In fact, al-Banna rejected the assumption of Islamic modernists of incorporating Western political ideas and institutions into Islamic thought; he instead argued that Islam is a complete and all-embracing system of life, which by itself provides all means for the development and progress of Muslim nations. Therefore, politics is part of religion and cannot be separated. Muslims who favour man-made political systems ignore the Qur'anic obligation to 'rule by what God has revealed' and thus commits a serious crime against Islam.

Moreover, al-Banna holds that non-Islamic political systems contradict the nature of human being, since Islam, in his view, is a system of world-view and behavior created by God to serve human beings, thus, it conforms to the nature of man, because the latter is likewise created by God.<sup>5</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>5</sup> Hasan al-Banna, *As-Salam fil Islam*, [cited 03/05/04]. Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.lewacddin.4t.com/rasacl/A22.htm>>.

particular Islamic regulations satisfy different needs of people: economical regulations promote material prosperity, Islamic rule safeguards unity, justice and freedom, and social rules based on Islam guarantee equality in the society. Only by uniting politics with religion in practice and by creating the Islamic state, which is a symbol of Islamic renaissance, contemporary Muslims could regain both political power and international recognition.

Hence, Hasan al-Banna was the initiator of a new dimension of Islamic resurgence. After him, Islamic movements did not come back to the old idea that Western sciences and technologies should be incorporated into Islam in order to modernize Muslim societies. Instead, they began to postulate that Islam is a complete and self-sufficient system for providing Muslims with all necessary means to promote development and progress, and that the European way of modernization contradicts the nature of Muslims and thus would bring no such a success as it does to European countries.<sup>6</sup>

## **Political Discourse of Hasan al-Banna**

### *A Must for the Islamic State*

The point of departure in Hasan al-Banna's political theory is the notion that the widespread perception of Islam as a solely personal devotion to God and performance of religious rites in the private sphere of a Muslim life is erroneous. In fact, Islam is defined as a complete system of the world-view that includes both faith and the models of social, economic and political organization, thus Islam cannot be divided.

Al-Banna grounds this assumption on a Qur'anic verse prescribing for Muslims to be guided by 'what God has revealed' (5: 49); this verse indicates two principles at once: first, the state is obligatory for Muslims because it safeguards the order of society; and second, Muslims are to be ruled by God's revealed Islamic law, the *shari'a*, which is based on the Qur'an and the Sunna.

Since al-Banna postulates an interrelationship between the spiritual and political aspects of Islam, the creation of the Islamic state is transformed into a religious act, because it embodies submission to God on the basis of Islamic law. The state, according to al-Banna, is the highest institution of Islamic religion, which regulates affairs of the community, and also upholds the superiority of religious values and thus creates a virtuous society. Since al-Banna defines Islam as "a complete world-view regulating all aspects of Muslim life and including a system of social norms, government, legislation and education", setting up the Islamic state becomes a religious imperative, because only by its existence Islamic religion can be fully realized<sup>7</sup>. That's why the revival of Islamic religion, in al-Banna's view, directly depends on establishing an Islamic system of governance.

The function of the Islamic order is to promote the spiritual, political, and economical well-being of the community, which that cannot be attained without the establishment of the Islamic

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<sup>6</sup> Nahwa an-Nur, *Majmu'at ar-Rasa'il Hasan al-Banna*, Dar ad-Da'wa, 1990, 77.

<sup>7</sup> Hasan al-Banna, *Risala al-Mu'atamar al-Khames*, [cited 03/05/04]. Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.lewaeddiin.4t.com/rasael/A05.htm>>.

state. Moreover, its function is extended worldwide, since the geographical limitations, from al-Banna's perspective, are not applicable to the Islamic call – *da'wa*<sup>8</sup>. Consequently, the mission of the Islamic state is to spread the Islamic call to humankind and to act as a guide to other nations.

Al-Banna's and his organization Muslim Brotherhood's call for setting up the Islamic state frequently is regarded as a fanatic dedication to the re-establishment of the 7<sup>th</sup> century political order, since al-Banna abundantly cites examples of the rightly guided caliphs' governance in his political theory construction. However, by freeing Qur'anic principles from their historical implications and postulating the necessity to reinterpret the Islamic law, which is the basis for renewing the religion, it is obvious that al-Banna employs the example of the four rightly guided caliphs to illustrate their capacity to implement Islamic regulations in their rule in accordance with the then prevalent conditions and demands of society.

Admiration for the political Islamic state's organization of the period of the rightly guided caliphs in al-Banna's discourse, however, does not mean an attempt to revive their political institutions or to imitate the period. In fact, al-Banna strives not for re-establishment of the Islamic state but for its creation anew, adapting it to the modern times.

### Theory of the Islamic State

As mentioned before, Hasan al-Banna proposed a new, comprehensive Islamic political theory. Previously, Islamic political thought was elaborated by the great Islamic jurists of the Middle Ages, such as Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi (972–1058), Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111), Ibn Taimiyya (1263–1328), Ibn Khaldun (1332–1395), and others whose political theory was seen to be ultimately established and followed; this fact without doubt was related to “closing doors of *ijtihād*” in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Therefore, analysing al-Banna's political discourse, it is worthwhile to compare his ideology with the well-established political theory suggested by medieval Muslim scholars, in order to get a more comprehensive view of how al-Banna's reinterpretation of the same Islamic principles leads to a construction of a completely different theory of the ideal Islamic state.

Al-Banna builds his political theory on a reinterpretation of the Islamic political doctrine of the “consensus” (*ijma'*). The original connotation of the concept, elaborated by the Islamic jurists, was the collective arrival at a decision on the subjects not found in the scriptures of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunna. Traditionally the right to practise consensus had been relegated to the religious elites and it was their unanimously accepted judgements that the ruled were to obey. But Hasan al-Banna, emphasizing the principle of equality in Islam, turns down any suggestion of particular privileges to any elite and institutionalization of intellectual and political elitism.

Conversely, “consensus” in al-Banna's discourse becomes the source of freeing the community from any obligation to follow one or another interpretation of Islamic law imposed on the community

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<sup>8</sup> lit. 'call' – the primary meaning of the Islamic term is the invitation of non-Muslims into Islamic religion. In al-Banna's discourse, however, the term *da'wa* is transformed into the call of born Muslims into the practice of Islam in its fullest meaning, which is realized by the establishment of the Islamic state.

without its consent. He reworks the original meaning of “consensus” as the consent of the clergy and replaces it by the agreement of the entire Muslim community<sup>9</sup>, for in al-Banna’s ideology the right to interpret the scriptures of Islam is attributed to all the Muslims without any authoritative human guide. Thus, community’s active involvement in political affairs constitutes the main source of the legitimacy of government.

Since the authority, for Hasan al-Banna, is the “social contract” between the ruler and the ruled, both sides have rights and obligations regarding the Islamic state. The Muslim community must continuously ratify and evaluate the political behavior of the ruler and obey his communally approved laws, but they have a right to disagree on the political course of the Islamic state and to remove an unjust ruler.

The ruler in turn is obliged to consult his community on political issues and yield to its will, but he has a right to interpret the principles of Islam adapting them to certain conditions and demands of people, and to legislate according to his own interpretation of the Islamic law. Hence the authority of the ruler is constrained by the Islamic law, but the difference from the medieval Islamic political thought is that in al-Banna’s discourse it is the community and not the religious scholars who interpret the Islamic law.

Thus, legitimacy of the ruler is based on two conditions: first, he must be appointed only by the community’s approval; second, the ruler is obliged to follow principles of the Islamic law such as they are interpreted by the ruled. In fact, these conditions converge into the basic one: the necessity of the community to approve or disapprove one political decision or another, because, in the view of al-Banna, the foremost step of setting up the Islamic state is the creation of a true Muslim society, which starts by every individual self-purification and discovering his pure nature that is of Islam<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, pure Muslims would never agree on un-Islamic decisions. As the sole source of the authority stems from people, not from God, the unjust ruler who does not respect the will of people is not legitimate and thus must be removed.

On the contrary, medieval Islamic political theory demanded yielding to tyrannical leader who at least nominally upholds the superiority of *shari’a*, to avoid strifes and disunity within the community<sup>11</sup>. This notion is confirmed by several *ahadith*<sup>12</sup>: “<...>. He (the Prophet) replied: You will listen to the ruler and carry out his orders; even if your back is flogged and your wealth is snatched, you should listen and obey.”<sup>13</sup> or “<...> and people asked (the Prophet): Shouldn’t we fight against them (unjust leaders)? He replied: No, as long as they say their prayers.”<sup>14</sup>

Al-Banna, conversely, views the revolting against an unelected and thus un-legitimate ruler not only as a right but also as a religious obligation of Muslims.

<sup>9</sup> Hasan al-Banna, *Mushkilatuna fi Dau’ an-Nizam al-Islami*, Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-‘Araby fi Misr, 42.

<sup>10</sup> Hasan al-Banna, *As-Salam fil Islam*, [cited 03/05/04]. Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.lewaeddin.4t.com/rasael/A22.htm>>.

<sup>11</sup> H. A. R. Gibb, *Law in the Middle East*, vol. 1, ed. M. Khadduri, M. G. Liebesny, Washington, 1955, 14.

<sup>12</sup> lit. ‘narration’-reports on the sayings and traditions of Prophet Muhammad which compound the Sunna.

<sup>13</sup> Sahih al-Muslim, Book 20, Number 4554, [cited 03/05/04]. Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/muslim/020.smt.html>>.

<sup>14</sup> Sahih al-Muslim, Book 20, Number 4569, *ibid*.



The basic difference between the classical Islamic political thought and al-Banna's Islamic political system lies in the different perception of the source of the authority in the Islamic state. While proponents of the classical political theory have always considered the only source for the authority to be God, and the divine rule was to be implemented by the ruler's adherence to the religious principles in the governance<sup>15</sup>, al-Banna, on the contrary, grounds the whole political ideology on the notion that the ultimate source of authority belongs solely to the community which embodies the divine will.

On the practical level, community's active involvement in the country's political process is realized by the institution of *shura* (consultation). *Shura* constitutes the fundamental part of the Islamic order, because it assures the community's control over the ruler and thus confirms legitimacy of the state. The ruler's consultation with *shura* in theory means consultation with the community, because members of *shura*, *ahl ul-hal wal-'aqd*<sup>16</sup>, are directly appointed by the people. According to medieval Islamic theory, *shura* functions in the same way, but the difference lies in the fact that members of *shura* are appointed by the ruler alone, not by the community of Muslims.

After having formulated the theory of the Islamic state, based on reinterpretation of the Islamic political principles, al-Banna postulates a correspondence between the Islamic order and the Western constitutional rule. Although he acknowledges different origins of the two political systems, he holds that their basic principles are the same: they postulate people's supremacy over government, specify the responsibilities and accountability of rulers to the community and maintain personal freedom.<sup>17</sup>

Al-Banna indicates the only difference between the two political systems, which is absence of a multiparty system in Islamic political order. From al-Banna's perspective, multiparty politics causes fractionalism and disunity within the Muslim society, therefore it is equated to disbelief in the Islamic discourse. That's why there should be only one political party which operates under the name of *ahl ul-hal wal-'aqd* and constitutes *shura* in the Islamic state. Therefore, the *shura* institution corresponds to parliament in the Western constitutional rule, and *ahl ul-hal wal-'aqd* means directly elected members of parliament, who form one party.

In line with al-Mawardi's thought, al-Banna indicates two possible kinds of ministry institution in the Islamic order: 'delegated ministry' (*wizarat ut-tafwid*) and 'executive ministry' (*wizarat ut-tanfidh*).<sup>18</sup> The fact that both kinds of institutions exist in the USA and Great Britain political systems also proves the resemblance of the Islamic order to Western political thought. Actually al-Banna tends to accept the latter kind of ministry, which merely executes the leader's orders and follows his political course, as opposite to a 'delegated ministry' which has a right to legislate and

<sup>15</sup> Binder, *al-Ghazali's Theory of Islamic Government*, 229, [cited 12/05/07]. Available from World Wide Web: <<http://umcc.ais.org/~maktab/ip/pdf/antkl/binder.pdf>>; al-Muqaddama Ibn Khaldun, 3 Book, 25 Chapter as cited in H. A. R. Gibb, *Law in the Middle East*, vol. 1, ed. M. Khadduri, M. G. Liebesny, Washington, 1955, 12.

<sup>16</sup> lit. 'people of loosening and binding'.

<sup>17</sup> Hasan al-Banna, *Mushkilatuna fi Dau' an-Nizam al-Islami*, Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Araby fi Misr, 47-48.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

to enact decisions of its own free will. This fact may be related to al-Banna's disappointment with the political activities of irresponsible 'delegated' governments of Egypt.<sup>19</sup>

Hence, executive power in al-Banna's Islamic state belongs to 'executive ministry'; legislative power is shared between the ruler and *shura*; and judicial power is exercised by judges nominated by the ruler, who on the basis of their *ijtihad* enact independent judgements.

Nevertheless, outlining the basic principles of the Islamic state, al-Banna does not present exact definitions of the outward forms of the state. In fact, his definitions of the state institutions were so vague that seemed to have no real meaning. The absence of official material on the subject in the Muslim Brotherhood organization indicates that the exact nature of the Islamic state was not a burning issue and reflects the general paucity of the ideology of the organization, having in mind that the ultimate goal of the Muslim Brotherhood was creation of the Islamic state. This problem became especially apparent after the death of the charismatic leader Hasan al-Banna; finally it led to splits within the organization.

Several reasons for the absence of the exact forms of political institutions in the Islamic state in al-Banna's theory could be indicated. The author of the comprehensive study on the Society of Muslim Brothers, Richard Mitchell holds that the cautious and compromising al-Banna's discourse reflects his expectations to achieve political reforms through the throne of Egyptian King Faruq<sup>20</sup>, whom he always accepted as a legitimate ruler.<sup>21</sup> This assumption, however, in essence contradicts his political theory, as by accepting the ruler of the Islamic state appointed merely by popular approval al-Banna automatically rejects the legitimacy of the hereditary rule. Having in mind that King Faruq was appointed to the reign by the former King Fuad, al-Banna's hopes to implement his political reforms in collaboration with the king would deny his theory's conformity with practice.

Furthermore, Mitchell presupposes that al-Banna's confining himself to generalities in theoretical development of institutions of the Islamic state in fact stems from his fear to lose followers of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose vision on the Islamic state might sharply differ from that of al-Banna's<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, the purpose of such ideological imprecision would be a safeguarding of the unity of Muslim Brothers. However, it was the paucity of the ideology of Muslim Brothers that led to splits within the organization after the death of Hasan al-Banna, and his exact formulation of the forms of the Islamic state in its fullest implications would have been the main unifying force of its members.

On the other hand, the only explanation of the absence of a precise formulation of the exact nature of political institutions in the Islamic state might be the fact that al-Banna's purpose was not

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<sup>19</sup> This fact might be explained by particular hostility between the Muslim Brotherhood and the popular party al-Wafd, which formed the biggest number of ministerial cabinets of pre-war Egypt. Also see Richard Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, 12–79.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>21</sup> Moussali S. Ahmed, *Moderate and Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999, 84.

<sup>22</sup> Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers*, 237.

finding concrete political solutions but rather suggesting a general method of harmonizing the politics of the state with the Islamic law. As the Islamic law, in al-Banna's perspective, is a set of general principles and its implementation in practice hinges on its certain interpretation, which varies depending on the time and space, it is impossible to produce final and unchangable interpretations, because as they are carried out by people whose understanding is limited by their surroundings and personal experience.

Al-Banna himself does not engage in interpreting the *shari'a* or elaborating the exact features of Islamic institutions, because, according to his theory, this is the prerogative of the people of the already established Islamic state and of its ruler. As long as this state does not exist there is no sense in creating political institutions or directing the state's political course, because concrete political actions depend on a concrete interpretation of the Islamic law, which in turn is pursued in accordance with the changing people's demands and needs.

## Conclusions

Although Hasan al-Banna is frequently regarded as the originator of modern terrorism and extremism both by Western politicians and Muslim policy-makers, while analysing his political discourse it becomes obvious that al-Banna's political theory is flexible and compromising, since Islamic law is open to various interpretations depending on the changing time, place and personal experience of the interpreter.

By extracting historically loaded terms from their history in order to imbue them with modern meaning, al-Banna includes fundamental democratical principles in the Islamic political theory, which assure the right for the community to direct the political course of the state, specify the responsibilities and accountability of rulers and differentiate executive, legislative and judicial powers in the Islamic state based on the Qur'an and the Sunna. Thus, Islamic political theory suggested by Hasan al-Banna absolutely denies the assumption of an inherent contradiction between Islam and democracy.

As he was the first who rejected the traditional modes of understanding religion and their relevance to modern times and advocated the necessity of reinterpretation of the Islamic sources, the Qur'an and the Sunna, one may conclude that Hasan al-Banna opened the door to various interpretations which caused proliferation of a great number of Islamic resurgence movements frequently advocating contradictory claims and aspirations and claiming to represent the true meaning of Islam. In the view of Hasan al-Banna's discourse, every theory is right under condition that it is based on the Islamic scripts, because every interpretation is inspired by various unforeseen factors. In fact, if one considers the process of the development of Islamic resurgence movement from Jamal ad-Din nal-Afghani, Rashid Rida, Muhammad Abduh and Hasan al-Banna up to the proponents of the Islamic renewal of the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> decades, who no longer seek to harmonize Islamic political thought with the democratic systems, one may notice an obvious tendency of the radicalization of Islamic revivalism.

**ISLAMIŠKOS VALSTYBĖS TEORIJA HASAN AL-BANNOS POLITINIAME DISKURSE**

**Giedrė Šabasevičiūtė**

**S a n t r a u k a**

Atskleidžiant istorinį islamo atkūrimo idėjos gimimo kontekstą, kuris kėlė islamo religijos ir modernizacijos suderinamumo klausimą, straipsnio tyrimo objektu pasirinktas Chasan al-Bannos pradėtas taikyti naujas klasikinės islamiškųjų politinių principų skaitymo metodas, kuris, atlaisvindamas islamo politines sąvokas, suformuluotas viduramžiais, nuo jų originalių prasmų ir suteikdamas joms modernias reikšmes, leidžia jam sukonstruoti visiškai naują ir modernią islamiškosios valstybės teoriją, kurios realizavimas Egipto valstybėje buvo jo sukurtos organizacijos „Musulmonų brolija“ tikslas. Chasan al-Bannos sukonstruotos islamiškosios valstybės pamatiniai principai apima visuomenės galią formuoti valstybės politinius procesus, apibrėžia valdovo atsakomybę ir atskaitingumą žmonėms ir atskiria vykdomąją, leidžiamąją ir jurisdikcijos valdžias islamiškojoje valstybėje. Taigi Chasan al-Bannos suformuluota islamiškosios valstybės teorija supanašėja su vakarietiškoja demokratine sistema, nepaisant to, kad abiejų politinių sistemų pamatiniai principai kyla iš skirtingų pasaulėžiūrų.

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