"The role of the Muslim Brotherhood in democracy-building processes in Egypt after the Arab Spring"
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1. Introduction

In the midst of an unprecedented stream of refugees coming from Islamic countries, Political Islam is one of the most contested terms in the political discussion in Europe. Yet, there seems to be a lot of vagueness to it. The populist far right parties are using it as a bogey to gain political capital, Political Islam and democracy are not supposed to mingle and Islam as a whole is not a genuinely European institution. On the other side, Islamic scientists such as Farid Hafez claim that there is a common ground between Political Islam and democracy and that growing Islamophobia in Europe is unjustified and the product of a discourse which is more and more racist. 1

For a few years now, my interest in the topic grew stronger and I decided that I want to have a more in-depth look at it. To follow the discussion in Europe is one thing but the percentage of Muslims in the continent is, in 2016, in the one-figure territory. My goal for this work is to find out in how far widespread narratives about Political Islam and Islamism in regards to democracy hold up if they are under examination. Although the Muslim population in the continent is rising, Islam is still a religion of the minority, Europe is therefore not really suited as a field of research.

In 2016 there are many countries in the world that are predominantly Islamic. Some of these countries are indeed governed by Islamist administrations. Still, only very few are really suited to find out more about the topic mainly because there very often seems to be no real contact point between Political Islam and genuine democratic politics in these countries.

I chose Egypt for a number of reasons. For one, it is the biggest Arabic country with a predominantly Sunni Muslim population. Furthermore, and more importantly, it was one of the main countries of the Arab Spring. Although there are a variety of reasons for one of the most important political events in the 21st century, it also was an outcry for more democracy in countries that are often governed by authoritarian regimes.

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1 see Hafez, Farid: Demokratie und Islam – schon am Ende? In: derstandard.at; Available at: http://derstandard.at/1371172114314/Demokratie-und-Islam---schon-am-Ende (accessed at 09 May 2016)
After the protests, Mohammed Mursi became president of Egypt in 2012. Although he was the first democratically elected president of the country, many observers there and elsewhere were concerned because he was a member of one of the most prominent Islamist organisations in the world, the Muslim Brotherhood. How could an organisation which denies the separation of state and religion lead the country into a brighter future and continue the path that began at the Tahrir square in 2011?

Although his tenure was quite short and ended by the hand of the allmighty military in 2013, this context, the demand for more democracy and an Islamist organisation in the role of the fullfiller of these demands and hopes makes it an excellent research field to find out more about the relationship of Political Islam and Democracy. In that aspect I want to concentrate on the aspect of freedom of expression for a few reasons. Firstly, it is an integral part of a truely democratic society. In the sense of Karl Popper, the demand for absolute validity of an ideology makes the difference between a democratic and a non-democratic society. If there is an absolute demand of a political idea it cannot accept differing opinions next to it and therefore it cannot be labelled democratic. This is reflected in the freedom of expression, assembly and association. Secondly, although maybe not as bad as in other Arabic countries, this right was very much circumcised in Egypt at the time before the Arab spring. After Mursi, under Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, the freedom of expression seems to be even more restricted. So it seems to be a valid indicator for the democratic nature of the Mursi tenure after the Arab Spring.

1.1 Research-object and –questions

In the following work I will try to find out about the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in democracy building processes focusing on the freedom of expression after the Arab Spring in Egypt. I will concentrate on the presidency of Mohammed Mursi as the candidate of the Freedom and Justice Party. The main focus will lie on his tenure from June 2012 until July 2013 but I will also have a short look into the parliamentary election in 2011/2012.

Regarding democracy building processes i will concentrate on the freedom of expression, assembly and association as described by Manfred Nowak.²

Of course, I will have a much more in-depth look at the definition of the term later, but in short, under Political Islam, I will use it synonymously with the term Islamism, I understand an ideology which sees the religion as the foundation of society as a whole and therefore denies the separation between state and religion.

I will try to find out if Political Islam, in this case the Muslim Brotherhood, can be a constructive or destructive force in democracy-building processes. In other words, is Political Islam a completely undemocratic political Idea or are there some contact points?

With this narrative in the background I will investigate the theoretical approach (for example the election programme) and the practice of the Muslim Brotherhood and compare them with the current regime under Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi.

To sum it up, my research questions are:

-Which role did the Muslim brotherhood play in their government-involvement regarding democracy building processes with focus on the freedom of expression, association and assembly? What is their theoretical approach on these rights?

-How does the government of Mohammed Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood compare to the current regime of Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi regarding the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly?

My thesis is that although the Muslim Brotherhood time and time again emphasized that it is not the goal of the organisation to build a theocratic state comparable to Saudi-Arabia and that they committed to uphold democratic values, it is questionable in howfar a truely democratic understanding with a pluralistic society is possible with such an absolute approach of a political idea. If the Muslim Brotherhood would have cemented their reigning position I don’t think that a genuine democracy in Egypt would have ensued.
1.2 Methodology

The above mentioned research questions should run as a common thread through the work and should serve to check my thesis. I will work with already existing, mainly qualitative data on the topic. This includes, for example, research on the question of the understanding of democracy of the Egypt people and the members of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as the question of the attitude of the Egypt people towards the Muslim Brotherhood.

Of course, I will extensively work with literature research. To get a better grip on the topic of democracy building and the freedom of expression, association and assembly I will work with authors such as Manfred Nowak or Nigel Warburton. Regarding Egypt, I will read authors such as Steven A. Cook. For a better understanding of Political Islam in general and the Muslim Brotherhood especially I will work with scholars such as Imad Mustafa or Annette Ranko.

Furthermore, I will work a lot with media research, including different newspaper and magazines.

1.3 Structure

In the second chapter I will explain terms that are important for the understanding and lay the theoretic foundation for the work. First I will investigate freedom of expression, assembly and association. What is the historic and philosophical background of this right? Why is it important for a functioning democracy? What are the limits? What is the prevalent view of the Islamic world towards this right? In the second part of the chapter I will shortly explain the term Political Islam. What are the characteristics and the theoretical background? I will give a short overview over the history of this ideology and its most important organisations.

In the third chapter I will find out more about Egypt. On the one side I will concentrate on the societal, socio-economic, religious and political background of the country, on the other side I will investigate the history until the Arab spring. Although there will be a short overview of the time before the Free Officer’s revolution in 1952, my main focus will lie on the time after that. In order to understand the Arab spring, the Muslim Brotherhood and the country in general it is inevitable to take a good look at Egypt under Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak. What
were the main ceasuras of that time? What were the main actors and how was their relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood? How was their attitude on the state, democracy and the freedom of expression?

In the fourth chapter I will have a look at the Arab Spring. What were the reasons for it? Which role played the demand for more democracy, Human Rights and the freedom of expression? What were the main actors? What was the stance of the Muslim Brotherhood? How was the course of the protests?

In the fifth chapter I will take a look at the Muslim Brotherhood, their history, their main actors and their stance towards democracy and the freedom of expression, assembly and association. What is their vision of an Egyptian state?

In that chapter I will furthermore look at the performance of the Freedom and Justice party in the parliamentary elections. Finally, I will investigate Mohammed Mursis performance as the president of Egypt. The special focus here will lie on democracy building processes and of course the freedom of expression, assembly and association. How does his performance compare to the theoretical approach of the brotherhood? Is Political Islam and democracy compatible?

In the epilogue I will take a short look at the time after Mursi. What were the main events after his downfall? What is the stance of Al-Sisi towards democracy and the freedom of expression, association and assembly? How does he compare in that field to Mursi?

At last I will try to answer my research questions in the conclusion and see if my thesis is valid or not.
2. Theoretical foundation and important terms

Before I will try to investigate Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood, I think it is necessary to see first why and how Freedom of expression is an integral part of democracy. I will use freedom of expression synonymously with freedom of speech.

2.1 Freedom of speech as an integral part of democracy

What are the most important characteristics of a democracy? If ordinary people are asked a question like that, most of them would probably answer that it is the possibility or the right to vote which differentiates a democracy from an authoritarian type of a political system. Still, elections can be observed in countries like Iran and no one would label the country as a real democracy. If an election alone isn’t sufficient, what other important attributes characterize a democracy then?

When Austrian Philosopher Karl Popper wrote about the “open society and its enemies”\(^3\), he differentiated between closed and open societies. Closed societies, meaning totalitarian regimes, demand absolute validity of their political idea, all aspects of society are permeated by the ideology. Thus they cannot accept any other ideologies and views next to it. Closed societies, because of this absolute approach cannot be democratic. Even if there are elections in a society like that, democracy is reduced to a shell. On the other side, pluralism and transparency are characteristic for an open society. Free elections and the right to vote are of course absolutely essential but there are other political freedoms and Human Rights which define a democracy.

Within this range of freedoms and rights it is the freedom of expression which is especially important for democracy. It is indeed a precondition for it, voters are interested in hearing and contesting different opinions from different parties with different ideologies before they make their mark. Opinions don’t necessarily have to be expressed by newspapers, TV or the internet, they can be expressed through art or through a protest march.\(^4\)

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\(^3\) see Popper, Karl R. (1945): The open society and its enemies
\(^4\) see Warburton, Nigel (2009): Free speech - a very short introduction; p. 2
Without this freedom a society couldn’t be called open, pluralistic and tolerant and governments couldn’t be called participatory:

“Free speech is a condition of a legitimate government. Laws and policies are not legitimate unless they have been adopted through a democratic process and a process is not democratic if government has prevented anyone from expressing his convictions about what those laws and policies should be.”

As such an integral part of democracy and Human Rights, freedom of expression, assembly and association is formulated in different Human Rights documents (Arts. 19 and 20 UDHR, 19 to 22 CCPR, 10 and 11 ECHR, etc.).

Of course, there cannot be an absolute right of freedom of expression. No society in history existed without a certain limitation of this right. Even in fully democratic societies there are some boundaries. In a social setting, there is always the possibility that a sort of expression comes in conflict with other Human Rights. Still, the question arises where to draw the line and how to justify the circumcision of this freedom. Where are the limits of the freedom of expression?

### 2.2 The limits of freedom of expression

It is crucial for a functioning democracy to lay great emphasis on the freedom of speech. At the same time it also very important to permanently discuss inhowfar freedom of expression is infringing on other basic rights such as the right to privacy. This is also of great importance for the discussion about blasphemy and the limits of freedom of expression in regards to religion. When is it legitimate to intervene as a state?

One of the most prominent defenders of the freedom of speech was the 19th century English philosopher John Stuart Mill. For Mill it is necessary in order to push arguments to their logical limits to allow the expression of opinions no matter how immoral they should appear.

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5 Warburton, Nigel: p. 3
The limits of an argument shouldn’t be dictated by social constraints:

“If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person was of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing the mankind.”

If the truth is seen as valuable and every judgement is seen as fallible, it is better in order for the truth to emerge and errors to disappear, to allow a free market of ideas and opinions with speech and counter-speech. For Mills every opinion has value because even if it is false it reinforces the truth and attributes to its emergence. This view is indeed essential for democracy.

Even for Mill’s very liberal stance on the freedom of expression there are some limits to it. His harm principle means that only if physical harm to other people is done through the expression, the circumcision of the freedom is justified.

Critics of Mill’s liberal stance argued that he is too much fixated at the truth or the falsification of an argument and his model is too theoretical. In reality, arguments have more or less serious consequences, even if they do not lead to physical harm. Indeed his theory is suitable as a philosophical model, and although it shows why free speech is so important for democracy, it doesn’t sufficiently capture what arguments about free speech and its limits mean for the complex structure of a society.

In the light of the protest against the Mohammed cartoon at a Danish newspaper and the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack, people argued for a more “responsible” use of the freedom of expression. If someone talks publicly, draws a cartoon or organises a demonstration and offends someone they shouldn’t hide behind the shield of freedom of speech. Still, it is questionable if a tight restriction still fulfills the criteria for freedom of speech as an important benchmark for democracy.

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7 see Warburton, Nigel: p. 24-25

8 see ibid. p. 41
For a pluralistic society it is necessary to hear different views, views some would find wrong, disgusting or distasteful:

“It is not clear why a principle would merit the name “free speech” if it only protected the views of those we find sympathetic.”

In that context, calls for more strict boundaries are often voiced by religious groups in regards to blasphemy or other “anti-religious” speech. The question that arises now is if there is a rationale that could explain why religious group should enjoy special protection from the freedom of speech and, for example, Marxists or atheists wouldn’t.

In the end, Mills harm principle is a philosophical concept and as such it alone isn’t suited to set boundaries of free speech in a democratic state, especially in regards to expression for the sole reason to undermine society or to hurt someone. Indeed, hate speech can poison the political environment:

“...Political speech is essential...for providing an environment where people can develop and exercise their goals, talents and abilities. If hate speech curtails the development of such capacities in certain sections of the community, we have a reason, based on the justification of free speech, for prohibition.”

It is the nature of this right that it comes into conflict with other rights. Still, a democratic state has to be very careful when setting limits to it. Permanent discussion about the value of free speech for a society and its limits is necessary. Censorship is a slippery slope and can initiate a development away from democracy:

“The risk that the exercise of the freedom of expression, assembly and association may violate the rights of others or even lead to violence is the price we have to pay for living in a free, open and democratic society.”

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9 ibid. p. 42
10 Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy: Free speech
2.1.2 Islam and freedom of expression

Given this background on the importance of freedom of speech for democracy it is questionable how this right is valued in Islam. Generally, many countries, with a few exceptions such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with Muslim majorities have quite bad Human Rights records. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was seen quite skeptical in the Islamic world and initially Saudi Arabia even refused to sign it.

In 1990, the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in Cairo by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. Today it has been signed by 45 countries and is seen as the Islamic answer to the more secular UDHR. Although it can at least in some ways be seen as a milestone in the Human Rights regime in Islamic countries, there are a lot of reservations to it. The document, meaning the participating governments, refers to the sharia as its source and many rights, such as the freedom of religion or the principle of the equality of men and women are therefore heavily restricted.

The Declaration refers to the freedom of speech and states in Article 22 (a): “Everyone shall have the right to express his opinion freely in such manner as would not be contrary to the principles of the Sharia.”12 In Article 22 (b) it states: “Information is a vital necessity to society. It may not be exploited or misused in such a way as may violate sanctities and the dignity of Prophets, undermine moral and ethical values or disintegrate, corrupt or harm society or weaken its faith.”13 Although the declaration started a wider discussion on Human Rights and the freedom of speech in Islamic countries, its restrictive character in general and especially in regards to freedom of expression is undeniable and some critics saw it mainly as a way to shed off criticism in Human Rights matters.

Although there doesn’t seem to be a consistent view on freedom of speech in the main Islamic sources, the Quran and the Hadithe, there actually are justifications for very harsh punishments in cases of blasphemy or for speaking of the prophet Mohammed in a derogatory

13 ibid.
way. These restrictions on the freedom of expression are acknowledged by some Islamic scholars.

Practice in many Islamic countries, such as Pakistan, Iran, Saudi-Arabia or Turkey seem to acknowledge the view that freedom of expression is heavily restricted in the Islamic world. It is generally questionable if Islamic law with such an importance of the Quran and the Hadith and severe restrictions of the freedom of speech within these sources is compatible with a strong Human Rights regime and the freedom speech.

2.2 Political Islam

Austrian philosopher Rudolf Burger stated in an interview at the beginning of 2015 that he is not afraid of Islamistic terrorist attacks or a sudden surge of Islamist ideology in Europe but of a gradual increase of the moderate Political Islam that infiltrates and endangers the secular constitution of the European countries. As this attitude from one of the most outspoken intellectuals in Austria shows, the fear of Political Islam in Europe is not just a thing of the lower class with anxiety about the future but very much concerns all social classes. Still, although this fear is so present in Europe and elsewhere, very much of the used terms are unclear. What are the main characteristics of Political Islam or Islamism (I will use the two terms synonymously)? Is it really the “fascism of our days”?

Like the religion itself, the term political Islam subsumes different organisations and beliefs. Still, there are certain points which characterize Political Islam as a holistic phenomenon:

- Islam is the foundation of life and society. This absolute approach of the social model seeks to overcome a separation of religion and the state. The government, the legal order and the whole social model is based on this penetration of the religion of every aspect of society.
- God, instead of the people, is the sovereign. The sovereignty of god, “hakimiyya” as Sayyid Qutb named it, is derived on the one side from the Quran itself, on the other side from

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14 see Wiki Islam: Freedom of speech; Available at: [https://wikiislam.net/wiki/Islam_and_Freedom_of_Speech#cite_note-3](https://wikiislam.net/wiki/Islam_and_Freedom_of_Speech#cite_note-3) (accessed at 16 May 2016)
15 ibid.
16 see Interview Rudolf Burger; In: Wiener Zeitung online; Available at: [http://www.wienerzeitung.at/themen_channel/wz_reflexionen/zeitgenossen/?em_cnt=729949&em_cnt_page=2](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/themen_channel/wz_reflexionen/zeitgenossen/?em_cnt=729949&em_cnt_page=2) (accessed at 17 May 2016)
17 as the german feminist Alice Schwarzer called it; see [http://www.huffingtonpost.de/2016/05/11/maischberger-alice-schwar_n_9919668.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.de/2016/05/11/maischberger-alice-schwar_n_9919668.html) (accessed at 17 May 2016)
the dogma of the infallibility of god.\textsuperscript{18} This doesn’t necessarily mean that Political Islam dismisses elections altogether. Candidates must be within the scope of Political Islam, they have to accept Islam as the foundation of society. An opposition which offers an alternative to this system exists, if so at all, only in a very limited manner.

- Society as a whole is affected and controlled by the Islamist ideology. Islamist parties want that the whole society is based on their (fundamentalist) interpretation of Islam. This is shown by the indoctrination of children as well as through dress regulations for women. According to the motto “the Islam is the solution”, Human Rights, as a secular man-made concept, are often being denied or restricted. As I will later describe, this mantra was also used by the Muslim Brotherhood as a way to improve Egypt.

- Political Islam strives to establish a homogenous social order in the name of Islam. Individualism and Pluralism is restricted or neglected as unislamic or secular and the community of faith, the “Umma”, is the manifestation of the true Islam.

- Political Islam dismisses the democratic constitutional state. Islamism denies the seperation of religion and state. The democratic concept that the people is the sovereign is dismissed as unislamic and undermines the sovereignty of god. An equal status of different social groups and religion in the sense of a pluralistic society is impossible.

- Political Islam has the potential for violence and terrorism. The term includes different organisations with different strategic approaches, not all of them use violence. Organisations range from the Ennahda party in Tunisia to the Hamas in the Gaza strip. Still, it can be said that, although the means to achieve it are different, the goal of Islamist organisations is a social model with the above described characteristics.\textsuperscript{19}

Although these characteristics are a theoretical model, not all Islamist organisations fulfil every point of this list and there is not one Political Islam, it is in my opinion a useful description of the phenomenon and helps to understand it.

Central for the understanding of Islamism is the sharia. In a simple sense it just means Islamic or divine law. How it is interpreted, literal or in a more general sense as a guideline for society, is different from organisation to organisation. It derives from the Quran and the Sunna, the actions and sentences from Mohammed. Next to the sharia and in close connection

\textsuperscript{18} see Imad, Mustafa (2013): Der Politische Islam – Zwischen Muslimbrüdern, Hamas und Hizbollah; p. 97
to it, the second important religious concept in Political Islam is the above mentioned hakimiyya. The sovereignty of god excludes democratic principles as it doesn’t leave any place for the sovereignty of the people which is central for democracy. Although it indeed seems that Political Islam and democracy don’t have much in common, there is a third concept which is derived from the Quran and provides some democratic elements to Political Islam, the “shura”.\textsuperscript{20} In a traditional sense it just means the consultation for decisions, but some Islamist organisations, including the Muslim Brotherhood, interpret the concept as a sort of democratic order which includes elections and the right of the people to deselect their government.\textsuperscript{21} How this concept is interpreted, it is also used by non-islamist governments, differs again from organisation to organisation. Still it is questionable if this concept, even if it includes elections, could be really called democratic as it must be, at least in an Islamist sense, within the limits of the sharia.

If one would use a wider term of Political Islam, it would maybe be justified to include Jihadist groups, meaning terrorist organisations which seek to establish a caliphate with violent means, in the term. But for the sake of this work and because it would not really help me to answer my research questions I am not including organisations such as the Islamic State (IS) in the term.

It is not possible to think about the emergence of Islamism and not take into account the role the West played. Political Islam as an idea rose in conflict with colonialism in the Arabic world. It is indeed inevitable to understand the phenomenon and not consider the historic, social and political conditions in the 19\textsuperscript{th}, early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Without the confrontation with the west Political Islam probably wouldn’t have emerged.\textsuperscript{22} As the Osmanic empire began to crumble, a new generation of Islamic intellectuals started to appear and began to criticise the western arrogance vis-a-vis Islam. The occupation of Arabic soil was perceived as a permanent humiliation by the west.

These scholars saw the reason for the domination of the Arabic world by the west and the weakness of Islam in the negligence of religious traditions and of a purer form of Islam. The solution for them was, contrary to the view of the west, an increasing importance of Islam.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} see Imad, Mustafa: p. 98
\textsuperscript{21} see Imad, Mustafa: p. 99
\textsuperscript{22} see Imad, Mustafa: p. 18
\textsuperscript{23} see ibid.: p. 20
In their mind it was two factors which contributed majorly to the weakness of the Arabic world and Islam, the disunity of the umma, the community of faith, and the compliance with the “taqlid”, which means the religious jurisprudence of medieval scholars. The solution for people like Dschamal al-Din-al-Afghani for a strong umma was “Idschthihad”, an autonomous interpretation of the religious sources of Islam. This view was essential for Political Islam.

Political Islam understood itself as an ideology which should find a way between western Capitalism and sowjet Communism.

Hassan Al-Banna when he founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 in Ismailia, Egypt, was convinced of the importance of Islam as the solution for the Arabic world. Although social services and the moral strengthening of Muslims were and still are cornerstones of the organisation, Al-Banna established in the early 40ies paramilitary groups within the Brotherhood. I will later have a more in-depth look at the Brotherhood including the role of Sayyid Qutb who was the intellectual father of a more fundamentalist approach of Islamist organisations.

The Muslim Brotherhood is also the mother organisation of the Hamas in Palestine. It established the “Islamic centre” in Gaza in 1976 and, although at first mainly concerned with charity work, it was the Intifada in 1987 which marked the beginning of a more violent attitude of Hamas. Those violent measures also included suicide bombings. Although it is of course the hostility towards Israel which shapes the identity of the organisation, it also strongly emphasises the importance of Islam as the foundation of society.

Contrary to the Hamas but also closely related to the Muslim Brotherhood is the Ennahda movement or Renaissance party in Tunisia which is a more peaceful example of an Islamist organisation. Although it gained the majority of the votes in the election in 2011, it voluntarily stepped down in 2014 in order to make place for the final drafting of the constitution and an interim government.

Salafists are more on the radical side of the Islamist spectrum. Salafism means an extremely conservative version of Islam which seeks to return to the way of life of the prophet Mohammed and his followers. Although very often equated with Jihadism, not all of them

24 see ibid.: p. 21
25 see ibid.: p. 21
26 see Cook, Steven A. (2012): The struggle for Egypt – from Nasser to Tahrir square; p. 31
27 see Imad, Mustafa: p. 64
seek to establish an Islamic state with violent, terrorist means. In Egypt, Salafism was represented by the al-nur party which won many seats in the parliamentary election 2011/2012. Al-nur, although definitely salafist, doesn’t openly promote or use violent means in order to establish state. Still, they argue for very strict interpretation of the Quran and the Sunna.

Political Islam subsumes a variety of different organisation, strategic approaches and attitudes. Still, there are certain elements which apply to all of them. First and foremost it is the importance of Islam as the foundation of the society. Given the above mentioned characteristic it is questionable if democracy with a strong emphasis on freedom of speech is possible under an Islamist government. Still, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Ennahda movement and even the salafist al-nur party stated that they would uphold democratic standards if they would govern their country. In the Egypt case I will try to find out if and how practice and theory differentiated.
3. Egypt

Before I dig deeper into the history of the country I will try to find out about certain general features of the country in different areas. As this work deals with Human Rights, freedom of expression (this will of course include media) and democracy in Egypt and within the Muslim Brotherhood, I will discuss these topics in great detail later. This short general introduction should serve as a way to understand the identity of the country a little bit more.

3.1 Geography

Egypt, or as it is officially known, the Arabic Republic of Egypt, is the 30th largest country in the world. It borders to Libya in the west, Sudan in the south, Gaza and Israel in the east and the Mediterranean in the north. As it possesses a landbridge (Suez) from Africa to Asia it is a transcontinental country and thus has geopolitical importance. Due to the very hot and dry climate, rain falls mainly in the Winter, the population concentrates on the Mediterranean coast in cities like Alexandria and around the Nile delta, mainly in the capital Cairo. Apart from the Nile delta the country consists mainly of deserts with a few oases. Because of this extremely dry climate, of huge importance for the agriculture and the economy in Egypt is the Aswan High Dam which provides and regulates water for irrigation. Prior to the construction of the Dam (it was completed in 1971) harvest was secured through the annual flooding of the Nile.28

28 see Mabe, Jacob E. (2004): Das Afrika Lexikon – ein Kontinent in 1000 Stichwörtern; p. 15-16
Figure 1: Map of Egypt

worldofmaps.net: map of egypt (political map); Available at: https://www.worldofmaps.net/en/africa/map-egypt/egypt-map.htm (accessed at 18 May 2016)
3.2 People and society

When Egypt is called “the gift of the Nile” it indeed tells the importance of the river to the people. The country due to its hot and dry climate very much depends on it. As P.J Vatikiotis writes:

“But no student of Egypt can fail to qualify this dictum by adding that productive Egypt has also been the fruit of the fellah, the peasant cultivator, literally the one who breaks up the soil, the largest identifiable social class in the country with unbroken historical continuity through the ages.”

If it is indeed the nile in connection with the fellah that very much shaped the identity of the country, Vatikiotis furthermore ads the importance of the socio-political separation between the two Egypts, “Bahri” and “Qibli” which is essential for understanding Egypt in general and the Muslim Brotherhood and its popularity especially: “Upper Egypt within immediate contact with the desert, was limited in its outlook towards Africa...Lower Egypt, on the other hand occupied the wide Nile Delta, richly agricultural, marshy and intensively habitable. Facing outwards to Asia, Europe and the Mediterranean, the Lower Egyptians must have been in commercial and other contact with various peoples.”

Due to the stark separation of the country in the past, Vatikiotis writes about a dual psychology which divides the country in an Asian-Mediterranean and an African-orientated Egypt.

In this context, there is also a dichotomy between countryside and city, where the inhabitants of the cities seemed to be in contact with progress, but the rural fellah’s life was and is very much shaped by isolationism and conservatism. Given this background the fellah is very much drawn to religious brotherhoods.

Egypt today is a fast-growing country with ca. 90 million inhabitants. Although the above described characteristics are still important for the understanding, it is today a highly

30 Vatikiotis, P.J. (1991): The History of Modern Egypt; p. 4
31 see ibid. p.5
32 ibid. p. 6
33 see ibid.
34 see ibid. p. 7
urbanised country. The largest ethnic group are the ethnic Egyptians with 91 %. Other ethnic groups of importance are Abazas, Turks, Bedouin and Greeks. An estimated 2.7 million Egyptians are living abroad.

The scarce resources are unevenly distributed. This leads to a social structure with a small wealthy elite and blatant poverty with ca. 25 % (as of 1995) of the population living under the poverty line.

3.3 Economy

The Nile isn’t only important for the socio-cultural identity of the country but the river is also very important for the economy. Without the river, agriculture would be impossible. As I wrote above, crucial for this sector was the annual flooding of the Nile and after 1971, the Aswan dam. Agriculture at the Mediterranean coast contributes only very little to the total crop, the bulk comes from the Nile Delta. Due to the climate change, desertification has become a problem. The percentage of the sector for the GDP is decreasing and Egypt imports 60 % of its food.

Although industrialisation in Egypt began relatively early, it is safe to say that future perspectives are rather dire. Industry in Egypt differs in few sectors. First, there is the textile and clothing industry which is a huge employer and thus crucial for the economy. Secondly, there are newer industries such as automobile manufacturing and chemical industries and thirdly, smaller industries, meaning mainly the informal commercial sector.

Due to the attractive sites the country has to offer, tourism is one of the most important sectors of the Egyptian economy. In 2010 it contributed more than 11 % to the GDP. How the Arab spring and a rather insecure political situation will effect it is yet to be fully evaluated.

37 see Mabe, Jacob E.: Das Afrika Lexikon; p. 18
39 ibid.
40 see Mabe, Jacob E.: p. 18
41 see Reuters (2014): Egypt tourist numbers to rise 5-10 pct in 2014; Available at: http://www.reuters.com/article/egypt-tourism-idUSL5N0RC3CF20140911 (accessed at 19 May 2016)
Because of the close connection of the military and politics in Egypt, the military plays an important role in the economy as well. There are no exact numbers but some sources estimate that it holds around 40 percent of the GDP.⁴²

Although economic growth picked up speed in 2014/2015 and was at 4,2%⁴³, Egypt has some serious problems. Poverty, unemployment and corruption are challenges the country faces and far reaching structural reforms are needed if it wants to move forward.

3.4 Religion

If the division between countryside and city is one feature that shapes the identity of Egypt, another one is definitely Islam. Ca. 90 % of the Egyptians are of Islamic faith, the vast majority of them are Sunni Muslims. Within the Sunni community a lot of Muslims are also affiliated with Sufi orders. Furthermore, a minority of Muslims belong to the Twelver Shia faith.⁴⁴ Next to Islam, it is the Coptic Church which makes up for around 10 %, in some areas up to 20 % of the population.⁴⁵ It is one of the oldest churches in the world and the believers see themselves as the ancestors of the “native” Egyptians. In recent times, there were quite a lot of conflicts between Coptic Christians and Muslims with notable clashes such as in 2011 when 21 people were killed. Persuasions other than Islam and Christianity are tiny with Jewish Egyptians that are in the three-figure territory.

Although the Christian community is much bigger and more influential than in other Arabic countries, it is without a doubt Islam which dominates the culture, politics and society in the country. Still, this wasn’t always like that. After the 1952 Free Officer’s revolution Gamal Abdel Nasser used religion, Islam and Christianity as a political means but pursued more secular goals. It was first and foremost the ideology of socialism and nationalism that shaped his ideology.⁴⁶

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⁴² see openDemocracy (2015): Egypt’s military economy; Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/arabawakening/cristina-casab%C3%B3n/egypt’s-military-economy (accessed at: 19 May 2016)
⁴⁴ see Khalil, Mohammed Hassan (2014): Between Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation and the faith of others
⁴⁶ see ibid. P. 138
This changed under Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak in the 70ies and the 80ies when the importance of Islam for the rulers grew stronger and the sharia, although more as a reference to the importance of Islam for Egypt, since the constitutional amendment in 1971 and 1980 was declared a primary source of law. Basically all presidents from Nasser to Al-Sisi more or less used Islam as a political means, the importance of it cannot be underestimated. It is in this context questionable if the Egyptian people want a western secular democratic social model. Islam was and is a cornerstone of Egypt. Given this fact, freedom of religion is in some ways restricted. Although the Egyptian constitution recognizes the freedom of religion, there are major obstacles in the way if someone wants to convert from Islam to Christianity. Atheism is not seen as socially acceptable by the majority of the population.

One of the major (Sunni) Islamic institutions not only in Egypt but in the world is the Al-Azhar university in Cairo. It was founded in the 10th century and is the oldest and most important Islamic university in the world. As a religious authority it is influential not only in Egypt and the Middle East but all over the world. Recognized scholars within the Al-Azhar see themselves as moral leaders and as intermediaries between the ruler and the population.47 Under Nasser, the Al-Azhar was put under strict state control, under Sadat and especially under Mubarak the role of the Al-Azhar became stronger and more restrictive. The Al-Azhar played a crucial role in the Islamisation of the political discourse and the rulers tend to seek the approval of the university to justify their decisions.48

The institution itself is by no means liberal and tries to hinder a democratization and liberalisation of Egypt. In that context it is a “prime censor of Egyptian social and cultural life.”49 Zaki Moheb compares the role of Al-Azhar to that of the Catholic church in the democratization of Latin-America:

“In contrast to the Catholic Church which, in the 1980ies, spearheaded the movement of liberation theology and was a potent force for democracy in Latin America, the Azhar’s orientation remains rigidly fundamentalist and generally anti-liberal. There are, of course, progressive elements within its ranks, but the institution as a whole stands for the most restrictive interpretations of Islamic doctrines. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that the Azhar, over the last decade, has fallen under the sway of Saudi Arabia and is now promoting

47 see ibid p. 140
49 ibid. p. 125
its extremely reactionary and oppressive Wahhabi type of tribal Islam. Thus the Azhar at present, far more than in the past, is generally ill-disposed towards Western democratic values, particularly those that concern individual freedoms.  

To sum it up, it has to be noted that Islam is deeply ingrained in the majority of the population. Although it is not necessarily opting for a fundamentalist rule it still is questionable if the Egyptian people want a democratic secular state.

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50 ibid. p. 124-125
3.5 The History of Egypt: from independence to the Arab spring

I will start my investigation with the unilateral declaration of independence of Egypt in 1922. A further look back wouldn’t really serve to answer my questions as it is mainly the more recent history which is relevant for my work. Secondly, as the extent of this work is limited, a further look back would exceed these limits. In my investigation of the liberal era I will rely mainly on the work of Selma Botman of this era in the anthology “The Cambridge History of Egypt II – Modern Egypt from 1517 to the end of the twentieth century.”51

3.5.1 The liberal era: 1922-1952

Although the history of Egypt under British protectorate formally only lasted from 1914 until the unilateral declaration of Independence on the 28th of February 1922, their presence in Egypt was there long before 1914 and lasted much longer than 1922. In fact, the foreign occupation of Egyptian soil was a major factor in the political discourse not only in the beginning but throughout the whole 20th century.

Compared to the second part of the century and the beginning of the 21st, from 1922 until the Free Officer’s revolution in 1952, Egypt experienced an era which was characterized, at least formally, by a western type of political model. Due to the influence of the British occupiers, Egypt was a (semi-)democratic, secular and constitutional monarchy with a lot of individual freedoms, at least on paper. Of course, the reality in a lot of ways differed from the theory but never the less, after this era ended by the Free Officer’s coup, Egypt and its political arena was never as pluralistic as at this time. Nationalism and the quest for (real) independence was the dominating theme. Although Egypt gained formal independence in 1922, the British only agreed under several restrictions and, although the constitution was democratic and gave the parliament certain powers, it also gave major authority to the king which time and time again tried to subverse the constitutional process.52

52 see ibid. p. 286
Since the nationalist revolution in 1919 the Wafd-party was one of the most important political actors in Egypt. By self-definition and by the definition of others, the Wafd was seen as the embodiment of liberal-democracy in Egypt. In this context the party was quite secular in the state-religion aspect and a major opponent to the king as well as to the British occupiers. Although it was such a popular party in Egypt and regularly won elections by a large margin, the party wasn’t imparting lasting democratic features to the political system:

“...the party was not committed to deepening the process of regularized democratic activity in Egypt by encouraging independent political thought in the population”

Egypt in this era was furthermore characterized by a multitude of governments and prime ministers (some of them such as the famous Saad Zaghlul came from the Wafd) as well as an emergence of political parties. From splinter groups of the Wafd, such as the Sa’adist party to religious groups, like the Muslim Brotherhood, to the communists, the political arena was stacked with new blood and new ideas of how Egypt should look like. There were only few things where more or less all political players could agree on, one was the detested ongoing presence of the British in Egypt.

The demand of driving the British out of the country was at least partly met with the Montreux convention in ’37 where it was agreed that british consular jurisdiction in Egypt was abolished. Still, British troops remained in Egypt and oppositional groups, especially Islamists such as the Brotherhood and the Young Egypt, were dissatisfied, any compromise with the foreign occupiers was inacceptable.

During the Second World War, Egypt saw again a rise in the number of British military personnel. Because the British now favoured a Wafd-Government it came under pressure from the other parties as they questioned its nationalist approach. After the end of the war the British staid in the Canal Zone, Egypt was disappointed once more. Under a Wafd-Government in the beginning of the 1950ies aggression against the occupiers grew larger and clashes between Egyptians and British troops ensued. As a result of the chaos, the Wafd-Government was sacked by the king, the old regime was nearing its end. The liberal era ended

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53 see ibid. p. 287
54 ibid. p. 288
55 see ibid. p. 296
56 see ibid. p. 304
on July 23, 1952 when the Free Officers staged a bloodless revolution, abolished the king and ultimately brought independence to Egypt. With the revolution the liberal democracy in the country came to an end. According to Selma Botman it was a top-down approach which didn’t fit the political and social realities of Egypt that was responsible for the ultimate failure of liberal democracy, political diversity, pluralism and civil rights (for men). What followed were leaders which rejected those features.

57 see ibid. p. 307
58 see ibid.
3.5.2 Egypt under Nasser

The Free Officers, a clandestine group of nationalist officers in the armed forces of Egypt and Sudan, formed in the 1940ies and gained momentum as a result of the deeply embarrassing defeat in the 1948 Palestine war. They saw the reason for this defeat and for the political instability of the country in the ongoing presence of the British, the King, the Wafd party, the pluralism of political parties and democracy in general. Although there were clashes between the Free Officers and the king in the late 40ies and early 50ies, the group around Gamal Abdel-Nasser was quite young and thus not influential enough in the patriarchal Egyptian society to pull off a coup d’etat at such an early stage with the blessing of the population.

The time was right on the night of the 22nd to the 23rd of July 1953, when the group took over, overthrew the king and ended the liberal era of Egypt. The Free Officers didn’t come from a wealthy background but were mostly lower middle- and working-class. Almost from the beginning, although mostly unknown to the public, it was Nasser who called the shots. It was him who saved the king’s life by asserting himself against Anwar Sadat and others when he allowed him to go into exile.

Although their attempt to overthrow the king was successful, it was dubious what their exact plan for Egypt was, it didn’t seem that they have a clear ideology:

“This is not to suggest that the Officers did not stand for anything. In general, they shared the same basic views as all the other political players of the era, including the Wafd, the Muslim Brotherhood, factions of the Left, and a bevy of small parties and political independents – the parliamentary system needed reform, the British had to go, and changes were necessary to improve the socioeconomic standing of the vast majority of Egyptians.”

Although there was clearly a consensus on the status of the British in Egypt, other subjects such as the way to improve the status of the poor, weren’t as clear.

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59 see Cook, Steven A.: The struggle for Egypt; p. 37
60 see Encyclopaedia Britannia: Gamal Abdel Nasser; Available at: http://www.britannica.com/biography/Gamal-Abdel-Nasser (accessed at 24 May 2016)
61 Cook, Steven, A.: p. 40
Nasser was the most influential and charismatic of the Free Officers, but it wasn’t him initially that became head of state. Muhammad Naguib, who joined the group in ’49 was their official leader and, mainly because of his seniority, became head of state in ’53, Nasser himself became prime minister. Frictions between the two grew larger and a year late Nasser deposed Naguib and placed him under house arrest.\(^6^2\) In 1956, the constitution declared Egypt a socialist Arab state with a one party system and Islam as the state religion. In June of the same year Nasser also became president.\(^6^3\) The constitutions main purpose was to cement the rule of Nasser and his allies:

“...the 1956 constitution decreed the establishment of the National Union to replace the provisional government’s Liberation Rally as the mass-mobilizing political organization. This newly established single party reinforced the president’s powers.”\(^6^4\)

Nasser’s regime still couldn’t provide a theoretically and emotionally convincing ideology for the population. Still, he became more and more popular, in Egypt as well as in the Arab world. Three events helped him constructing a political system which became increasingly authoritarian and restricted the individual freedoms and rights. The first was Mahmoud Abdel Latif’s failed assassination of Nasser which helped to transform his image from a feared man in the background to a popular leader of Egypt. As the assasin was said to be connected with the Muslim Brotherhood, Nasser decided to crack down the organisation. Secondly, due to the increased popularity, the population seemed to have more and more confidence that the regime would deliver on its promise to improve the situation of the poor and the economy in general. Indeed, Nasser put through an agrarian reform which redistributed agricultural property, built the Aswan dam, helped to accelerate industrialization and improved the situation of women in the country. The third event that helped him gain popularity not only in Egypt but in the whole Arabic world was the nationalization of the Suez-canal in 1956.\(^6^5\)

It is questionable if Nasser’s pan-arabic and socialist measures and rhetoric were due to genuine ideologic conviction or just as a means to solidify his standing in the Egyptian political system and the region. His popularity was massively damaged after the defeat in the six-days war against Israel in 1967. As Steven A. Cook puts it:

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\(^6^2\) see Encyclopaedia Britannia
\(^6^3\) see ibid.
\(^6^4\) Kassem, Maye (2004): Egyptian Politics – The Dynamics of Authoritarian Rule; p. 17
\(^6^5\) see Cook, Steven, A.: p. 64-65
“Egyptians were told that the political system the Officers built and the set of policies and principles that became known as Nasserism-nationalism, a vague socialism, and a strong central government-were necessary to achieve the goals of the revolution. Consequently, Egyptians were asked to sacrifice political and personal rights for the benefit of the important collective goods. Yet Egypt’s shattering defeat seemed to strip bare the justifications for the regime and the nature of the political system...The smoldering wreckage of the Egyptian armed forces made the political order founded after July 1952 seem hollow.”

Nasser never fully regained his popularity. He died in office from a heart attack in 1970.

### 3.5.2.1 Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood

Nasser knew the importance of Islam as a cornerstone of Egyptian society. It is quite safe to say that he used religion as a means to consolidate his reign. In that context he used the Al-Azhar to legitimate Arab socialism. He put the most important religious institution under his control. Nasser himself referred to Islam (and to Christianity) more in a way of emphasizing the Islamic heritage of the country, he didn’t necessarily see it as a foundation of law and government. With that background, sharia courts were abolished in 1955.

This view was of course in sharp contrast to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. But Nasser and the Free Officers and the Brotherhood didn’t have a bad relationship from the beginning. Before the revolution some officers had ties to the organisation and in the first few years of the revolution they had a state of mutual tolerance. The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), serving as the executive body of the government in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, even offered ministerial posts to Brotherhood members. Although they declined, the Muslim Brotherhood was the only political party or group that survived, after all the others were abolished by decree in 1953. The reason for that was because the government’s position wasn’t really solidified after 6 months in power and the Brotherhood was the largest organized popular force in the country.

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66 Cook, Steven A.: P.99
68 see ibid.
69 see Ibid.
70 see Kassem, Maye: p. 138
As time passed and Nasser and his colleagues became more and more confident, the Islamist organisation was just one more oppositional group in the way of an authoritarian political system. Tensions increased and after consolidating power, the government dissolved the Brotherhood in 1954.\textsuperscript{71} Still, the Brotherhood up to that point was just one more oppositional group that was abolished. They existed in the underground and still were a formidable organised group. But after the failed attempt to assassinate Nasser in October 1956, the sky fell on the Islamists and put them on the brink of extinction. If or how the Brotherhood was actually involved in the failed assassination remains unclear. The power struggle between Nasser and the Brotherhood ramped up to that point. Maye Kassem describes it as following:

“At the outset of the July Revolution there was a good deal of cooperation, and even some ideological affinity, between the Ikhwan (Brotherhood) and the Free Officers...The falling out between the Ikhwan and Nasser was not a mere misunderstanding. It was the result of an open struggle for power; and when Nasser won, he had to decide how to deal with the Ikhwan organization, with Islamic fundamentalism and voluntary Islamic organizations, and with those classes and groups that had been most responsive to the appeal of the Ikhwan.”\textsuperscript{72}

Nasser decided to mercilessly track the Brotherhood down. The people’s tribunal handed death sentences to 16 members (although not all of them were executed), 1100 were sent to jail and 1000 Brothers were incarcerated without formal charge.\textsuperscript{73} The Brotherhood was crashed, until 1957/early 1958 “there was no agitating, no strategizing, and no politicking...Yet while Nasser and the Officers could repress the Brothers in an effort to erase entirely the sentiments, principle, and ideas that animated the organization and its activists. The reemergence of the Brotherhood in the late 1950s suggests a certain resilience borne of the conviction in the establishment of an Islamic society above all.”\textsuperscript{74}

The consequence of the abolishment of the Muslim Brotherhood and thousands of them imprisoned, in concentration camps and getting tortured was, at least in part, a radicalisation of the group. This is exemplified by the life and work of Sayyid Qutb, who before the crackdown of the Muslim Brotherhood was a supporter of the Free Officers like other Muslim Brothers.\textsuperscript{75} Imprisoned, he more and more radicalized. Central for his theory was the concept

\textsuperscript{71} see ibid.  
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. p. 139  
\textsuperscript{73} see Cook, Steven A. p. 82  
\textsuperscript{74} ibid. p. 83  
\textsuperscript{75} see ibid. p. 86
of “jahaliyya” which translates to a state of ignorance of a socially unjust society which is based on man-made laws. For him, to overcome this state of ignorance, society has to be based on the sovereignty of god. Jihad, in a martial sense, was a tool to create an environment where true Islam could flourish. His thinking should be influential for a more radical approach of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as for Jihadists worldwide. He was executed by hanging in 1966. I will have a much more detailed look at his theory and his influence in later chapters.

3.5.2.2 Nasser, democracy and freedom of expression

Given the description of the Nasser era before, it is more or less clear that democracy and the freedom of expression wasn’t fully developed nor was this the main agenda of him. In the power struggle of Nasser and Naguib it was the latter who wanted to go back to a more democratic political system. Nasser vetoed against it and ultimately won. The regime thought that there could be no real political freedom without establishing freedom of poverty first for the majority of the Egyptian people. In order to improve the situation of Egypt (which in some ways he actually did), the people was asked to sacrifice.

Given this pretext and the fact that political parties were abolished, it is safe to say that pluralism and freedom of expression in the political field was non-existing. Interest groups existed but they were under state control. Immediately after capturing power, the regime imposed a single party, which after 1962 was called the Arab Socialist Union (ASU). Nasser’s regime relied on the charisma and coercion of him and on a highly centralized bureaucratic-authoritarian state.

When Nasser solidified the standing of his political system he faced no real opposition and he wanted to keep it that way. In 1958, officially known as Law 162, the law gave the government extraordinary powers under a state of emergency. These powers included censorship, closure of newspapers and periodicals, restrictions on union activities and limitations on political organizations.

76 see ibid. p. 87-89
78 see ibid.
79 see Cook, Steven A.: p. 82
Civil society under Nasser was more or less extinguished. Freedom of expression was under the tight grip of Nasser. Needless to say, the same goes for the press and the media in general. Although just because a TV-station is state owned, doesn’t necessarily mean that it is censored in a major way, in Egypt under Nasser this was the case:

“...it is usually very difficult at least in the Arab World to maintain freedom of the mass media when the newspapers and broadcasting facilities are owned and directly supervised by the government or a quasi-governmental institution. In Egypt’s case, the Consultative Council...owns the two largest daily newspapers and numerous other papers and magazines – all of which are semi-official and are referred to as the “national press”....Under Mubarak’s two predecessors the Egyptian press was severely constrained (though much more so under Nasser). The story of the press under Nasser and Sadat as told by a former prominent Egyptian journalist was a “chronicle of bullying, intimidation, arrests and sackings.””

Since the 1960ies the Egyptian media is dominated by the state-owned Egypt Radio and Television Union (ERTU) and three semi-public publishing houses that publish the biggest daily newspapers Al-Ahram, Al-Akhbar and Al-Goumhouriy as well as a number of Special-Interest papers and other magazines.

Nasser used institutions, religious and political, and the media to solidify his popularity. This worked well until the mid-/late 1960ies. It was the crashing defeat in the six-days war that damaged his image and made people question the sacrifices they made for the government. If the government couldn’t achieve its goals, why should the people give up political freedoms and rights? After the defeat, the feeling was that the government wouldn’t take proper responsibility for it. As a result, in 1968 protests broke out that put the regime on the defensive. The protests were broadly based, including students and workers, and some of the protesters had specific demands, such as freedom of expression and the press and laws protecting these freedoms. At first, the regime rejected these demands, but as the pressure grew stronger, Nasser held a referendum on the “march 30 program” which proposed and emphasised the importance of individual rights and freedoms, including the freedom of expression and a more democratic Egypt. It was approved on May 1968. Many of the people

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80 see Kassem, Maye: p. 88
81 Zaki, Moheb: p. 66
82 see Strohmayer, Edda A.: p. 116
involved in the protests today believe that it was only a tactical move of him to release pressure.\footnote{see Cook, Steven A.: p. 107}
3.5.3 Egypt under Sadat

After Nasser’s sudden death, it wasn’t clear who would be his successor. Western media, intelligence and diplomats were worried that there could be a power struggle with serious instability for the geopolitically important country. When the name Anwar Sadat fell, few if any thought that he would have the strength to lead the country or to transform it. He joined the Free Officers in 1950, in the background he was a confidant of Nasser throughout his tenure. Sadat held high offices under him including the post of vice-presidency twice.\(^{84}\) In a lot of ways he was underestimated. Influential people like Ali Sabri weren’t too worried about him as they saw him as unthreatening and, because he was in the public identified with the Nasser-regime, as a symbol of continuity.\(^{85}\) As a result they didn’t obstruct his formal promotion to president. They thought he could serve as a puppet and that he wouldn’t last long in office anyway.

As history showed, they seriously underestimated Sadat and his political talent. When they tried to put pressure on him in order to get rid of him, it showed that Sadat knew about his opponents and how to dispose them. He surprised everyone when he put vice president Ali Sabri and Sharawy Gomaa, the interior minister, in jail.\(^{86}\) Sadat’s long standing ties with the Free Officers seemed to won him the support of the military.

The imprisonment of his “nasserist” opponents was a part of what would be known as the “corrective revolution”, which means derogation from the politics of Nasser, at least in some ways. In order to gain support for this plan, he presented this as a continuance of the revolution at the beginning of the 1950ies. As Maye Kassem comments it:

“...the fact that Sadat was in the position to personally redirect the policies doesn not imply that the fundamental dynamics of governance differed from those during the Nasser era. In fact, once Sadat undertook his “corrective revolution” and placed his own trusted men in office, he established a new legal-constititional framework to encourage and legalize a system of personal rule similar to Nasser’s.”\(^{87}\)

\(^{84}\) see Encyclopaedia Britannia: Anwar Sadat; Available at: [https://www.britannica.com/biography/Anwar-Sadat](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Anwar-Sadat) (accessed at 26 May 2016)

\(^{85}\) see Kassem, Maye: p.20

\(^{86}\) see ibid. p. 21

\(^{87}\) ibid. p. 21
It was the 1971 constitution which should legalize personal rule. Between the three branches of government it was preoccupied with the role of the president in comparison to the legislative and the judiciary. Once in office, it allowed the president to object laws, to rule by decree, declare a state of emergency and appoint and dismiss the entire cabinet. Furthermore it included the right for the president to dissolve the People’s Assembly if necessary.

Part of the “corrective revolution” was generally a liberalisation of the political system insofar as he installed a multi-party system (I will have a more detailed look at this later). It is questionable if this was a genuine move towards a more democratic Egypt. It is quite probable that this was a signal to foreign investment, as it went hand in hand with an economic liberalisation. The move away from socialism already began under Nasser. Although the economic performance at the beginning of his tenure was quite decent, in the mid- to end 60ies the economic outlook was more and more bleak. The large debt burden staid mostly the same and instead of staying with socialist strategies, Nasser began to loose the reins on the private sector. At the beginning of his reign, Sadat continued the path of his predecessor when he returned private property, eased restrictions on foreign investment and established the Egyptian International Bank for Trade and Development. Sadat continued with this economic policy in the 70ies. The “infitah” policy, meaning openness, moved further and further away from socialist ideas and tried to improve Egypt and its economy by inviting foreign investment and generally opening up to the free market. Under infitah, the rift between poor and rich grew larger. The middle-class that emerged under Nasser was increasingly marginalized under Sadat’s economic changes. Tarek Osman believes that infitah was over ambitious, failed to recognize the complexities of the socio-economic system of the country and that it was unrealistically rapid and thus doomed to fail. In accordance with his economic shift from a socialist towards a capitalist economy, he moved away from the support of the Sowjet Union.

Although infitah provoked opposing voices, Sadat’s popularity in the 70ies grew because of his role in the Yom-Kipur war of 1973 where he was the first Arab leader who could, with parts of the Sinai-peninsula, retake property from Israel. In 1978 he negotiated a peace-

88 see ibid. p. 24
89 see ibid. p. 24
90 see ibid. p. 53
91 see Cook: p. 121
92 see ibid.
93 see Osman, Tarek (2011): Egypt on the brink – from Nasser to Mubarak; p. 125
agreement with Israel. In the western hemisphere he was hailed and he and his isreali counterpart Menachem Begin were awarded with the nobel-prize. In the Arab world, including Egypt the situation for him wasn’t as bright, Sadat was confronted with heavy criticism form all parts when he made peace with the arch-enemy, for a lot of Egyptians Sadat betrayed them.

It was probably at least one reason why he was assinated in 1981 during a military parade by Islamists. One month earlier, in September, he arrested 1500 people in a crackdown against critics, intellectuals and activists, many of them were Islamists.

3.5.3.2 Sadat and the Muslim Brotherhood

In the early years of Nassers reign, the Muslim Brotherhood was one of his main opponents. Although he used Islam as a means to gain political control, under his tenure he didn’t really give to much importance to it as a source of law. Under Sadat the relationship between the regime, Islam as whole, the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups should change. In accordance with his corrective revolution it was less the Muslim Brotherhood and more the leftist groups and the Nasserists who were viewed as the enemies of the president.94

In that context, he loosened the tight grip of Nasser vis-a-vis Islam and its institutions such as the Al-Azhar.

Sadat was seen as much more religious than Nasser, this also showed in the 1971 constitution. Altough it didn’t radically depart from previous documents, in some ways there actually were important innovations. Article 2 states that “the principles of Islamic shari’a are a principal source of legislation.”95 Generally, during the Sadat years in 1970ies Egypt, the political discourse became more and more islamcized and Sadat encouraged this development. Especially in the universities, student unions were permeated with Islamic ideology:

“Knowing that they had the support of higher authority, the Islamic students began to behave as if it was they who were running the universities....Any students who openly disagreed with the Islamic groups were subject to disciplinary action. Boys and girls seen walking together were beaten up....It was clear that the religious students were not simply tolerated by the

94 see Kassem: p. 140
95 Cook: p. 124
authorities but actively encouraged by them.”

Islamist groups, such as Al-Jama’at, were nurtured in such a supportive environment.

During the end of the 1960ies, Nasser released hundred of Muslim Brothers and other Islamists from the prisons. It was the 1967 defeat in the six-days war against Isreal that not only damaged Nassers image but also gave Islamism a huge upwind. Religious groups could recruit new personnel as they could communicate that the defeat against the arch enemy was because socialist rather than religious ideas were pursued and the defeat was the punishment for this. Israel in many ways was seen as the continuance of colonialisation of Arabic soil by the west. Again, much like in the late 19th/early 20th century, the Islamistic motto “Islam is the solution” saw the lack of Islamic ideas as the reason for the defeat.

At the beginning of Sadat’s tenure, he sought to reconcile with the Muslim Brotherhood. He released hundreds of members from the prisons and encouraged exiled members to come home. He didn’t allow the legal recognition of religiously based political parties but he did allow such groups to take part in the political and socioeconomic realm at some levels. After years and years of persecution, prison and torture, the Brotherhood just wanted to rebuild and sought peace with the government. Other (more radical) Islamist youth movements weren’t as mellow and gained more and more support. Given the cordial relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the regime and the weak state the organisation was in, “by the late 1970s, the government and the Brothers developed a mutual interest in countering extremist group...”

The support of Sadat towards smaller Islamist groups diminished during the course of the 70ies. Due to Sadat’s economic policy which opened up Egypt for foreign investment and the growing rift between rich and poor and the growing importance of Islam, Islamist groups could recruit in the poor neighbourhoods and gained more and more support.

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96 Heikal, Mohammed (1983): Autumn of Fury: The Assasination of Sadat; p. 133-134
97 see Kassem: p. 142
98 see Kassem p. 141
99 see ibid.
100 see ibid. p. 140-141
101 see ibid. p. 142
102 Cook: p. 125
After the peace-agreement between Egypt and Israel, the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood worsened:

“The cordial but wary relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and regime also came to an end as the result of the treaty with Israel. Although the Brothers were allies of Sadat’s de-Nasserization, appreciated his outward religiosity, and supported some aspects of infitah...the trip to Jerusalem, Camp David Accord and subsequent peace treaty sent the Brothers into opposition... The Brotherhood regarded (the orientation toward the United states and the agreement with Israel) as threats to Egypt’s Islamic character.”

Although criticism came not only from the Islamist side, Sadat tried to conciliate and engineered five constitutional amendments in 1980. The previous constitution stated that the sharia was a source to Egypt’s legislation, the new text said that “Islam is the religion of the state and Arabic its official language. Principles of Islamic law (Shari’a) are the principal sources of legislation.”

Still, criticism and protest from Islamist side didn’t really stop and as a result, much like Nasser, he came down hard against the opposition and arrested 1500 people in September ’81, many of them were from the Muslim Brotherhood. Following his brutal assassination by a radical Islamist, the product of a development which he was in part to blame for, the state was more contested than ever.

3.5.3.3 Sadat, democracy and freedom of expression

Although the era under Sadat was in some ways characterized by political and especially economic liberalizations, his tenure was a continuation of the Nasser-era insofar as the political system was personalistic and authoritarian-bureaucratic. He wouldn’t really allow that his authority as a president would be challenged. In the end, the crackdown against his critics showed that when push came to shove he would resort to the methods of his predecessor.

Under Sadat, Egyptian society would be more and more Islamicized. Not only did he establish Islamic law as the source of legislation, especially in his early years as a president he also encouraged Islamist groups to be more active in pursuing their vision of an Islamic society. The result was a growing intolerance against non-Islamic views to a point were some

103 Cook: p. 152
104 Cook: p. 153
105 see Zaki, Moheb: p. 18
institutions, especially the universities, were dominated by these groups and contrary opinions couldn’t be voiced without serious consequences.

But in comparison to Nasser he allowed a more pluralistic political arena. In 1977 he permitted the re-establishment of political parties in Egypt.\textsuperscript{106} His decision for a multiparty system came when he announced that the Arabs Socialist Union (ASU), the Nasserist socialist party was to split into three ideological parties which should represent the left, the center and the right. He then established his own party, the National Democratic Party (NDP).\textsuperscript{107} It is questionable in how far Sadat made this step from a single- to a multiparty system out of democratic conviction or if his decision was fueled by other thoughts. A few years earlier he more or less cut the ties with the Soviet Union when he expelled their advisors.\textsuperscript{108} The break with the foreign supporters from the east was the prelude to his economic politics of liberalization and opening up the Egyptian Economy for foreign investment. Infitah meant also the reorientation towards the west, especially the USA, and because of this, an economic liberalisation went hand in hand with a political liberalisation:

“Thus the point here is that Sadat’s motives for liberalizing the political system were influenced by economic and political priorities other than a desire for genuine democratization. This assumption is further reinforced by the nature of Law 40 of 1977, governing political parties. According to this law, political parties can only be established if their goals, principles, and programs do not conflict with either sharia principles and national unity or public order.”\textsuperscript{109}

Because of the vagueness and the restrictions of the law it was quite easy to reject political parties if they would really represent different views. Instead of allowing the emergence of a pluralistic political arena it seems that “Sadat’s objective was to ensure a transition from a weak single-party system to an equally weak multiparty system.”\textsuperscript{110} By the end of his tenure, Sadat showed his true colours when he arrested 1500 intellectuals, activists and other political opponents.

\textsuperscript{106} see ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} see Kassem, Maye: p. 52
\textsuperscript{108} see ibid. p. 53
\textsuperscript{109} ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} ibid. p. 54
Sadat loosened the reigns on censorship and press freedom a little bit. But it was still unacceptable to openly criticize the president, his political system or the main cornerstones of Egypt. In 1979, Sadat introduced the Law for the Protection of the Internal Front and Social Peace, which is better known as the “Law of Shame.” This law included many new restrictions and basically criminalized opposition to the government. Due to its vagueness this could be interpreted as anything. Violation of public, religious and national morals was outlawed.111

111 see Cook, Steven A.: p. 153
3.5.4 Egypt under Mubarak

Hosni Mubarak’s reign that lasted 30 years was in a lot of ways in continuance with his two predecessors. Egypt was still a political system that was characterized by personalism and an authoritarian-bureaucratic rule. Unlike with Sadat, at the beginning of Mubarak’s presidency there was no power struggle about the office. He still faced a huge challenge, the country was in search of a political identity. Nasser socialist politics drove Egypt into debt, the defeat against Israel in the six-days war was a huge humiliation and the peace-agreement with the arch-enemy faced broad criticism, the country lost its leading role in the arabic world. Furthermore Sadat’s economic politics widened the gap between rich and poor. Although in the first years in office he portrayed himself as a democrat, he knew that the multiparty system could potentially challenge the system of personal rule.  

During the ’73 war with Israel, Mubarak was chief commander of the Air Force and he was credited with good performances during the opening days of the conflict. Because of this, he was appointed vice-president in 1975. In contrast to Sadat, Mubarak’s relationship with Israel cooled off. This was mainly because of the Lebanon invasion of Israel in ’82. Furthermore, he knew that a normalisation of the relationship between the two countries wouldn’t be popular in Egypt and in the whole Arabic world. On the other side, his orientation towards the West, especially the USA was as strong as under Sadat, Washington was still the main aid-donor.

The strong ties between Egypt and the US also showed through the involvement of the country in the Iraq-conflict in 1991 were Egypt was a part of the allied forces against Saddam Hussein. His reward for the involvement was that a bulk of foreign debt was waived. In 2003 he was against an involvement in Iraq. 

One of the problems under Mubarak and under his predecessors was corruption. There are a lot of reasons for corruption in Egypt but the personalised rule, in that context the widespread clientilism and the low wages of government officials contributed to it in a major way. Still, Mubarak tried to portray himself as a fighter against corruption in Egypt. When his son Alaa

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112 see Kassem, Maye: p. 26-27
113 see Encyclopaedia Britannia: Hosni Mubarak; Available at: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hosni-Mubarak (accessed at 30 May 2016)
114 see ibid.
115 see Strohmayer, Eda A.: p. 101
was suspected as being involved in corruption he didn’t allow him to appear in public anymore. The Mubarak regime targeted businessmen who got rich under Sadat’s economic liberalisation, the so-called “infitah-mafia”. These efforts brought some major cases to the daylight.\textsuperscript{116} He campaigned against corruption throughout his tenure. But there was no real improvement in terms of true reforms with a system of checks and balances, clear responsibilities and transparency,\textsuperscript{117} “some symbols of the regime (were) sacrifices to create the illusion of cracking down on corruption.”\textsuperscript{118}

Despite his rhetorics, corruption was blatant under Mubarak and it was reported that his family, especially his sons were involved. This was especially delicate because it was reported that his younger son, Gamal, climbed the ranks in the National Democratic Party (NDP) and was prepared to be his father’s successor. Furthermore the inheritance of political power wasn’t a part of the Arabic political culture, and in that context the Syrian case was heavily rejected in Egypt.\textsuperscript{119} Father and son Mubarak denied the reports about the succession and it would have been extremely unpopular in Egypt.

At the beginning of the 1980ies, the Egyptian economy was characterised by a huge trade deficit, debt, a wide gap between rich and poor and huge costs for the military.\textsuperscript{120} The century was characterized by the economic politics of “productive infitah.” Mubarak, at the beginning of his reign declared that he wants to lay focus on economic issues. He often spoke about the need to fight corruption and to reform the economy in the country. Productive infitah meant rationalising import, modernising the public sector and a strengthening of important sectors such as transport or electricity. Furthermore, privatisation was an important part of his economic strategy.\textsuperscript{121} Although there were little successes, the Egyptian economy didn’t really improve in that time.

The economic situation in the 1990ies bettered also due to the involvement of Egypt in the Gulf war of 1991. As a result the US and other donor-countries waved a good part of the debts. Reform prescribed by the IMF, such as a further privatisation of public companies, liberalisation, tax reforms etc. had the effect that economic data improved. Egypt at the end of

\textsuperscript{116} see ibid.: p. 102-103  
\textsuperscript{117} see ibid.: p. 107  
\textsuperscript{118} ibid.  
\textsuperscript{119} see ibid. p. 248  
\textsuperscript{120} see ibid. p. 196  
\textsuperscript{121} see ibid. p. 198
the 90ies/beginning of the new millenium was presented as a prime example for a successful economic stabilisation policy. But there were some huge reform-deficits and the Egyptian economy wasn’t really capable of competing.122

Due to the 9/11 attacks and the invasion in Iraq, Egyptian economy temporarily suffered, but privatisation picked up speed in the 2000s, between 2004 and 2009 the Egyptians privatized 191 companies netting the government about 7 billion US-Dollar.123 The century was marked by unprecedented foreign investments, free-floating currency and a neoliberal economic programme. Although figures improved, it was still a “tale of two Egypts”, most people would earn under 2000 dollars a year and there were sixteen million Egyptians who lived on about 2 dollars a day. Economic measures were mostly done for the investors and not for the normal people.124 As Steve A. Cook describes the situation:

“Egypt enjoyed a period of unprecedented economic growth in the second half of the 2000s, but Egypt grappled with a spike in prices as the pound, now subject to global market forces, was worth far less. The impact on the working and lower classes was almost immediate and entirely negative, as food and consumer products became more expensive almost overnight.”

For the vast majority the social contract, based on personal rule and authoritarian politics that was supposed to provide security, a job and health was not much worth anymore.

As far as the role of the military in Egypt is concerned Mubarak continued Sadat’s politics when he pushed it out of the political day-to-day business. Nevertheless, he didn’t really tackle the powerful role of it in Egyptian society. The relationship between the regime and the military was very good. Under Mubarak the budget for the military rose and he saw it as a prerequisite for peace and security. The US donated from 1982 on 1,3 billion dollars yearly to the Egyptian military.125 The military under Mubarak was heavily involved in economic activities and had a preferential role in the Egyptian society.126

122 see Strohmayer: p. 200-201
123 see Cook, Steve A.: p. 176
124 see ibid.: p. 175
125 see Strohmayer: p. 86-87
126 see ibid.: p. 88
4.5.4.1 Mubarak and the Muslim Brotherhood

Nasser’s regency was characterized by a relatively secular political system, this changed under Sadat. Not only did he reconcile with the Muslim Brotherhood, he also approved in his early years for a growing importance of Islam for the public life. The assassination of Sadat by radical Islamists was a warning to Mubarak. In order to combat radicalisation, he tried to strengthen relatively “moderate” Islamic institutions, first and foremost the Al-Azhar. 127

Nasser controlled the Al-Azhar with a tight grip and Mubarak too tried to use Islam and the legal opinions of the scholars to solidify his position and to stabilize the political system. If the president needed support to condemn religious violence in Egypt or his involvement in the gulf war in ’91, Sheikh Gad Al-Haqq was there to give him the necessary religious credibility. 128 He also used Nasser’s politics of state control over religious institutions when he nationalised numerous mosques in order to take possible places for agitation for radical Islamists as well as to control them. 129

The fact that the Al-Azhar supported Mubarak in his effort to combat radical Islamism doesn’t mean that it supported a liberal, secular Egypt. Quite the opposite, the Al-Azhar was and is a super-conservative institution which sought to play the role of the Islamic guardian of morality. Especially under “Sheikh Al-Azhar” Al-Haqq, from ’82 to ’96, it agitated confidently against liberal intellectuals and activists, Women-rights, against apostasy and everything that appeared “non-Islamic”. Newspapers, TV-programmes or certain curricula which seemed to be too progressive or un-Islamic were censored due to the pressure of Al-Azhar. 130 After the death of Al-Haqq in ‘96, Mubarak appointed Muhammad Sayed Tantawi as the “Sheikh Al-Azhar”. He was a much less confident persona. Due to his relatively moderate and close-to-government attitude he was a controversial figure within the Al-Azhar. 131 Mubarak and his relationship with Al-Azhar were of great use for the president. In fact, it was a means of stabilisation and for combating (radical) Islamism. One the other side it propagated a very conservative Islam and repressed a liberal societal climate.

127 see ibid.: p. 152
128 see ibid.
129 see ibid. p. 153
130 see ibid. p. 154
131 see ibid. p. 155
Mubarak’s cooperation with the Al-Azhar was not the only strategy he had to combat Islamism. After his predecessor was assassinated, many people connected to political Islam or suspected were put in jail. Despite these crackdowns, the early 80ies can be viewed as a relatively tolerant period for Political Islam in Egypt. As Maye Kassem explains it:

“The virtual absence of state coercion against Islamist opponents during the first part of the 1980ies can be attributed to the fact that Mubarak was in the process of consolidation his power base within the military, National Democratic Party (NDP), legislative, and executive realms. As a consequence, Mubarak presumably felt that the mass Islamist arrests following Sadat’s assassination had removed the main threat to his new leadership, thus leaving him free to concentrate on the more important task of consolidating his personal power within the formal state apparatus.”

Given this background, Islamism, and especially the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the century managed to reappear as a serious player in the political arena of Egypt. The 70ies were a period of reconstruction but the 80ies were the time as the main opposition in the parliament. In the 1984 and 1987 legislative election the organisation could gain eight and thirty eight seats. They overcame the legal restriction by building alliances with legal parties. Furthermore, they were very successful in the professional syndicate elections and because of their political success they more and more appeared in the media by the end of the century. The Brotherhood had to be taken as a serious opponent. During this time there was a common goal that unified most of the Islamist organisations, the (de-facto) implementation of the sharia. The threat coming from the Brotherhood wasn’t only apparent in the political arena. Speculation of “Islamic Banking” was partly blamed for the bad economic performance of Egypt and members of the Brotherhood were said to be key-figures in these institutes.

Due to the successful reconciliation of the Brotherhood, they became more and more confident when they openly supported the sharia, Islamic clothing rules for women in official positions and the jihad in Palestine after the Intifada. Mubarak reacted to the political threat coming from the Brotherhood by introducing the majority voting system for the parliamentary election in 1990. The Brotherhood then boycotted the election. The success of the Muslim

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132 Kassem, Maye: p. 147
133 see ibid. p. 148-149
134 see ibid.
135 see Strohmayer, Edda A.: p. 158-159
136 see ibid.
Brotherhood and other Islamist organisations at this time was also because of the wide gap between poor and rich. Islamism, with its charity work filled the void of the state and got sympathies, votes and members from the poor, the uneducated and the illiterate. The 90ies in Egypt were characterized by religious terrorism and a circle of violence. The assassination of the liberal poet Farag Fouda, attacks on foreign tourists, the killing of 13 copts and last but not least a failed attempt to kill the president himself caused a relentless crackdown on radical Islamists. Because of these violent outbursts, Mubarak more and more gave up the differentiation between moderate and radical Islamists. Mubarak’s indulgence and appeasement with the Brotherhood came to an end. There is no concrete proof connection between the Brotherhood, as an organisation, and violent Islamists but still, ever since the emergence of Sayyid Qutb’s radical and more violent ideology, the dividing line between Muslim Brotherhood and more radical groups became blurry.

Due to the more repressive attitude of the Mubarak regime towards the Brotherhood in the 1990ies, the 2000s were marked by a more docile and low-key attitude. Time and time again, they declared to support state of law, democracy and Human Rights.

On the other side Mubarak didn’t seem to be so forgiving: “The last thing our country needs is a group like the Muslimbrothers,…they have a terrorist past, they killed a Prime Minister and others who did not agree with their political goals.” His threatening attitude towards the organisation was also due to the fact that in the parliamentary elections in 2005 the Brotherhood could gain 88 seats. They were a formidably organised group and a real political opponent to the president.

3.5.4.2 Mubarak, democracy and freedom of expression

In the first years of Mubarak’s presidency he tried to present himself as a reformer and a genuine advocate for democracy. He stated: “I believe democracy is the best guarantee of our future….I totally oppose the centralization of power and I have no wish to monopolize the decision-making because the country belongs to all of us and we all share a responsibility for it.” This attitude at the beginning wasn’t for too long, at the end of the 80ies and especially during the 90ies he more and more changed his stance and contained democratic structures

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137 see ibid.: p. 160-161
138 ibid.: p. 165
139 Kassem, Maye: p. 54
and political freedoms. In 1987 he stated: “We are providing democracy doses in proportion to our ability to absorb them … but we need time for our democracy to fully develop.”140

Although the multiparty-system and the legislature, inherited by his predecessor, was weak and state-controlled, his support for democracy in the beginning seemed genuine for some analysts. The opposition, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1984 and 1987 parliamentary elections gained quite a respectable number of seats.141 The beginning of the 80ies was characterized by a relatively high degree of pluralism and political freedoms. But it was the success of the Muslim Brotherhood and a unified Political Islam which caused the president to hit the breaks on his “laissez-fair” politics. Egypt in the 1990ies was marked by the Islamist threat, the stabilisation- and austerity-programme and severe restrictions for political rights.142 Especially the Luxor massacre in 1997 where 62 people, mostly tourists, were killed by Islamists caused huge damage to tourism and to the economy in general. Because of that, the restrictions on personal and political freedoms were, at least temporarily, supported by the bulk of the Egyptian population.143

After the Islamist threat was diminished these restrictions were partly loosened up in the early years of the new millennium. Egypt didn’t take part in the Iraq-war in 2003, still, the USA was a main-donor of the country and so George W. Bush put pressure on Mubarak to liberalise Egypt and the president had no other choice but to obey. Mubarak was forced to make political reforms and strengthen democracy so he again positioned himself as a reformer. Indeed, the early 2000s were a quite liberal time for Egypt. As Steve Cook puts it:

“None of these ostensible commitments to political change was credible, but they did have a critically important effect on Egyptian politics. With Washington watching and Mubarak posturing as a reformer, activists who had previously worked at the margins, or who had been subject to repression, were relatively free to pursue their agendas in new and innovative ways.”144

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140 ibid. p. 55
141 see ibid. p. 30
142 see Strohmayer, Edda A.: p. 209
143 see ibid. p. 211
144 Cook, Steve A.: p. 264
Because of the fear of Islamists and the successes in the parliamentary elections of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2005 this pressure decreased shortly after and the reform speed was slowing down.

Throughout his tenure, after the assassination of Sadat until the Protests of 2011, Mubarak ruled with the Emergency Law. By renewing it every three years he was able to control political activities in Egypt. Of course, Mubarak justified the necessity of the Emergency Law by the Islamist threat, but restrictions were not only used against Terrorist but also against peaceful political activities. Other than his predecessor, who often governed by decree, Mubarak used the Emergency Law as a “play-it-safe strategy”. He kept it just in case the opposition would have gotten too strong.

This was especially important regarding the freedom of expression, assembly and association. It allowed the government “the right to censor, seize, or confiscate letters, newspapers, newsletters, publications, and all other means of expression and advertising before they are published.” Under Emergency Law, during legislative election campaigns, a campaign gathering could not take place without the permission of the Ministry of Interior. Candidates who were supported by the NDP, wouldn’t have any problems to get this permission whereas opposition outside of their control couldn’t get the formal approval. Independent opposition weren’t allowed to hold these election gatherings. During an election gathering, the Emergency Law made sure that agitation wouldn’t get out of hand. If an opposition candidate would be too outspoken and critical against the regime it faced the risk of not only having the gathering dissolved but also of potential arrest. The articles that support these severe restrictions were very broadly written and thus left room for interpretation.

Under Hosni Mubarak, Human Rights groups started to emerge. The first Egyptian Human Rights organisation, the Partisans Association of Human Rights in Cairo (PAHRC) was established in 1977 but it served more as an advocate for the regime. The first independent organisation was not established until 1987. Its independent views are confirmed by the fact it was legally unrecognized, the Emergency Law enabled the regime to control political activities.

145 Kassem, Maye: p. 55
146 see ibid. p. 56
147 see ibid. p. 57
activities and restrict pluralistic view in many fields. Until the end of the Mubarak regime, independent, critical Human Rights organisations were very scarce.¹⁴⁸

During the crackdown of Sadat in the last year of his life, many critical journalists were imprisoned. Under Mubarak, in the early “laissez-fair” years, he released many of them. Freedom of expression in the media in the early 80ies wasn’t as restricted. Still, there were some red lines that couldn’t be crossed, direct criticism of the president, derogatory speech against him, his family or the military and anti-religious speech were off-limits.¹⁴⁹ As the societal climate became more restrictive, the grip against the press and the media became tighter. Although the Egyptian constitution foresees freedom of the press and forbids censorship, like in so many other aspects of the political life, the Emergency Law enables in matters related to public safety or for purposes of national security the possibility of censorship. As this broad formulation suggests, there were a few possibilities for it.¹⁵⁰ The restrictive societal climate during the 90ies also affected the freedom of expression in the media in a major way. Although a law that sanctioned the spreading of false information or defamation against public institutions with 5 years prison was revoked shortly after it was adopted in ’96, the regime would react with imprisonment or the ban of newspapers or magazines.¹⁵¹ In 1998 a new harsh media law was adopted and journalists were given a code of ethics which enforced self-censorship. Especially reports about oppression against the Copts were a thorn in the side of the government.¹⁵²

Due to the pressure of Washington in the early 2000s, the press profited very much from reform towards more freedom. The liberal climate was unprecedented, new independent papers such as Masr Al-Yawm were founded, censorship was loosened up and public criticism against the president wasn’t as unthinkable as it was a few years ago.¹⁵³

Under Hosni Mubarak, democratic reforms, including freedom of expression were a mirror of domestic politics. Although there were improvements in some areas, Egypt was an “unfree” country with severe restrictions. Upcoming blogger-activists who questioned formal and

¹⁴⁸ see Kassem, Maye: p. 119
¹⁴⁹ see Strohmayer, Edda A.: p.116
¹⁵⁰ see ibid. p. 119
¹⁵¹ see ibid. p. 120
¹⁵² see ibid. p. 121
¹⁵³ see ibid. p. 122
informal power structures and documented wrongdoings of the police and other institutions were surveyed, censored, intimidated, beaten up and imprisoned.
4. The Arab Spring

As I have given an in-depth look at the history of Egypt under Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, a lot of the root-causes for the protests at the beginning of 2011 were described. Additionally, I now will provide a broader context of the Arab spring. What do the countries that were mostly affected by the protests have in common? And how is Egypt fitting in those descriptions?

4.1 Causes and broader context

Given the description of Mustapha Kamel Al-Sayyiid\textsuperscript{154}, there are different common features that can be observed in the countries that were mostly affected by the Arab Spring. Countries like Egypt or Tunisia can be categorized as the poor in the Arab world. Other than in Saudia-Arabia, although there were protests there too, those countries do not possess significant amounts of national resources, meaning oil and gas. Income is used by rich Arab countries to buy loyalties from their citizens. The per capita income in Egypt was close to the average or slightly below the average of the Arab countries as a whole but far behind the rich gulf countries.\textsuperscript{155} In Egypt, as I have already described, the 2000s were marked by a growing economy, it has averaged a 6% GDP growth rate during the decade, in Tunisia the GDP rate grew from 3 to 4.7% in that time.\textsuperscript{156} So, although there was a growth rate which was significantly higher than in European countries, it didn’t have that much effect on the creation of new jobs, the living conditions didn’t improve much:

“Perhaps, the spotty increase in income, by virtue of its skewed distribution, brought about rising expectations. In any event, the oligarchic nature of the ruling regimes seems to have skewed the distribution of income and wealth: thirty percent of income growth in Egypt accrues to the top ten percentiles of the population and 3.7% to the lowest ten percentiles.”\textsuperscript{157}

Additionally, the unemployment in general and the youth-unemployment especially is very high in these countries. Given that in Egypt half of the population is below the age of 30, such

\textsuperscript{154} see Al-Sayyiid, Mustapha Kamel (2015): The Arab Spring - Why in Some Arab countries and Not in Others; In: Sadiki, Larbi (ed.): Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring – Rethinking Democratization; p. 51-61
\textsuperscript{155} see ibid. p. 52
\textsuperscript{156} see Sakbani, Michael: The revolutions of the Arab Spring (2013): Are democracy, development and modernity at the gates? In: El-Din Haseeb, Khair (ed.): The Arab Spring – Critical Analyses, p. 92
\textsuperscript{157} ibid.
an economic state is a ticking time bomb.\textsuperscript{158} Furthermore, while people that live of an income of less than 2 $ per day amounts for the whole region to 16,9 per cent, this rate is above this number in Yemen, Egypt and Syria, in Tunisia the number was significantly lower.\textsuperscript{159} Unemployment and poverty has to be seen against the background of the population growth, which is high in Egypt. As we have seen in the chapter before, since the reign of Sadat, economic politics were more and more directed towards liberalisation and open markets, social equality wasn’t a major concern of Sadat and Mubarak. The population explosion, thereby blatant poverty, unemployment and a lack of perspective were without a doubt a major cause for the Arab spring.

Politically, a common feature for those countries is a political system which is characterized by a personalistic, authoritarian model which has no real limit of the tenure of the heads of state. Furthermore, succession wasn’t done by free and fair democratic elections but through a dynastic or almost monarchic system. Rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya or Syria belonged to the longest serving heads of state. Moammar Gaddafi was in power for 42 year, Zine el Abidine Ben-Ali in Tunisia for 24 years and Hosni Mubarak for 30 years before he got sacked. Rulers were keen to ensure that if they eventually have to step down, the power would remain in the family or in their familiar environment. In Syria, the son Bashar succeeded his Father Hafiz Al-Assad, in Egypt there were persistent rumours about the son Gamal Mubarak would follow his father as president and in Tunisia Ben-Ali was preparing his son-in-law to be the next president of the country.\textsuperscript{160} The political systems were tailored for the president without a functioning system of checks-and-balances. Under a system without an effective accountability mechanism, the rulers didn’t want to give up privileges and the possibility to gain wealth. The extent of the corruption by the reigning presidents and their families and friends, although they often portrayed themselves as fighters against corruption, was documented by investigations and trials after the protests.\textsuperscript{161} Given this background, there was a lack of a convincing political ideology:

“Since the 1960ies, Egypt’s leaders have failed to develop a coherent ideological vision that makes sense to most people. As a result, the Egyptian elite have had to rely on bribery and coercion to ensure social cohesion. Even so, the amount of resources available to Egyptian

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\textsuperscript{158} see ibid.
\textsuperscript{159} see Al-Sayyiid, Mustapha Kamel: p. 52
\textsuperscript{160} see ibid. p. 53
\textsuperscript{161} see ibid.
leaders in contrast to their Saudi counterparts is limited. As a result, President Mubarak only had enough largesse to buy off that constituency for autocracy-big business, the military, security service, regime intellectuals, and the bureaucracy. The rest of society was controlled almost exclusively through violence or the threat of it. This is expensive and risky, revealing the profound weakness of the Egyptian state.  

The police in Egypt, the “al-shurta”, is run by the interior minister who was very close to Mubarak. In the 80ies, gangs in the slums of the cities, the “baltagiya”, became more and more of a problem. Because they became so powerful in certain areas, the interior ministry and the Central Security Services started outsourcing certain aspects to these thugs and trained them to use sexual violence against protesters and detainees. Next to the baltagiya, the State Security Investigations (SSI), the “mabahith”, is notorious for detaining and torturing political opponents. The “normal police”, the Central Security Services, the “Amn Al-Markazi”, are not as feared or intimidating as the baltagiya or the mabahith. The Intelligence Service, the “mukhabarat”, a branch of the military, is more in charge of externally orientated secret operations.

The leaders of the Arab spring states often were too short-sighted to realize the growing potential for protest and revolution. In Egypt, although there were restrictions of the freedom of expression, protests such as the bread-riots in 1977 or the protest of the Kifaya-movement against Mubarak in 2005 were nothing new. The aspirations of the widely educated and charismatic people were ignored in the Arabic states. The ruling elite didn’t seize the opportunity and install reforms that were more than just cosmetic, the Emergency Law in Egypt was a major cause for the protests.

Social media, facebook and twitter, wore important tools for the protests and helped organize events, exchange ideas and connect the contributing movements and people. Other communication means, like the “Arab Radio” were as important when the government tried to suspend the Internet in last days of their existence.

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162 Cook, Steven A.: p. 269
163 see Amar, Paul (2012): Why Mubarak is out; In: Haddad, Bassam/Bsheer, Rosie/Abu-Rish, Ziad (eds.): Dawn of the Arab uprisings – End of an old order?: p. 84-86
164 see Al-Sayyid, Mustapha Kamel: p. 54-55
165 see ibid.
The demand for democracy and freedom of expression wasn’t the sole reason for the outbreak of the Arab spring. Other factors, especially the economic misery of the bulk of the population, were equally as important. Still, the undemocratic nature of these authoritarian states was crucial for the protests and there are surveys that show that democracy is favored by the majority of the Arab people.166

4.2 Involved actors and social movements

One characteristic of the protests in the Arab spring is that there wasn’t a clear leading figure, movement or party. It was more a common goal, to demonstrate and to sack Mubarak and his political system, which unified a multitude of actors, movements and organisations, religious and secular. A lot of these movements have their roots in the early/mid 2000s when the political and societal climate, mostly because of pressure coming from the USA, became more and more liberal. These movements were often led and organised by young, well-educated members of the middle-class that were fed up with the undemocratic, corrupt and predatory nature of Mubarak’s political system. A lot of these movements were associated with blogger-activism which evolved in the early/mid 2000s. Activists like Wael Abbas were daring in their conduct to accuse the undemocratic and political system and police brutality. Bloggers also organized demonstrations, such as the May 25, 2005 demonstrations, and photographed or filmed the riot police and the baltagiya thugs beating and sexually assaulting women. Other, classical media used the documentation of the bloggers as a source.167

The government, especially when the pressure from the West began to decrease, realized the potential of these new opponents and invested heavily in surveilling the internet. They didn’t treat them too mild. For example, Abel Karim Suleiman, arrested in 2005, was sentenced to four years in prison in 2007. He blogged entries that were critical of the government and Islam. Arrested bloggers, such as Mohammed Al-Sharkawi, were often tortured and raped in custody.168

167 see Cook, Steve A.: p. 194-195
168 see ibid.
“The harassment of bloggers continued with arrests of both internationally known and largely anonymous bloggers on an array of charges including Muslim Brotherhood membership, disrupting social harmony, criticizing Islam, spreading false images of Egypt, sending messages about a demonstration, publishing false information about the army and posting photos of police brutality. Each of these charges was related in some way to breaking informal and unofficial political taboos.”

Despite the crackdown on those bloggers, oppositional activists had new forms of organizing their protests and exchanging their ideas. In this context, there were a few movements that were crucial to the Arab spring in Egypt in 2011:

-Kifaya, meaning enough in Arab, was the catch phrase of the protest that began in 2004 when they demanded more democracy, a direct election of the Egyptian president, the lifting of the Emergency law and more social justice. Kifaya was largely an amalgamation of different actors which were unified by their demands for the end of corruption, personal rule and more democracy. Much like other groups, Kifaya relied heavily on social media and the cooperation with big (foreign) TV-stations such as Al-Jazeera.

-Mahalla al Kubra, was a movement named after a city with a big state owned textile-industry. Due to the bad working conditions, low wages and bad social and medical security situation in the fabric, workers organized strikes and protests. Like the other movements, Twitter and Facebook played essential roles for spreading the message that was targeted against Mubarak. An important figure in this context was Ahmad Maher. He succeeded in mobilizing many people and he documented the violent reaction of the regime.

-The April 6 Youth movement that emerged in 2008 supported the worker’s demands. Furthermore, they supported the reform that Mohammed El-Baradei’s National Association for Change had proposed: ending the state of emergency, judicial oversight of the election, allowing and authorizing local and international observers, equal access to the media for all candidates, giving Egyptians that are abroad the right to vote, permitting candidates for

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169 Cook, Steve A.: p. 195-196
170 see Schumacher, Juliane/Osman, Gaby (2012): Tahrir und kein zurück – Ägypten, die Bewegung und der Kampf um die Revolution; p. 250
171 see Perthes, Volker (2011): Der Aufstand - die arabische Revolution und ihre Folgen; p. 23-25
172 see Hamed, Adham (2012): Vom arabischen Erwachen zur dauerhaften Demokratie!? Postkonsensuale Bruchstellen der ägyptischen Revolution; In: Preiss, Bert (ed.): Zeitenwende im arabischen Raum – Welche Antwort findet Europa?; p. 27
presidency to run for office without arbitrary restrictions and limiting the presidency to two terms.\textsuperscript{173}

-The “We are all Khaled Said” movement evolved because of the death of Khaled Said through the brutal beating of Alexandria police men on June 6, 2010. The death of the young man was a testament of the brutality of the Mubarak regime and the misuse of the Emergency Law. The murder and the following protests, which were not only in Cairo but in many cities throughout Egypt, are seen as a direct trigger to the Arab spring by many analysts.\textsuperscript{174} Especially in this movement the importance of Facebook as a means to build a movement is evident.

-The Women’s movement has, despite the conservative identity of the country, a far-reaching past. As early as 1919, the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) was established. Under Nasser, “state-feminism” was installed and under Mubarak women were more and more pushed back into the private and family-realm. The role of such movements, secular and religious, in the protests mustn’t be underestimated.\textsuperscript{175}

4.2.1 The Arab Spring and the Muslim Brotherhood

If the brutal beating of Khaled Said can be seen as one direct trigger of the Arab spring in Egypt, the 2010 elections and the role of the Muslim Brotherhood can be seen as another. Held in November 2010, the big question was if the Brotherhood could keep or even increase their 88 seats that they won in 2005. The result was that they lost almost all of them in an obviously rigged election. Voting stations in MB-affiliated neighbourhoods were closed, the presence of the military was evident at every station and prior to the election, many members of the Brotherhood were arrested.\textsuperscript{176}

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\textsuperscript{173} see Cook, Steve A.: p. 277 \\
\textsuperscript{174} see ibid.: p. 295 \\
\textsuperscript{175} see Nourbakhch-Sabet, Reza (2012): Ägypten: Geschlechterverhältnisse im Revolutionsprozess; In: Preiss, Bert (ed.): Zeitenwende im arabischen Raum \\
\textsuperscript{176} see Farag, Mona (2013): Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood and the January 25 Revolution: new political party, new circumstances; In: El-Din Haseeb, Khair (ed.): The Arab spring – Critical Analyses, p. 254
\end{flushright}
The ridiculously rigged election was the straw that broke the camel’s back and showed how serious the Mubarak regime really was about democracy and reform:

“As it turned out, the conduct of the 2010 People’s Assembly elections violated every principle that the government and the NDP promised to uphold. Rather than free and fair elections, violence—eight people died—intimidation, ballot stuffing, and counting irregularities marred the polling and produced a parliament with only eight opposition voices.”  

Although the Muslim Brotherhood was on the receiving end of oppression, at first it sought to not take part in the protests as an organisation. There were a lot of, especially younger, members taking part in the various social movements organized through social media and as the protests grew stronger, the Brotherhood couldn’t stay neutral and decided to join the people, not necessarily as an Islamistic movement with a hidden agenda.

The Brotherhood wasn’t the decisive actor that sparked the revolution. But they provided different services. When Mubarak unleashed his thugs to intimidate and beat the protesters, the Islamists provided security. Furthermore they were an asset in organizing and mobilizing in the later days of the protests.

4.3 Course of events

The undemocratic political system, a significant lack of freedom of expression and the large rift between rich and poor made protesters ready but it was the events in Tunisia which truly inspired the Egyptian people and gave them the last bit of confidence that was needed. The Jasmine revolution started in December 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor set himself on fire. He was repeatedly harassed and his wares were confiscated by municipal officials. He became a catalyst not only for Tunisia but for the whole Arab spring. The following protest caused major protests in the country and forced long time president Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali to flee the country on the 14th of January 2011 after 23 years in power. At the 17th January, minister president Mohamed Gouanouchi builded a provisional government.

177 Cook, Steve A.: p. 278-279
178 see Farag, Mona: p. 255
179 see ibid. p. 256
The Egyptians and the rest of the Arab World was inspired by the fact that the people caused the collapse of an authoritarian, undemocratic and corrupt system which was perceived as worse as the Egyptian. If the Tunisians could do it, there is no reason why the Egyptians couldn’t, the country was ripe for a revolution. Still, when young people, involved in movements such as Kifaya or “We are all Khaled Said”, called for protests on Facebook and Twitter, no one was really thinking about a revolution: “It is impossible to have a revolution by appointment and by announcement on Facebook, but why not try. We have nothing to lose.”\textsuperscript{180}

The 25\textsuperscript{th} January was a holiday in Egypt, the national Police Day and because of its banality typical for the Mubarak administration. It was this day that seemed fitting for the protesteres to demonstrate against police brutality, Emergency Law and the lack of democracy and freedom of expression under Mubarak. Of course, the regime knew about the plans but they weren’t too concerned about it. Regardless of the arrogance of the regime, protests erupted throughout Egypt on that day, with tens of thousand people taking part. The protest began in Cairo at the court of justice and later at the Tahrir square but other cities such as Alexandria or Asuan were also participating and demonstrating against Mubarak.

“Within two days, the tens of thousands of people in Tahrir Square morphed-by some estimates-into million people demonstrating across seven of Egypt’s twenty-nine governorates. The crowd in Tahrir grew tenfold while in Alexandria-Egypt’s second-largest city-the Corniche along the Mediterranean was packed with tens of thousands of demonstrators...By Friday the 28\textsuperscript{th}, dubbed Egypt’s “Day of Rage,” more and more Egyptians from all walks of life-businessmen, professors, laborors, government workers-joined the protests. Although the demonstrations were confined to seven governorates, the fact that they had widened and deepened was a significant development.”\textsuperscript{181}

Mubarak and his folks were surprised by the intensity of the protest and tried to counter it with the all-too-familiar strategy of violence. During the first days of the protests, he also sent the speaker of the shura council (the second chamber of the parliament) to hold a speech in order to placate them but it didn’t work. Mubarak also tried to undermine the protests by using it as an exhibit to show how far freedom of expression in Egypt has come.

\textsuperscript{180} Ghabra, Shafeeq (2015): The Egyptian Revolution – Causes and Dynamics; In: Sadiki, Larbi (ed.): Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring – Rethinking Democratization; p. 205
\textsuperscript{181} Cook, Steve A.: p. 284
Furthermore, some spokesmen tried to deflect the protests by saying that the Muslim Brotherhood would be behind it. Both strategies were in vain, nobody believed them. When Mubarak moved the military in the heart of Cairo, it showed that he was losing the grip on his country.\textsuperscript{182}

As it became apparent that the protests challenged the system, it was questionable at first what the position of the military would be. The system served them well and Mubarak himself came from the military. In the end, Mubarak became a liability and his son Gamal, because of his economic politics, was hated in the military almost as much as by the protesters.\textsuperscript{183} Still, over the first weekend F-16s flew over the rooftops of Tahrir square and tried to intimidate them. The protesters were staying and still demanded Mubarak’s departure and a transition to democracy.\textsuperscript{184}

At the 1\textsuperscript{st} of February Mubarak spoke to the protesters and promised that he would serve out his term in office, not to seek reelection and that he would restrict the terms for presidency. The military agreed and urged the protesters to go home but they remained. A day later, the baltagiya thugs, policemen and Mubarak-supporters went into Tahrir square and attacked with brute force. The degree of violence was shocking and confrontation continued the next day. The military now was forced to step in and control the access to Tahrir square.\textsuperscript{185} Vice-president Omar Suleiman and the new prime minister, Ahmed Shafiq sought to negotiate but ultimately failed because both of them were key-figures under Mubarak and wouldn’t serve as believable for a new Egypt.

On Monday, the 7\textsuperscript{th} February protesters seemed to be exhausted, normal life in Egypt was continuing and it seemed that they would loose momentum. But, given the analysis of Steven A. Cook, two events changed this. First, the dean of the Cairo University’s school of law stated that he would support the demonstrators and the demand for freedom, democracy and sovereignty of law. Ahmed Awed Belal was a government functionary and supporter of Mubarak. By turning his back on him, it showed that Mubarak’s day as president could come to an end. The second event that helped the protester regain momentum was the release of Wael Ghonim from detention.

\textsuperscript{182} see ibid.: p. 285  
\textsuperscript{183} see ibid. p. 286  
\textsuperscript{184} see ibid. p. 287  
\textsuperscript{185} see ibid. p. 287-288
He was thought to be the man behind the Facebook group “We are all Khaled Said” and was picked up on January 26th. It is not known why exactly Ghonim was released but he was a decisive figure in the protests and his release gave new energy to demonstrations.\(^{186}\)

It seemed that his release and the way he spoke publicly about himself, the protests and their goals for a new democratic Egypt motivated more and more Egyptians from all social-classes to take part in the protests:

“The uprising (of the workers in Mahalla al Kubra and other cities) achieved what some of its own planners-specifically the April 6th Youth movement-had failed to realize on previous occasions: workers were now connecting their economic grievances with the rigged political order...average Egyptians turned up in Tahrir Square with their children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, parents, sisters and brothers to demand Wael Ghonim’s Egypt.”\(^{187}\)

When on 10th of February, Mubarak addressed the Egyptians again, it was believed that he would resign, but the hopes wouldn’t be fulfilled on that day. He merely delegated the presidential authority to the vice-president. Understandably, Egyptians were enraged and a day later the protests grew larger and larger all over the cities of Egypt. With this pressure, in the evening of the 11th vice president Suleiman appeared on television and announced that Mubarak had ultimately resigned.\(^{188}\)

The question remains why the protests were successfull in the end. Of course it was the undemocratic, corrupt and unjust system of Mubarak, the murder of Khaled Said, the rigged elections in 2010 that caused or in a way triggered the protests. But police brutality, restricted freedom of expression and corruption were features of this system for quite some time now. The fact that the Tunisian population got rid of a government similar or worse to the Egyptian probably inspired the people. The refusal to be intimitated made it a revolution: “The longer the protesters in Tahrir refused to be intimitated no matter what the defenders of the regime threw at them, the greater the chances that what scholars call a “revolutionary bandwagon” would develop.”\(^{189}\)

\(^{186}\) see ibid. p. 290-291
\(^{187}\) Cook, Steve A.: p. 292, 293
\(^{188}\) see ibid. p. 294-295
\(^{189}\) Cook, Steve A.: p. 296
4.4 Aftermath

The demands for bread, freedom, dignity and social justice seemed to be fulfilled when Mubarak stepped down. As time passed by, the revolution picked up momentum to a point where it wasn’t as risky to join the revolution and in the end, it was almost a bigger risk to not participate than to go out and join the protests. No one wanted to be on the “wrong side of history.”

Shortly after the departure of the hated president, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) under Hussein Tantawi took over and they promised that a committee would rewrite critical articles of the constitution, to hold a referendum within two and elections within 6 months. Despite these promises, there were many Egyptians that thought that the military, once in the background now in charge of the country, didn’t really have intentions on transforming the country and the system which served them so well. The demand to lift the Emergency Law and the impression that the military didn’t really have a plan on how to turn the country over to a civilian government were all too familiar and reminded many analysts of the Free Officer’s coup 1952.

Without a clear roadmap, the military sought for someone they could negotiate with. This was definitely no easy task as the opposition seemed so divided:

“The activists, established opposition parties, the Muslim Brotherhood, and myriad civil society groups had demonstrated enormous staying power and unity of purpose during the heady days in Tahrir Square; but once Mubarak departed the ideological and personal differences among the leaders of these groups were likely to return. The Western media and its pundits were fond of suggesting that the uprising was “leaderless.” In fact, the Egyptian revolution had many leaders and they liked it that way, at least while they were in Tahrir. When it got down to negotiating a new political order, the dizzying array of groups and individuals... made it hard to imagine the orderly transition that the military sought.”

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190 Cook, Steve A.: p. 296
191 see ibid. p. 297
192 see ibid.
193 ibid. p. 298
The Supreme council didn’t want to get too much involved in day-to-day politics, they wanted order and weren’t too keen on further demonstrations.

As time went by, the protesters became more and more impatient with the Supreme council and questioned their attitude towards democracy and freedom of expression. The constitutional amendments didn’t really represent regime change. The committee ultimately recommended the amendment of eight articles including limiting presidential terms to two for four years each, strengthening the independence of the judiciary and giving parliamentary control over the Emergency Law. At the referendum on the 19th march, Egyptians voted with 77 percent in favor of the amendments. Some supporters of democratic change were against it, mainly because it still contained many components from the Mubarak-era, and they didn’t see too many secular elements in it. The Muslim Brotherhood on the other side supported it because they wanted to keep the Article 2 which says that sharia is the source of legislation for the state.\textsuperscript{194} Article 179 which restricted individual freedoms under Anti-Terrorism measures was erased. This was one of the demands of the protesters.

The pressure from the streets increased and led to the detention of Hosni Mubarak and other figures of his regime such as his sons. After suffering a heart attack he was trialed and charged for attempted murder and intentional murder, attempted killing of some demonstrators, misuse of influence and corruption charges.

Although, there were some more political freedoms under the council, living conditions didn’t really alter much and protests continued on the streets throughout the year demanding real democratic change, social justice and the withdrawal of the Supreme council.

\textsuperscript{194} see Faraq, Mona: p. 256
5. The Muslim Brotherhood

Without a doubt, the Muslim Brotherhood, its relationship with the Egyptian state and its vision on how an Islamic society should look like had profound impact on the history of this nation. Furthermore, the organisation, as it is active in many states is one of the most important and influential Islamist movements in this world. Annette Ranko stated that today, on a transnational level, Islamism is dominated by two schools, the transnational Salafist movement and the Muslim Brotherhood.\(^{195}\) In contrast to Salafism, the Muslim Brotherhood tries hard to portray itself as a more inclusive and tolerant Islamist organisation and often declared its support for democracy, peace and Human Rights. On the other side, real intentions of the clandestine organisation are often hard to pin down. In this chapter I will try to shed more light on the history and evolution, the relationship of the Muslim Brotherhood with democracy and the freedom of expression, in theory and in practice.

5.1 Historical Background and evolution

According to Olaf Farschid there are three phases which can be differentiated when looking at the history of the organisation since its foundation in 1928. In the first phase, it understood itself mainly as a religious community with the goal to educate Muslims. The second phase in the 1940ies and 1950ies is characterized by an increasing degree of militancy with a number of, attempted and successful, assassinations against Egyptian officials. This phase also includes the crackdown of the Egyptian state against the organisation, the imprisonment, torture and murder of many members and the following radicalisation.

The third phase entails an increasing rejection of violence since the late 1970ies. The organisation shed violent chapters, such as “al-jihad al-Islami”, reconciled with the Egyptian state and tried to participate in the political system.\(^{196}\)

The “Jamacat al-Ikhwan al-Muslmim fi Misr”, meaning the Society of Muslim Brothers, in short the Muslim Brotherhood, was founded in March 1928 in Ismailiyya by a twenty-two year old Arabic teacher named Hassan Al-Banna in order to reestablish the honor and dignity of Arabs and Muslims. Upt to that point Al-Banna devoted his young life to Islamist activism.

\(^{195}\) see Ranko, Annette (2013): Die Muslimbruderschaft – Porträt einer mächtigen Verbindung; p. 9
\(^{196}\) see Farschid, Olaf (?): Staat und Gesellschaft in der Ideologie der ägyptischen Muslimbruderschaft; In: Bundesministerium des Inneren (ed.): Texte zur Inneren Sicherheit – Islamismus; Available at: http://www.fes.de/BerlinerAkademiegesspreche/publikationen/islamundpolitik/documents/Islamismus_Id_93846_de.pdf; p. 50 (accessed at 13 June 2016)
He perceived secularism as the reason for the stagnation of the Egyptian society. When Al-Banna moved to Cairo in 1932 membership figures rose rapidly and the influence of the Brotherhood grew. It was here where he developed the identity of the organisation and his view of political and social reform:

“At the heart of the Brotherhood’s emerging set of principles were three related ideas. First, Islam is a “total system”, meaning that classic Western-liberal notions of a separation of church and state did not apply in the Muslim world. In the type of Islamic society that the Brotherhood advocated politics was always sacred. Second, for the Brothers, Islam is based on two primary sources: the holy Quran, which is God’s revelation to his messenger on Earth, the Prophet Mohammed, and the compilation of the sayings and actions of Mohammed known as the Sunna. This was the key to understanding Islam and building a Muslim society. Finally, “Islam was applicable to all times and places” - a notion that reinforces the centrality of religion in all aspects of a Muslim’s life.”

These set of principles should not only be essential for the Brotherhood but for Political Islam in general. Religion is not seen as a matter of privacy and a code of ethics but as an absolute system which entails every aspect of life.

The first phase of the Muslim Brotherhood after its installment was characterized by peaceful attempts on reforming society through education and welfare. Still, as early as in the 1930ies, there was a growing number of members who advocated for violence as a strategic means to establish an Islamic state. Although Al-Banna eschewed violence, he wasn’t opposing the idea of arming the organisation. The 1930ies, but especially the 1940 saw a gradual transformation from a peaceful organisation to a political group and a social movement. Welfare and missionary work was still an important aspect of the group’s identity but in the early 1940ies Al-Banna set up paramilitary groups known as “al jihaz al sirri” (secret apparatus) or as “al nizam al khass” (special section). Al-Banna justified this move by the necessity to combat the British Military in the Suez Canal and Zionism in Palestine.

197 Cook, Steve A.: p. 29
198 see Cook, Steve A.: p. 30
199 see Ranko, Annette: p. 27
Shortly after this paramilitary section was set up, Al-Banna more and more lost control over it. Soon, they wouldn’t only attack British or Zionists but also Egyptian officials which they suspected of cooperating with the occupiers. This development found its climax in the assassination of the Egyptian prime-minister Al-Nuqraishi in December 1948 by a Brother named Abd al Majid Ahmad Hassan. As an act of retaliation the secret police murdered Al-Banna a year later.  

After the death of its founder and charismatic leader, the organisation slipped into disorientation. 2 years later, the Brotherhood found a new leader in Hassan Al-Hudaybi. He tried to lead the organisation away from the streets and the violence back to focusing on education and missionary work. But his attempts were overshadowed by external events. The Free Officer’s revolution and the following crackdown of Nasser against the Brotherhood brought it on the verge of extinction.

The merciless oppression of the Brotherhood and the murder, imprisonment and torture of its members led to the radicalisation of many. Essential for this phase was Sayyid Qutb. Not only was he one of the most influential intellectuals of the Brotherhood at that time but him and his works provided an intellectual background for Jihadism. Under the impression of a more liberal Egypt he wrote “Social Justice in Islam” in 1949 where he explained that because the base of of Islam was social cohesion, equality and community, it alone could guarantee justice. After he went for a short time to the United States, he worked for the Ministry of Education but left pretty soon to devote himself to the Islamization of the society. He joined the Muslim Brotherhood and instantly became an influential figure.

Like so many other members of the Brotherhood under Nasser, he was imprisoned. It was at this time where he developed his more and more radical ideas. With the Brotherhood being allmost crushed by the state and the leader Al-Hudaybi being basically powerless, Qutb filled the void with his ideology and became one of the most influential persons of the organisation in the 50ies.  

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200 see Ranko: p. 28  
201 see Cook, Steven A.: p. 85  
202 see ibid.  
203 see ibd. P. 86
It was probably his work “Milestones along the way” (1964) that was most influential, not only in the Muslim Brotherhood but in Islamist circles worldwide. In his work he describes Islam as a total system that if applied as God and his prophet prescribed, guarantees peace and harmony for humanity. For his ideology Islam is a “system (that) extends into all aspects of life; discusses all minor and major affairs of mankind; it orders man’s life—not only of this world but also of the world to come, it gives information about the unseen as well as the visible world; it not only deals with material things but also purifies intentions and ideas.”

Central for Qutb’s ideology is the term “jahaliyya” which means the state of ignorance. A society which doesn’t follow the dictates of God is in jahaliyya and manifests itself through a lack of social justice. Every society which puts man-made laws above those of god is a rebellion against the sovereignty of Allah. A true Islamic state must accept God as its sovereign and the sharia as the expression of the sovereignty of god. In his interpretation the sharia is quite rigid and unflexible. His ideology is not merely a philosophical idea but also a call for action for all Muslims to confront the jahili system without compromise. Qutb argued that in order to overcome the state of ignorance, one important tool would be jihad, the holy war. In his view, because the cosmic mission of Islam is to liberate humankind, jihad is not only a defensive tool but also offensive. In this context, the term “takfīr” means the excommunication of other Muslims if they don’t agree with Qutb’s ideology. Like other Islamists, Qutb’s views are characterized by a rigid, literal and opportunistic “interpretation” of the Quran and the Sunna.

The aggressive views of Sayyid Qutb served as a justification for jihadist groups in the years to come but his influence in the more moderate Muslim Brotherhood, at least in the 1960ies must not be underestimated. Egypt in his view was ripe for jihad and it comes to no surprise that Nasser saw a threat in him. He was executed in 1966.

In contrast to Qutb Hassan Al-Hudaybi tried to distance the Brotherhood from those radical views and propagate a more tolerant and inclusive and less violent definition of Islam. This shows also in the fact that Al-Hudaybi finally succeed in dissolving the paramilitary secret

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204 Cook: p. 86-87
205 see ibid.
206 see Ranko: p. 30
207 see Cook: p. 88
208 see ibid. p. 89
apparatus. The sometimes ambivalent attitude of the MB in regards to violence and jihad is a constant point of criticism against the organisation. Although the Brotherhood, since the 1970ies/early 1980ies officially supported a peaceful relationship with the Egyptian state, high-ranking members such as the General Guide Ma’ mum Al-Hudaibi in 2003 called for Jihad to free the Iraqi people. Furthermore, Islamic scholars associated with the Muslim Brotherhood such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi justified the Taliban and their actions as well as suicide attacks in Palestine.209

In 1982, leader Omar Al-Tilmissani announced that the Brotherhood plans to participate in the formal political process. This marked the increasing degree of politicisation in the century, highlighted by the success of the MB in the parliamentary elections in 1984 and 1987.210 In its alliances with other parties, such as the new Wafd, the Muslim Brotherhood was quite flexible but it insisted on the sharia as the main source of the law. The organisation wasn’t the only party that voted for this, almost all other parties were in favour of it. Discrepancy related to the concrete application of it.

Fired up by the success the Brotherhood saw itself as a true opposition to Mubarak and became more and more confident. Furthermore, one of the cornerstones of the Brotherhood, social welfare transferred into political power when in 1992 an Earthquake showed that the organisation could fill the void of the state. The MB was the first to help the people, spreaded banners that said “Islam is the solution” and put them up as a competition to Mubarak and the Egyptian state.211 The popularity of the Brotherhood grew. In the following years, the Brotherhood was again surpressed by Mubarak.

The 1990ies and the 2000s featured a growing influx of democratic ideas in Egypt and also in the Muslim Brotherhood. Especially younger members engaged in activism and discussions about the compatibility of Islamist ideas and democracy. Still official programmes emphasized the Islamic character of their vision of the state which seems to be in opposition to liberal democratic principles.

209 see Farschid, Olaf: p. 54
210 see Ranko: p. 38
211 see ibid. p. 43-44
5.2 The Muslim Brotherhood, the state, democracy and freedom of expression

5.2.1 The Muslim Brotherhood and the state

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the relationship between the Egyptian state and the Muslim Brotherhood featured many ups and downs. From the relentless crackdown of Nasser to Sadat’s more liberal attitude towards Islamism and the Muslim Brotherhood to Mubarak’s more restrictive politics against the organisation in the 1990ies, the relationship was quite rocky. The attitude of the Brotherhood towards the state was and still is quite ambivalent. The paramilitary secret apparatus was responsible for attacks against Egyptian officials, and since the ideology of Sayyid Qutb became popular, there seems to be a constant conflict within the organisation if Egypt is truely an Islamic state, if and how the organisation should participate in the political forum, how the vision of an Islamic state according to the Brotherhood should look like and how it should be achieved.

Since the end of the 1970ies/beginning of the 1980ies the Brotherhood officialy declared its consent with the state and took part in the formal political arena. Still, a lot of the questions above are unanswered and it is dubious how Egypt would look like if the Brotherhood models the state completely after their vision. Nevertheless, it has been made clear that the sharia is the main feature of the state in the mind of the Brotherhood. Under Sadat the principles of Islamic law were declared as the principal source of legislation. The Brotherhood was by no means satisfied with political reality and demanded time and time again the proper application of the sharia. Brothers like Salah Abu-Ismail published the book “ash shahada”, which means the creed in 1984 where he accused the Egyptian state of not properly applying the sharia. He sees the application of the divine law as an all-encompassing solution for the problems of the Egyptian nation. In his statement he also argues for a deterring effect of capital punishment. His views are based not only on the Quran and the Sunna, but also on the classic Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). His demands for the application of the sharia were also presented in the parliament.212

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212 see Farschid, Olaf.: p. 72-74
For the Brotherhood the sharia is the foundation of the state. The essential position it has in their vision of the state shows one more time the unit of religion of politics. In their view it is the prophet himself that shows that a separation of state and religion is unislamic. The prophet didn’t only hold religious authority but also held executive power. The sharia as a foundation of the state should ensure the Islamisation of it.²¹³

Alltogether, the MB seems to design an authoritarian state: the first principle of the state and the foundation of it is the sharia. It is based on the Quran and the Sunna.²¹⁴ Legislative, executive and judiciary power must subordinate to the sharia. The executive power is responsible to god and not the legislative. The legislative is an instrument to establish an order willed by god.²¹⁵ In this order, god is the sovereign and not the people.

Critics of a model like that argue that if the sharia is applied in ways described above, the state is necessarily religious because political power is justified with “divine and eternal truths”.²¹⁶ Such a state is intolerant and anti-pluralistic because if political positions are declared undisputed and absolute truths and divine law is the foundation of the state, every argument and every position that doubts these views has to be seen as an attack at the foundation of the state.

In the party platform of 2007, the organisation described its understanding of the sharia in detail.²¹⁷ According to this position paper it divides it in three groups. The first one applies to rituals of faith, including prayers, fasting and pilgrimage. This group is not subjected to man-made interpretation, the sharia has to be obeyed at all times in all places. In a similar way the sharia has to be obeyed as far as morals, especially public morals, are concerned. Here as well, the Sharia is quite inflexible. Rules derived from Quran and Sunna have to be applied literally. Islamic moral in this view is the core of the Islamic identity and cannot be touched.²¹⁸ The third group includes interactions between individuals in the political, social and economic realm, except such interactions which relate to Islamic moral. This group is not as rigid and is up for interpretation. This group also include institutions of the state and mechanisms of political decision finding. Still, as “liberal” as this understanding of the sharia

²¹³ see Farschid: p. 79
²¹⁴ see ibid.
²¹⁵ see ibid.
²¹⁶ see ibid.
²¹⁸ see Ranko, Annette: p. 7
may seem, it mustn’t get in conflict with Islamic principles, principles of justice, freedom, shura (or council) and equality.\textsuperscript{219}

In some aspects, the understanding of the sharia is indeed not as rigid as that of salafist groups. And although, some democratic aspects can be integrated in this model, the fact that divine law is the foundation of a societal model make is intolerant against views that oppose this absolute idea. This model bears similarity to the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights, where those rights were supported as long as they are not in conflict with the sharia. It is highly questionable if such a model can really be called democratic.

5.2.2 The Muslim Brotherhood, democracy and freedom of expression

The Muslim Brotherhood repeatedly declared its support for democratic structures during the course of the Arab Spring. But as we have seen, it is highly dubious if the vision of a state of the Brotherhood can be truely called democratic when Islamic law is the foundation of such a state.

In their model, there are democratic elements in the political system. These elements apply to interactions between individuals or groups and are up for interpretation. If public morals are concerned the sharia is interpreted quite rigid. A speech, a demonstration or a political party can be seen as unislamic or as a violation of public morals. Islam is seen as the central component of the state. In this state, the shura should help to find decisions in a democratic manner. The shura-principle can be understood as the element of accountability of the state vis-a-vis the people and should happen through majority-decision in the legislative. Basically, shura means counseling of the government by the people. With the shura, there are a few democratic elements int the Islamist vision of the state, namely free, fair and regular election, the division of power and political pluralism and the rule of law. All these elements are restricted by the Islamic character of the state and the sharia.\textsuperscript{220}

Freedom, as the second sharia-principle applies to civil rights of citizens, the right to vote and the right to found parties, furthermore to freedom of speech, association and assembly. As the third principle, justice should ensure the life in dignity of people.

\textsuperscript{219} see Ranko: p. 78
\textsuperscript{220} see Ranko: p. 79-81
Although the Brotherhood emphasizes equality regardless of religion, gender or skin-colour, justice, in the sense of full civil rights and liberties only applies to male Muslims. Non-Muslims are differentiated in Christians and Jews, as monotheistic believers and others. In classical Islamic law, only the first group enjoys the full protection of the state.\textsuperscript{221} Non-Muslims cannot hold certain positions in an Islamic state, such as president or a leading position in the military. Furthermore they cannot do missionary work.\textsuperscript{222}

As the sharia is rigid in questions regarding public morals, it restricts the role of the woman in the public sphere immensely. Such restrictions include dress regulations and generally a very conservative image of how a woman should behave. Apart from public morals, the Brotherhood emphasized that they support certain rights of women, such as the right to vote. Still, the Islamic character of the state mustn’t collide with these rights.\textsuperscript{223}

In the party platform of 2007, the Brotherhood stated that it supports the rights of parties being formed by notification without interference of the authorities.\textsuperscript{224} This has to be seen as the stance of an organisation under authoritarian rule. Within the Brotherhood, there are a lot of influential thinkers that reject the idea of party pluralism as un-Islamic. Brotherhood member Fathi Yakin stated that it undermines the Islamic unity and replaces the loyalty to god by a loyalty to a party.\textsuperscript{225} Generally, the overwhelming majority of scholars and thinkers of political Islam doesn’t support a system where political parties, religious or secular, exist, that argue against the foundation of an Islamic state.\textsuperscript{226} Pluralism is confined by the limits of the sharia.

Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, a highly influential thinker associated with the Brotherhood, stated that a multiparty system is possible if two points are fulfilled. One, the party must accept Islam and the sharia. Two, it is not allowed if it works for an entity that is antagonistic towards Islam or the Islamic Umma. Furthermore, he explicitly stated that atheistic parties and parties that are against the application of Islam or the sharia are not allowed in an Islamic state.\textsuperscript{227}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{221} see \textit{ibid.}: p. 83 \\
\textsuperscript{222} see \textit{ibid.}: p. 84-85 \\
\textsuperscript{223} see \textit{ibid.}: p. 87-88 \\
\textsuperscript{224} see Tadros, Mariz (2012): The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt: Democracy redefined or confined?: p. 76-77 \\
\textsuperscript{225} see \textit{ibid.} \\
\textsuperscript{226} see \textit{ibid.} \\
\textsuperscript{227} see \textit{ibid.}: p. 79
\end{flushleft}
Other more liberal thinkers in the Islamist realm argue that the only condition for political parties is that their platform is in compliance with Islam as the main principle of legislation.\textsuperscript{228}

Although the Brotherhood voiced their support for freedom of expression, the phrasing is quite vague. Freedom of expression has to be limited by the fundamental values of society, meaning the Islamic character and the sharia. These limits apply to artistic freedoms and to the freedom of the press. In a similar fashion, the Brotherhood support private media stations as long as they respect the values of society and morals.\textsuperscript{229} Furthermore, the Brotherhood aimed to establish a special council for the Internet so that the work there is guided by “the spirit of Islam and the values and morals of the Egyptian civilisational project.”\textsuperscript{230}

If we look at the concept of the state, democracy and the freedom of expression of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is quite obvious that this vision doesn’t have much in common with liberal democracy beside certain mechanisms. Instead the Muslim Brotherhood argued for an “Islamic democracy” which is compatible with the “culture of the state”. Although it is labelled as such, democracy in this political system is reduced to a shell.

\textsuperscript{228} see ibid.

\textsuperscript{229} see El-Fegiery, Moataz (2012): A tyranny of the majority? Islamists ambivalence about Human Rights; Available at: \texttt{http://fride.org/download/WP_113_Islamists_Ambivalence_about_Human_Rights.pdf}; p. 12 (accessed at 17 June 2016)

\textsuperscript{230} ibid.: p. 12
5.3 The Freedom and Justice Party

For the better part of the time since the Free Officer’s revolution in 1952, the Muslim Brotherhood was illegal and wasn’t allowed to be directly represented in the parliament. This changed after the uprising in the beginning of 2011. As early as April, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) was founded and in June it gained official status.

From the 9000 founding members there were 1000 women and more than 100 Christians that should underline the diversity and tolerance of the Muslim Brotherhood. As a rolemode1 the FJP often mentioned the Turkish AKP. As a chairman, Muhammed Mursi was elected who was already a speaker of the Brotherhood in the parliament in 2005.231

On its founding the Freedom and Justice Party declared its support for the goals of the Revolution, social justice, democracy and freedom of expression. Still, in its programme for the parliamentary election of 2011, the party once more emphasized that the programme is based on the four principles of the sharia: freedom, justice, development and leadership.232 Although there are a few commitments to democracy, liberty and the freedom of speech, the principle of the sharia and the moral values and the Islamic character of the programme are red lines that mustn’t be crossed.233

Many of the activists from the revolution struggled to transform their success from the Tahrir square to the more formal political arena. Among liberals and secular Egyptians there was a present fear that the Islamist parties, the FJP and the salafist al-Nur would gain significant seats in the parliamentary elections at the End of 2011/Beginning of 2012. As Steve Cook explains the success of the Brotherhood after the uprising:

“The Brothers had long articulated a vision of society couched in a religious vernacular that reasonated with many Egyptians. In the two decades or so before the uprising, the Brotherhood had also effectively appropriated the discourse of reform and political change as a way of deligitimizing Mubarak and the authoritarian political order over which he presided.

233 see ibid.: p. 39
Whether the Brotherhood’s leadership internalized democratic ideas was an open question, but it was largely immaterial when it came to the ballot box. It was more important that Egyptians believed the Brother’s claim to be the best stewards of the country’s transition to a more open political system.”

5.4 The parliamentary election

After a year filled with turmoil, protests and the rule of the more and more unpopular SCAF, the parliamentary elections were set to be held at September 2011. Due to concerns that established parties and movements, not least the Brotherhood and the FJP, would have a big advantage to movements and parties that came up in the course of the revolution, it was decided that the election would be held at the end of 2011/Beginning 2012. As the Brotherhood feared repercussions of the state for over-investing, it held back and allowed other political actors to organize and to compete on a more egalitarian level.

As far as democracy and freedom of expression is concerned, the FJP in its programme stated that it is the goal to build “a strong democratic political system that safeguards the citizen’s rights and freedoms.” In this context it also states: “Safeguard, for every Egyptian, fundamental rights and freedoms – indispensable in any advanced society and in the framework of genuine value system – as well as political and social freedoms – indispensable for the exercise of rights and improvements of communities. The most important of these freedoms are: freedom of opinion and expression, the formation of political parties and NGOs meeting and demonstrations...” Again it shows through the emphasis on the “framework of genuine value system” that in the vision of the Brotherhood and the FJP, democracy, pluralism and freedom of expression is only desired if it doesn’t interfere with the Islamic character of the state and the sharia.

From the liberal and secular political actors it was feared that the elections would bring a huge win for the Islamists. Although there were threats of protests and boycotts, the elections

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234 Cook, Steve A.: The struggle for Egypt; p. 315
236 see Wilmot, Jennifer: A commitment to politics: the trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood during Egypt’s 2011-2013 political opening; Available at: http://www tandfonline.com/ uaccess.univie.ac.at/doi/pdf/10.1080/17550912.2015.1051377; p. 11 (accessed at 28 June 2016)
237 Freedom and Justice Party: Election programme; p. 2
238 ibid.: p. 12
were held in a peaceful and civil manner as the first free and fair elections since the 1952 revolution.

The FJP’s Democratic Alliance won 43 % and the Salafis’ Islamic Alliance, with the al-Nur party, won 25 % of the seats. The Islamists were now dominating the parliament. Worried by this outcome the SCAF denied the FJP to form a government. They said that this should be the task of the president. As a result, the party withdrew from the promise to not enter the upcoming presidential election.

5.5 The presidential election

The presidential election was held in two rounds, one in May, the second and decisive round in June. For the first round there were 13 candidates from different backgrounds. Candidates like Ahmed Shafiq or Omar Suleiman, the latter was disqualified, would represent the old regime. Others, like Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, were Salafists (he also was disqualified).

As the Brotherhood broke their promise on not nominating a candidate of their own, the SCAF, liberal and secular activists and analysts were worried about the expansion of power of the organisation. Their alliance had the most seats in the parliament, if they would win the presidential election as well, the judiciary and the military could be next. In that context, as some analysts like Annette Ranko believe, since 2010 the Brotherhood-leadership was dominated by disciples of Sayyid Qutb.

Their first choice of the organisation was Khairat al-Shater. He was considered one of the most powerful figures of the organisation, a very important financier, an interlocutor with the SCAF and a main voice in the political strategy after the revolution. But although he seemed to be the logical choice for the Brotherhood, the SCAF denied him because he had been convicted of several crimes. His replacement was Mohammed Mursi. For the majority of the public he was unknown but nevertheless he was well-connected and influential within the organisation. As he ran for president no one believed in him, and the surprise was quite big when he entered the second ballot against Ahmed Shafiq. The runoff poll was a choice

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239 see Wilmot, Jennifer: p. 13
240 see ibid.
241 see Ranko, Annette: p. 129
242 see Cook, Steven A.: p. 321
between a representative of the old regime and an Islamist. Mursi was elected as the new president with 51, 73 % of the votes.\textsuperscript{243}

5.6 Egypt under Mursi

Mohammed Mursi was born in the nile-delta in 1951. Since 1979 he was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Like so many Brothers, he was arrested quite a few times under Mubarak.

For the Brotherhood he wasn’t the posterboy but a man in the background. Nevertheless, he was well connected and had a saying in the political strategy and the direction the organisation was going. Together with the supreme guide Mohammed Badie he counted to the conservative fraction within the Brotherhood that was more concerned with the inner life and the hierarchy of the organisation and more or less disregarded communication and compromise with other societal actors.\textsuperscript{244}

To the surprise of many, this mousy and uncharismatic figure won the first democratic election since the revolution in 1952. For some analysts his win was less about the Brotherhood and Mursi and more about the other candidate who represented the Mubarak-regime. As Yasmine El-Rashidi wrote:

“Was the nation divided between those in favor of the old regime and those in favor of the Islamists? Or was it the case that millions of young Egyptians who had taken to the streets to oppose Mubarak were voting “no” to Mubarak’s Shafik, rather than “yes” to Morsi? As the prominent newspaper editor Hassanein Heikal has said at dinner parties and on TV: “It was not that people knew what they wanted and were voting for it. They simply knew what they didn’t want, and they were voting against it.”\textsuperscript{245}

In that context it seemed that it was less about Mursi’s plans, that were very hazy, or his charisma, or his lack thereof, and more about the lack of an alternative. Not only was the candidate in the second poll representing the old-regime but other political forces, secular and

\textsuperscript{243} see ibid. p. 323
\textsuperscript{244} see Ranko: p. 129
\textsuperscript{245} El-Rashidi, Yasmine (2013): Egypt: The rule of the Brotherhood; Available at: http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2013/02/07/egypt-rule-brotherhood/ (accessed at 30 June 2016)
liberal activists and parties established during the protest were struggling to find a common ground.

Mursi’s first speech as the elected president was on Tahrir square where he promised that he would be a president for all Egyptians, no matter if Muslim or Christian, man or woman, old or young. Furthermore he vowed to fight for justice and freedom, including press-freedom and freedom of expression and to fight against corruption. After this surprisingly convincing speech, many people from Egypt and elsewhere, although sceptical of an Islamist as the president, were hopeful that Mursi was the right person to transform the country.²⁴⁶

These hopes didn’t hold for too long. After the inauguration of the new president it seemed that the Brotherhood and its president went more and more into confrontation mode with everyone outside of its ideological view, especially the left and liberal forces. After successful campaigns at the constitutional campaign, the parliamentary elections and now the presidential elections, the Brotherhood was more than confident and went into confrontation mode. Parts of the population who believed the Brotherhood’s image as a pragmatist force that was able to fulfill the hopes and demands of the Arab Spring for a democratic and just Egypt, were disappointed and sought other partners, first and foremost the military. The non-inclusive nature of the Mursi regime also showed in the formation of the new cabinet which didn’t include any liberal and secular forces.²⁴⁷ Egypt wasn’t a stable democracy, it was in a transformation period. Thus there would’ve been the need for a broad support of the president and the government. The Brotherhood ignored the opportunity to show that it has genuine democratic aims for Egypt’s future.

Although the influence of the military was still strong in many ways, Mursi and the Brotherhood were trying to diminish their role in society, especially their economic privileges.²⁴⁸ As time passed, the organisation didn’t have many allies. As important institutions were stacked with figures of the old regime it was initially hard for Mursi to make his impact felt.

²⁴⁶ see ibid.
²⁴⁷ see Ranko, Annette: p. 131-132
²⁴⁸ see ibid.: p. 140
When Mursi took office many people asked if he could distance himself from the Brotherhood. After a few months in office it was clear that this wasn’t the case, Mursi’s presidency was that of the Muslim Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{249}

Frictions between the Brotherhood and their former allies during the Arab Spring grew larger during the discussions about the constitutional assembly in the parliament, which was dominated by Islamists, Muslim Brothers and Salafist. Non-Islamists felt not represented properly. The Brotherhood drafted a constitution which observers saw as the legal ground for the Islamisation of Egypt.\textsuperscript{250}

Oppositional forces were worried about the more and more autocratic behaviour of Mursi. This worries seemed to be justified in November 2012 when the president issued two decrees which stated that the judiciary couldn’t hinder the implementation of his decrees and that it couldn’t hinder the, Islamist dominated, constitutional assembly.\textsuperscript{251}

His authoritarian course didn’t go unanswered as tens of thousands went onto the streets to protest. Violent clashes between Mursi supporters and protesters happened often in the end of 2012. Still, Mursi pushed the consitutional referendum through. The protests and criticism from Egypt but also from other countries didn’t seem to impress the Brotherhood too much. It seemed that they believed that they were entitled to transform the country how they wanted. But they overestimated the support in the population and forgot that they angered allmost everyone outside of the Islamist realm, including the economy.\textsuperscript{252}

A lot of the success of the Brotherhood came from the social welfare and the demand for a more just country. As the economic performance under the reign of the Brotherhood worsened, the support for Mursi crumbled. Since 2011, foreign investment and tourism, due to the authoritarian and conservative politics of the Brotherhood, dropped. Petrol shortages and regular power failures made the lifes of the ordinary people much more uncomfortable and finally led to broadly based protests against the president at the end of June 2013. On July 3\textsuperscript{rd} the military sacked Mursi.\textsuperscript{253}

\textsuperscript{249} see El-Rashidi, Yasmine: Egypt: The rule of the Brotherhood
\textsuperscript{250} see Ranko: p. 132
\textsuperscript{251} see ibid.: p. 133
\textsuperscript{252} see ibid.: p. 134
\textsuperscript{253} see ibid.: p. 142-143
5.7 Mursi, democracy and freedom of expression

The Mursi reign, because it only lasted one year, didn’t change the political and societal system in a fundamental way. Due to the fact that the old regime was sacked only 1 and a half years ago, key institutions were filled with persons affiliated with the Mubarak-regime. Thus his impact in the beginning on many fields was quite limited.

As we have inspected the authoritarian nature of his predecessors and the theoretical approach of the Muslim Brotherhood towards freedom of expression, it is now time to ask how Mursi and the organisation handled the hopes and demands of the Arab spring. In other words, was the Mursi-regime a democratic or an autocratic one?

The Atlantic, when asking this question used empirical data to answer it. Although they more or less characterize the Mursi reign as autocratic, they also state that Egypt is a transitional political system and thus cannot be judged with the same parameters as a stable democracy. According to the Polity IV index, an empirical instrument to differentiate autocratic from democratic political systems, they used three main indicators: executive recruitment (asking if a leader is elected or appointed), constraints on the executive and the openness of the political participation. The Index is scaled from -10 to +10. Negative results mean a more autocratic, positive a more democratic regime. According to this index, the Mursi regime scored at its best result a 4 and at a more realistic assessment (including other indicators such as the spirit of the regime) a 2. Although these results in no way show the democratic nature of the Mursi government, it comes as a surprise that he has a relatively high score. The index shows mainly that Mursi was the democratically elected president of Egypt. As the article goes, under Mursi, there was oppression against the media and the liberal and secular opposition as well as favouritism for Islamist groups. Still, imprisonment and oppression against opposing voices wasn’t as systematic as under the military-backed government after Mursi. In some ways the Brotherhood was restricted as there were other powerful institutions, the military, business-elites or the judiciary, which weren’t controlled by him and the organisation.

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254 see Hamid, Shadi/Wheeler, Meredith(2014): Was Mohammed Mursi really an autocrat? Egypt’s receding democracy, by the Numbers; In: The Atlantic; Available at: http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/03/was-mohammed-morsi-really-an-autocrat/359797/ (accessed at 04 July 2016)
It was mainly the discussion about the constitutional referendum, which marked an increasingly autocratic course of Mursi. The constitution itself shows the Islamist attitude towards democracy and freedom of expression. In Article 2 it sees again the principles of Islamic law as the main source of legislation. As we have seen in the chapters before, the constitution before makes the same reference. But in contrast to its predecessor, it goes a step further. In an urge to please the Islamist spectrum it defines “the principles of the sharia” in the way of the Sunni Muslim jurisprudence.\textsuperscript{255} It states that those principles include their “evidence, rules, jurisprudence and sources.”\textsuperscript{256} Furthermore it gives unprecedented constitutional power to the Al Azhar which now has mandatory consultative status on issues related to the sharia. The old constitution didn’t mention the Al-Azhar.\textsuperscript{257}

As far as individual rights go, Article 81 states that those rights are inalienable. But the constitution also states that they are only then valid if they are not in conflict with the principles set out in the chapter on state and society in the constitution. Article 10 says: “The state and society shall commit to preserving the true nature of the Egyptian family.”\textsuperscript{258} Article 11 states: “The state shall protect ethics and morals and public order.”\textsuperscript{259} Given the strong Islamic character of the constitution and this broad and vague formulation there is a strong impression that Human rights have to take a step back, free speech is only acceptable if it doesn’t come in conflict with the Islamic character of the state and the sharia.

In the same manner the constitution mentions freedom of expression in article 45. It protects it but it doesn’t state which limits are permissible and how it is balanced against other rights. In this context article 31 states that “The individual person may not be insulted.” Article 44 prohibits “insulting the prophet.”\textsuperscript{260} As Human Rights Watch stated:

“Articles 31 and 44 are not legitimate limitations on freedom of expression under Human Rights law and they would appear to make difficult, if not impossible, any meaningful reform to existing penal code provisions that criminalise “insult” and defamation, provisions


\textsuperscript{256} see Lipin, Michael (2012): Egypt’s new constitution: how it differs from old version; In: Voice of America; Available at: \url{http://www.voanews.com/content/egypt-constitution/1572169.html} (accessed at 04 July 2016)

\textsuperscript{257} see ibid.


\textsuperscript{259} ibid.

\textsuperscript{260} see ibid.
frequently used in the past to prosecute critics of the government. Criminal prosecutions on charges of “insulting the president” or “insulting the judiciary” have increased since Morsi took office.”

Article 43 limits the freedom of religion mainly to Muslims, Christians and Jews.

The constitution of 2012 was written in the same spirit as the electoral programme for the parliamentary elections and is in accordance with the stance of Islamism towards democracy and the freedom of expression. Blasphemy or insults against institutions or authorities are not accepted. Sure, as The Atlantic wrote in its article, Egypt is a transitional political system and democracy is a process that takes some time. But as the constitution is the foundation of the political system, it shows in the above described chapters the core of the problem and answers the question why Islamism and democracy are incompatible.

The Egyptian cultural scene, aware of the fundamentalist views of the Brotherhood, was afraid of the organisation, even before the Arab Spring. In an effort to try to change the morals and standards, the Brotherhood more and more came into conflict with the liberal Egypt who wanted to break out from conservative restrictions.

“The Brotherhood’s apparent apathy towards freedom of expression was clearly evident when thousands of Muslim Brotherhood supporters surrounded Media Production City in Cairo three times to intimidate both journalists and the television guests trying to enter the tv stations. The Brotherhood supporters viewed the media coverage as being biased against Morsi and the Islamic project. While artists, writers and intellectuals look at the Islamist-led government attempt to monopolize artistic circles at the expense of other voices, as efforts to “Brotherhoodize” the arts to exert their influence on the lives of Egyptians and to force their religious agenda on the Ministry of Culture. Moreover, they believe that the Minister of Culture wants to fix the history of the Brotherhood over the past 80 years by appointing a new director to the National Library and Archives. Indeed, the Brotherhood clashes with artists and intellectuals increased many woes, whether real or unreal, that certain freedoms would not be protected as long as the Muslim Brotherhood is in charge.”

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261 ibid.
262 Eid, Mohammed/Bessma, Momani (2014): The Muslim Brotherhood: Between democracy, ideology and distrust; In: Sociology of Islam; Available at: http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/content/journals/10.1163/22131418-00204006 (accessed at 04 July 2016)
Freedom of expression was restricted on almost all platforms through criminal and vague allegations such as “insulting the president” or “insulting the religion” against prominent media figures such as the satirist Bassem Yousef.\textsuperscript{263} Especially at the end of his tenure, Mursi intensified his attacks against the media accusing them to work on behalf of the old regime.\textsuperscript{264}

The broadly based opposition against Mursi at the end of his tenure in June was also fueled by the unclear stance of him and the organisation towards violent Islamism. Although the Brotherhood renounced violence in the early 1980ies in Egypt, he sent mixed signals when he showed himself with Abbud al-Zumar, who was supposed to be involved in the Sadat assassination. Furthermore, many critics accused him of being too tolerant vis-a-vis Jihadist groups on the Sinai and not vehemently enough stopping Islamist attacks on Christians.\textsuperscript{265}

It is safe to say that the Mursi presidency was a failure in many aspects. The hopes and demands of the protesters weren’t fulfilled. It was neither a step towards more democracy and more freedoms nor did the economic situation for most of the Egyptians improve. The electoral success of the Brotherhood made them overconfident and as a result they lost sympathies they had from parts of the Egyptian people. It is hard to say what would have happened if Mursi and the Brotherhood staid longer in charge. But the consitution from 2012, restrictions on pluralism and the emphasis on the sharia, moral values and the Islamic character of the country shows their understanding of a societal model, democracy and freedom of expression.

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\textsuperscript{263} see ibid.
\textsuperscript{264} see Safwat, Medhat (2013): Egypt’s journalist respond to Mursi’s attack on the press; In: AlAkhabar english; Available at: \url{http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/16278} (accessed at 04 July 2016)
\textsuperscript{265} see Ranko, Annette: p. 149
6. Epilogue

Due to the clumsy and authoritarian course of Mursi and the Brotherhood, the discontent of the population grew stronger and more and more people went on the street to demonstrate against the regime. In order to prevent Egypt from a collapse, the military decided to intervene and ultimately sack the elected president of Egypt.

Although the downfall of the Brotherhood was largely of their own making, external events contributed as well. From the get go, the Brotherhood had many powerful opponents which refused to work together with the president. Furthermore, the economic problems didn’t fade and Mursi couldn’t really improve the situation.266

The media often portrayed Mursi as a powerful president who would extend his control more and more, but in fact the Islamist was rather weak as he never succeeded in controlling the central institutions of the state, the military, the police and the judiciary. They were all quite sceptical of the new president and wanted a return to the old system where they served as the backbone of repression.267

On July 3, the Egyptian Army chief general Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi not only removed Mursi but also suspended the constitution from 2012. They arrested the president and declared Adly Mansour, the chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt (SCC) as the interim president. What followed were cheers on the one side and protests of members and supporters of the Brotherhood and Mursi on the other side. As the pro-Mursi protests caused chaos, violent clashes, injuries and casualties, Mansour declared a state of emergency and a curfew which would last one and a half months.268

After the coup, the military moved against several media stations that were owned by the Brotherhood, such as the channel Misr 25, supportive of Mursi or critical of the coup, such as Al-jazeera’s Mubasher Misr. Many journalists were detained and their offices raided.269

266 see Ranko, Annette: p. 130
267 see ibid.: p. 138, 139
269 see ahramonline (2013): Egyptian security cracks down on Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr; Available at: http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/75646/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-security-cracks-down-on-AlJazeera-Mubashe.aspx (accessed at 05 July 2016)
were major restrictions on press-freedom and freedom of expression and journalists were threatened, injured and two journalists were even killed while reporting clashes between security forces and pro-Mursi protesters.\textsuperscript{270}

Despite these restrictions, protests and clashes lasted the whole July and became more and more violent. On 14 August, security forces cracked down on pro-Mursi protest camps in Cairo and killed several hundred Brotherhood members and supporters. In the months following the coup, the Brotherhood experienced oppression like under Nasser. In December 2013, it was declared a terrorist organisation. Almost all of the leading figures were jailed, in spring 2014 over 1000 members or supporters were sentenced to death and another 1000 were put in jail serving long sentences.\textsuperscript{271}

Because of this relentless crackdown on the Brotherhood, there is, just like under Nasser, the real danger of radicalisation of the group. Although since the early 1980ies it officially rejected violence, over the course of 2013 and 2014, the tone of the organisation became much harsher. Especially the 14\textsuperscript{th} August crackdown serves for many Brothers as an exhibit why a non-violent and pro-state approach isn’t going to work.\textsuperscript{272}

After the coup, the interim president Mansour and the two provisional governments faced several problems. Not only experienced Egypt a major political crisis, nobody really knew which way the country would go and the economic problems didn’t just fade either. Measures like a price rise on gas or electricity didn’t do much to improve the situation and again sparked demonstrations.

A new constitution was passed in a referendum at the beginning of 2014. The constitution is based on the constitution of 1971. Islam is state religion, there are no political parties allowed that are based on religion, gender, race or geography and freedom of expression is subjected to broad exceptions.\textsuperscript{273}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{270} see Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) (2013): Egyptian press under fire after Morsi’s ouster; Available at: \url{https://www.cpj.org/2013/07/egyptian-journalist-killed-press-targeted-after-mo.php} (accessed at 05 July 2016)
\textsuperscript{271} see Ranko, Annette: p. 151
\textsuperscript{272} see ibid.: p. 150
\textsuperscript{273} see Kirkpatrick, David D. (2014): Egypt’s crackdown belies constitution as it nears approval; Available at: \url{http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/17/world/middleeast/egypt-constitution-nears-passage-as-authorities-step-up-crackdown-.html?_r=1} (accessed at 05 July 2016)
\end{flushleft}
In May 2014, Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi was voted new president of Egypt. Even before, he maybe was the most powerful person in Egypt.

Like under Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, Egypt went back to a president with a successful career in the military. At first, Al-Sisi was reluctant to candidate for president but eventually he changed his mind because of the “general will of the population.” Al-Sisi was indeed one of the most popular figures in the political arena after the sacking of Mursi. In the forefront of the election, his opponent, Hamdeen Sabahi questioned his attitude towards democracy and made him responsible for the numerous Human rights violations during the interim government.

The election itself was a one-sided affair as Al-Sisi gained 96 % of the votes. In a similar way as Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak before him, he doesn’t seem to have a political vision of Egypt beyond bringing stability to the country after the coup. As far as economic measures are concerned, Al-Sisi tried to improve the deplorable situation by raising fuel prices as well as cutting subsidies on basic goods and energy. As a result, rating agencies like Moody’s raised the credit rating’s outlook from negative to stable. Still, numerous people in Egypt live under the poverty line and depend on subsidies.

As a candidate he stated that under his reign, the Muslim Brotherhood would cease to exist. As a president though, he stated that the organisation can play a role in Egypt again. His stance towards Islam seems to be quite obscure. On the one side he tries to portray himself as a protector of the various religions in the country and calls for a modernisation of Islam, on the other side blasphemy cases under his reign are higher than under Mursi. It seems that he uses Article 98 of the penal code which bans blasphemy to control the population. Islam, like under his predecessors, is used as a means to legitimate his autocratic regime.

274 see Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (2014): Ägypten, Verwirrung über angebliche Kandidatur Sisis; Available at: http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/aegypten-verwirrung ueber angebliche-kandidatur-sisis-12787551.html (accessed at 06 July 2016)
275 see ahramonline (2014): Sabahi: I am the only presidential candidate so far in Egypt; Available at: http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/91945/Egypt/Politics-/Sabahi-I-am-the-only-presidential-candidate-so-fa.aspx (accessed at 06 July 2016)
278 see Reuters (2015): Sisi says Muslim Brotherhood can play a role in Egypt before UK visit; Available at: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-sisi-idUSKCN0ST0TB20151104 (accessed at 04 July 2016)
279 see Meringolo, Azzurra (2016): Egypt: How Al Sisi uses the Islamic weapon of blasphemy to threaten freedom of speech; Available at: http://www.resetdoc.org/story/00000022656 (accessed at 06 July 2016)
In 2006, Al-Sisi wrote a thesis about democracy in the Middle East during his time at the US Army War college in Pennsylvania where he generally argued for democracy but against secularism. In his view, democracy must adapt to Islam.  

In February 2016 Al-Sisi addressed the Egyptian parliament, it was convened in January, and stated the country now has completed a transition to democratic rule after years of turmoil. Still, the role of the parliament as a fullfiller for Al-Sisi shows that this statement is quite daring.

Restrictions on freedom of expression under Al-Sisi are tighter and more systematic than under Mursi. Journalist and other persons that dare to criticise the president or important institutions of the system are under constant danger to get imprisoned. 5 young men who called Al-Sisi the Bashar Al-Assad of Egypt in social media were detained in May 2016. During the course of protest against the handover of two islands to Saudi-Arabia 150 people were sentenced to years in prison.

It seems 5 years after the Arab spring democracy and freedom of expression in Egypt are further away than ever.

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7. Conclusion

The question about the “nature of Islam”, its lack of enlightenment or a possible congruency with democracy will be discussed in an intense manner in the years to come. In the media and in the scientific realm, many terms related to the subject seem to be quite contested. Of course, as many scientists and religious scholars state, there is not one Islam, the religion has 2,2 billion believers and is after Christianity the second biggest community of faith in the world. According to this number, there are many different versions of it and it is hard to pin it down and to talk about one big monolithic block with absolutely the same beliefs, traditions and goals. Still, there is a common ground which unifies Sunni, Shia and other schools, the Quran and the Sunna. Of course, there are different interpretations of the book that was written in the 7th century, some interprete it in a literal, some in a more metaphorical sense. Among the first group there is another term which seems to be quite contested in politics, the media and in science, Political Islam or Islamism. In the 21st century it is used as a political slogan to gain political capital in the west. Because of this, the term became more and more blurry and is sometimes confused with the religion itself.

In this work, i not only tried to gain some clarity on the term but also detect its narratives. Just like the religion itself, within Political Islam, there are different versions. It makes a difference if we talk about the Shia Muslim Hizbollah in Lebanon, the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the Sunni Hamas in Palestine, also because those organisations act in different environments. But again, there are some characteristics which identify those organisations as examples of the same political ideology.

In the case of Egypt to take Political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood into consideration is not only useful but mandatory if someone wants to understand the country. As the Brotherhood, as one of the most prominent examples of Political Islam, was a major factor of the country and in some ways shaped its identity, I don’t think it is possible to look at Egypt without taking the role of the organisation into consideration. This was also a reason for me why I choose it as the field to investigate how certain narratives about Political Islam hold up. One of the biggest questions about Egypt and the Arab world is inhowfar democracy as a political concept suits the social model there. Can there be democracy in the Middle East? When answering this question, of course it is important at first to define democracy. As I have elaborated in the beginning of this work democracy that is only defined by elections is
reduced to a shell. There are certain freedoms which need to accompany a democratic society. One of the most important freedoms is the freedom of expression because it is a right which represents one of the most important features of democracy, pluralism. This is why I concentrated on this aspect when looking at the Political Islam and democracy at the example of Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Many voices in the Arab world and in the western hemisphere argued after the Arab spring that democracy as we understand it, with a strong emphasis on freedom of expression and other Human rights cannot work in the Arab world with its strong importance of Islam and its beliefs in tradition and authority. Still, the Arab spring was one of the most remarkable outcries for a free and just society in recent history. Furthermore, we don’t know yet what effect this revolution will have in a few years or decades. The people stood up against a predatory, corrupt and autocratic system. Maybe it is too early to judge if it was a complete failure or not.

When we are talking about democracy, the freedom of expression and Egypt we can see a quite turbulent history of the country.

The liberal era featured a constitutional monarchy, foreign presence which was detested by almost all parties involved and a pluralist political forum which involved different ideas and social models for the country. Never again Egypt should be flooded by such a multitude of opinions.

The Free Officers revolution should mark an important ceasura of the 20th century when a bunch of officers deprived the king and made an end to the liberal era. It was the early 50ies and the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser which installed a political culture which was characterized by autocratic, personalist, and bureaucratic rule. Although there are slight differences between Nasser and his successors, these points apply to all of them. What’s more important is that Nasser, and all the other presidents in the 20th and the 21st century, couldn’t provide a coherent political identity or a vision for the country. He, just like Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi today, called for sacrifices from the population for the sake of the country but there was no coherent goal for the country besides keeping the president and the system in power. It was kind of a promise that was given to the Egyptian people. If you hold your tongue in now,
abstain from demands for democracy and go with the system, there might be a better future for the country. As we have seen, this was a hollow phrase.

Islam didn’t play a big role under Nasser. That changed under Anwar Sadat. Under his tenure, the importance of the Al-Azhar rose and Islamist ideas gained momentum. Many institutions, especially the universities, were filled with a more and more fundamentalist vibe. Both presidents, Nasser and Sadat, contributed to the emergence of Islamism in the years to come, in Egypt and in the Arab world. Nasser’s relentless crackdown against the organisation throughout his tenure was a major factor for the radicalisation of the Brotherhood and other, more radical Islamist groups. Especially the work of Sayyid Qutb was an intellectual cornerstone and a justification for Jihadist ideas and practices. His influence is felt from the Brotherhood to the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq. On the other side, Sadat encouraged the Islamisation of the country and followed an appeasement politics vis-a-vis radical Islamists and the Brotherhood.

Under Hosni Mubarak the 80ies were a quite liberal era and went back to a conciliatory status with Islamism and the Brotherhood. That changed in the 90ies when Jihadism presented a real problem for the Egyptian state. In the 2000s, under the influence of the “Freedom agenda” of the United States, Egypt experienced more individual freedoms, including a relatively wide freedom of expression. Under Mubarak we cannot see a coherent political vision and strategy. Instead there were hollow phrase about a transitional period, a path to democracy and sacrifices of the people. Without a vision beyond personal rule, it is impossible for democracy and the freedom of expression to really evolve. Although in the centuries before the Arab spring pluralism and freedom of expression wasn’t always restricted in the same way, there always were certain red lines that couldn’t be crossed.

Given this background it is astonishing that the people in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world stood up and held their ground the way they did. Sure, it weren’t solely demands for more freedoms and democracy which caused the uprising. Population growth and the deplorable economic situation shouldn’t be underestimated but nevertheless it was a broadly based protest relentlessly demanding freedom beyond red lines and the tight grip of the government and its allies.
The Egyptian state and its authoritarian nature were also defined by its relationship to the Muslim Brotherhood. As there were fluctuations of liberties for the people, it seems the Brotherhood adapted to the more or less restrictive politics of the government. The organisation was as confident in its approach to demand more importance to their version of Islam, the sharia and the “Islamic character” of Egypt as the state allowed them to be. As I have written in this work, from the early 1980ies on, the Brotherhood didn’t really include violence as a political strategy.

The Mursi-government marked the first time the Brotherhood was really in charge of the biggest Arab nation. They were a formidably organized political player in Egypt allmost from the get-go. But this time they won several elections in a row, including the parliamentary and the presidential election. This should’ve been the start for the building of Egypt as a state modelled by the most prominent Islamist organisation. For members and supporters this was the moment they were waiting for such a long time. Now they would show Egypt and the world that Islam really is the solution. For liberal and secular Egyptians and many protesters from the Arab spring, this was more like a nightmare. The Brotherhood were involved in the protests and provided security and organisational tasks, the relationship between the movements mainly involved in the protest and the organisation wasn’t bad from the beginning of the Mursi reign. But as the Islamists became more and more confident after their electoral victories they dismissed their former allies.

Their overconfidence would be their downfall as the Mursi government showed that there wasn’t much difference between him and the other presidents before. Islam played a more and more important role and freedom of speech and democracy didn’t. Mursi was increasingly perceived as a pharaoh. But other than Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak he didn’t really have the “deep state” behind him, the military, the security service and the judiciary.

What followed was, much like under Nasser, the oppression of the Brotherhood under the interim government and under Al-Sisi, and tight restrictions, even more than under Mursi, on freedom of expression. Right now, the dreams of democracy seem to be a thing of the past.
After this short summary of my work I think it is now time for me to answer my research questions and see if my thesis is valid or not.

- Which role did the Muslim brotherhood play in their government- involvement regarding democracy building processes with focus on freedom of expression, association and assembly? What is their theoretical approach on these rights?

During the course of the protest or in interviews with western media, officials from the Muslim Brotherhood declared their support for democracy, Human Rights and freedom of expression. They were involved in the protests of the Arab spring and authentically seemed to support their goal. It is questionable in how far their involvement was due to their visions of democracy or mainly because they wanted to get rid of Hosni Mubarak. Without a doubt, the Brotherhood was the political winner in the immediate post-Mubarak era. Not only that, Islamism, especially the Salafist al-nur party was on the rise as well. With such a context, the Brotherhood sought to pursue their vision of an Islamic state more directly. First and foremost it was the constitution of 2012 which showed their vision of the state. Democracy and freedom of expression played a role, but it was the sharia, moral values and the Islamic nature of the state which trumped everything else. Divine law was the foundation of the state and should perpetuate every aspect of society. With such an absolute approach of the political idea of Islamism, pluralist views, a wide freedom of expression and democracy are made more or less impossible. Within these tight limits, every speech, picture or demonstration against these “eternal truths” is an assault on the very foundation of the state and cannot be accepted.

Despite their commitment to democracy and the freedom of expression, this model was more or less described in theory such as in the party platform of 2007, the electoral programme of the FJP as well as in interviews with scholars that are members or affiliated with the Brotherhood. In that sense, the political practice matched the theory.

- How does the government of Mohammed Mursi and the Muslim brotherhood compare to the current regime of Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi regarding the right to freedom expression, association and assembly?

Because the Al-Sisi government is officially in power since 2014, there are not many scientific documents that helped to answer my question. But with media research it is quite clear that it seems to be, at least as far as democracy and freedom of expression is concerned, a backlash to the Nasser-era, one of the darkest chapters not only for freedom of expression but also for the Muslim Brotherhood. Surprisingly, as I found out, blasphemy cases are more
numerous than under Mursi. Al-Sisi uses (a very conservative) Islam to cement his power, also in the sense of placating conservative Islam. Furthermore, freedom of expression and the press is systematically restricted under Al-Sisi, more so than under Mursi.

The foundation of the state under the Muslim Brotherhood is divine law. The sharia, the Islamic character of the Egyptian state and a strong emphasis on morals perpetuates the whole social model. As I have shown with the example of the Muslim Brotherhood, Political Islam is a political idea with an absolute approach and therefore cannot accept differing opinions next to it. As it rejects pluralism it is largely incompatible with democracy.

As the Mursi tenure only lasted a year, it is unclear how he and the Brotherhood would have shaped Egypt if the staid longer in charge. Besides the findings of my work which indicate an Islamisation of the country and increasing restrictions on political freedoms, it is maybe useful to take a look at Turkey. The Brotherhood stated that it sees the reigning AKP under Erdogan as a role model. When it came to power in 2002, the party and its leader was seen as a hope for a more liberal, democratic and free country. But as Erdogan’s reign was solidified, the political system became more and more autocratic, emphasized the role of Islam as the foundation of society and heavily restricted freedom of expression and the media. In the Islamist sense, democracy is like a train, you get off once you have reached your destination.
8. Appendix

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8.1.3 Illustration directory

Illustration 1: Map of Egypt……………………………………………………………………………………………………..19
8.3 Abstract

Englisch

This work deals with the question if Political Islam and democracy is compatible. Islamism is one of the most contested terms in Europe today. As it is often used as a bogey in the political arena and there seems to be a lot of ambiguity to it, I have tried to shed light on the subject and detect certain narratives about it. Exemplified by one of the most prominent organisations of Political Islam, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, I asked what role it played in democracy building processes after the Arab Spring. Although the protests were also sparked by economic grievances, it certainly was a huge outcry for a more democratic and free Egypt. After the revolution, the Brotherhood won the parliamentary and the presidential election. When Mohammed Mursi became president of the country in 2012, he was in the role of the fulfiller of the hopes and demands of the protesters. During the course of the protests, the Brotherhood declared its support for democracy and freedom of expression, but as this work shows, in the Islamist sense the foundation of the state is divine law, the sharia, the sovereign is god and not the people. In such a social model democracy becomes a shell.

Deutsch