# Hassan al-Banna: A Starting Point for Contemporary Islamic Fundamentalism

**The Ideological Roots of Contemporary Islamic Fundamentalism:**

**Hassan al-Banna – A Starting Point**

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, there has been an increasing interest in understanding AL-Qadaa's ideology, jihad and Islamic fundamentalism (Burgat, 2008; Sageman, 2004; Aboul-Enin, 2010; Kepel, 2004). In tracing the ideology of Al-Qadaa and other Islamic radical militant groups, there is a widespread notion in the literature of terrorism that the roots of Islamic fundamentalism, rejection of the religious other, violence and, ultimately, terrorism or to be precise radical Islam terrorism are basically the outcome of the ideas of the Egyptian Islamist ideologue and the member of Muslim Brotherhood Sayyed Qutb's, particularly displayed in his two books titled *In the Shadows of the Qur'an* and *Signposts on the Road*. Qutb's ideas are often attributed to his influence by the 20th century Islamic thinkers, Abul Ala Maududi[1] and Abu al-Hassan Al Nadawi[2] (Rehmana, 1994). This is particularly reflected in his distinction between Islam and *the jahiliyya* world, the Kingdom of man or the un-Islamic world, and his call for actions to banish the world of *jahiliyya* and setup the Kingdom of God (Rahnema, 1994).

These radical views are deemed as the manifesto of radical Islamist groups. For instance, Ayman Zawahiri, the brains behind al Qaeda, is said to have been greatly influenced by Qutb. Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, currently in prison in the United States for conspiring to commit terrorism, is a disciple of Qutb's work. In addition, the leaders of many of the major terrorist groups—such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad—regularly cite his works (D'Souza, 2004, as cited in Murr, 2004).

Muhammad Faraj, one of the founders of Jihadist groups in Egypt in 1970s, spread Qutb's message and updated his strategy in his manifesto *Al-Farida Al- Gayba* *The Neglected Duty* , in which he follows Qutb on the need for a strategy that attacks the "near enemy"—apostate Muslim regimes—before the "far enemy" —meaning Israel, the United States, and other Western powers interfering in the Muslim world (Henzel, 2005).

There is a widespread notion that Qutb's ideas and thought are rapture from the ideas of Hassan Al-Banna, the founder of Muslim Brotherhood, whose establishment in 1928 marks early attempts at politicizing Islam (Soage, 2008). Hasan al-Hudaybi, al-Banna's successor as the General Guide of Muslim Brotherhood, wrote in 1969 *Preachers, not Judges*, in which he denounces the ideas introduced by Al-Mawdudi, hence indirectly criticizes Qutb's views. Omar al-Tilimsani, the third General Guide of MB, states that Qutb's ideas represent himself alone and not the Muslim Brotherhood in general (Soage, 2009). Contemporary Islamic authors such as Yusef al-Qardawi and Farid Abu-Khaliq[3] also emphasize the dichotomies between Al-Banna's and Qutb's thought, whilst excusing Qutb's radical thought by stressing his suffering under the Nasserite regime (ibid). Even currently some major Islamist figures, including ex-leaders in the Muslim Brothers movement such as Kamal Al-Helbawi, Mukhtar Nooh and Mohammed Habib, often criticize the present members of the Muslim Brothers Guidance Office on the grounds that they have deviated from the original teachings of late Hassan Al-Banna and, instead, advocate the rather extremist ideas and teachings advocated by Sayyed Qutb.

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The notion that radical Islam has started from Qutb is also reflected in western scholarly writings. Gilles Kepel in his, *The Roots of Radical Islam* (2005), presents an account of the roots of the ideology of radical Islamists as heavily influenced by Egypt's radical movements in 1970s and Sayyid Qutb. John Esposito in *his Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (2002), apologetically argues that Qutb is the Godfather of militant jihad who has transformed and radicalized al-Banna's ideas.

This paper, however, challenges this common notion and examines the following hypothesis: the ideas of radical Islam are actually deeply rooted in Hassan Al-Banna's writings and actions. Hence, the research sets out to examine the validity of the aforementioned statement. This research paper argues that the teachings and ideas of Hassan Al-Banna are a potential source of fundamentalist ideas that serve as a theoretical umbrella for radical Islamists. The paper seeks to trace the roots of the rationale or justification of radical Islamists stemming from the condemnation of the Other as infidels, rejection of democracy and multi-parties political systems, elevation of religious loyalty at the expense of patriotism and nationalism and, hence, indulgence in violence under the cover of Islamic Jihad in the writings of Hassan Al-Banna, his only book *The Memoirs of the Advocation and the Advocator*, and a number of his tracts, particularly "Towards the Light", "Our Message", "Between Yesterday and Today", "Oh Youth" and "Al Jihad".

## Structure of the Research

The research is divided into three main sections. The first section is a theoretical background in which the main concepts that are tackled in the paper will be defined including: terrorism and religious terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, jihad, and Salafi jihadism. The second section will be dedicated to tracing the ideological underpinnings in al-Banna's writings under four main themes: the totalitarian conception of Islam, the monopoly of Islam and rejection of the Other, the Islamic Ummah and patriotism; Islamic government and rejection of democracy, and jihad. Finally, the last section is a conclusion section to reflect on and sum-up the main ideas and arguments of the research.

## Theoretical Background

*Terrorism & Religious Terrorism*

No clear consensus has developed about the definition of terrorism. Defining terrorism may vary widely among scholars and academics, as well as among nation states, international organizations, and even terrorists themselves (Tuman, 2003). *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (2011) compiles 260 definitions of terrorism. There is even no standard universal legal definition of the term; the General Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on Terrorism has been trying to reach a legal binding definition of terrorism since 1972 but in vain (Schmidt, 2012). Some theorists, such as Alex Schmid, have attempted to reach an academic consensus definition of terrorism. Schmid compiled a number of definitions of terrorism and he has come out with a long and detailed definition that has most of the common components that other definitions have[4]. However, for the purpose of this research, terrorism is defined as "the use or the threatened use of force designed to bring about a political change" (Tuman, 2003). This definition is better fit for the research argument as it emphasizes the use of violence for political gains.

Accordingly, religious terrorism can be defined as

"A type of political violence motivated by "an absolute belief that an otherworldly power has sanctioned—and commanded—terrorist violence for the greater glory of the faith. Acts committed in the name of the faith will be forgiven by the otherworldly power and perhaps rewarded in an afterlife. In essence, one's religious faith legitimizes violence as long as such violence is an expression of the will of one's deity" (Martin, 2012, p. 130).

In short, religious terrorism is committing an act of political violence in the name of religion or using terror based on religiously-motivated reasons or to further religious causes. Based on this definition, the research seeks to explore how al-Banna's ideas and teachings can be considered as the contemporary foundation for providing religious and moral excuses to commit an act of terror in the name of religion.

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*Jihad: Various Interpretations*

Jihad is another term in this research that has various interpretations. The concept and practice of jihad have been critical in the rise of Islam and the creation and expansion of the Muslim community (Esposito, 2004). Jihad, in a broad Islamic view, means exertion or struggle to fulfill one's moral and spiritual obligations to God and it is sometimes referred to as the Sixth Pillar of Islam (Aboul-Enin, 2010). The literal meaning of the word jihad in the Qur'an, the Muslim Holy Scripture, is to struggle in the path of God and follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad. In most Salafist interpretations, this extends to include not only Mohammad, but his early Companions as well. This interpretation of jihad is referred to as the greater jihad, where individuals are striving non-violently to live a good Muslim life and realize God's will by leading a virtuous and vigilant life and supporting the Islamic community through preaching, education, etc (Sageman, 2004).

Jihad also includes the right, indeed the obligation, to defend Islam and the community from aggression, which is the lesser jihad. Lesser jihad, or the violent struggle for Islam, is further divided into defensive and offensive jihad. Defensive jihad is an individual obligation upon all Muslims to defend Islam and the land of Muslims either through direct fighting or financial contributions, prayers, etc. The offensive jihad, which is a collective obligation, implies attacking the land of infidels to spread Islam and submit it to Shar'a (Segman, 2004).

Islamic jurisprudents, however, differ when it comes to their interpretations of lesser jihad and under which cases it should be undertaken. Some late 19th century and early 20th century Islamic scholars have even argued that a violent strife is only legitimate when Muslims are being attacked by others. A scholar like Mohammad Abdu, for instance, the Mufti of Egypt at the beginning of the 20th century, even set out to participate in the establishment of what may be regarded now as a secularist political party, the National Party, in 1881. Article 5 of the program of the party, phrased by Imam Mohammad Abdu personally, states that the membership was open for any individual living on the land of Egypt, regardless of race, color or even religion[5]. There was no such reference, then, to the land of the Muslims versus the lands of the Infidels; it was simply a political party based on national, not religious, identity.

Since the late 20th century, however, the word jihad has been used by resistance, liberation, and terrorist movements to legitimate their cause and motivate their followers. From the Afghan Mujahiddin who waged a jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union; to Algeria's Armed Islamic Group that engaged in a jihad of terror against the government, and to Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda have waged a global jihad against Muslim governments and the West (Esposito, 2004).

Accordingly, one of the objectives of this research is to explore how al-Banna interprets jihad and promotes it among his followers.

*Islamic Fundamentalism*

Defining the term Islamic fundamentalism, which is the focus of this paper, is quite perplexing as it relates to other terms such as Islamism, political Islam, radical Islam, and Salafism. What all these terms have in common despite the nuances, is the political aspect as in Islam religion and politics are hardly distinguishable in Salafist thought, including the Muslim Brotherhood. Islamic fundamentalism is sometimes used interchangeably with political Islam to refer to Islamic movements that use Islam for political ends and call for the fusion of the religion and state. Islamic fundamentalism could also be used to refer to the radical interpretation of Islam as advocated by jihadi Salafis (Ross, 2011). The term Islamic fundamentalism is used in this paper in its latter sense and used as a synonym of radical Islam and radical/militia Islamists.

Another term related to Islamic fundamentalism is *Salafi jihadism*, a term used to refer to a strict fundamental interpretation of the Qur'an; rejection of democracy and other man-made government systems; and justification of the use of violence against the Other by referencing to a narrow interpretation of the Islamic concept of Jihad (Hemmingsen, 2011). This research paper argues that the roots of these ideas can be traced back to Al-Banna's ideas and thought.

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To conclude this part, despite the disparities among these definitions and the various Islamist groups and movements, there are defining features they have in common.: 1- They view Islam as total way of life, for personal conduct and for the conduct of state and society; 2- Westernization is regarded as the primary cause of the political, economic, and social ills of Muslim societies; 3- the introduction of the Sharia, Islamic Law, will produce a moral, just, and self-reliant society, and finally radical groups consider violent struggle against unjust rulers and those governments that support them as a justifiable strategy.

**Analysis & Discussion[6]**

This part will be dedicated to tracing these ideological underpinnings in al-Banna's writings under four main themes: totalitarian conception of Islam, monopoly on Islam and rejection of the Other, the Islamic Ummah and patriotism; and the rejection of multi-parties political systems and democracy.

*Totalitarian Conception of Islam*

Al-Banna's establishment of Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 was one of the most important events in the development of political Islam as it is currently known. The association started as a reformist group, dedicated to *Daw'a*, spreading true religion (i.e. Islam), restoring the glory of the Muslims, and advocating what he deemed as the correct understanding of Islam (Soage, 2008).

Being a charismatic leader, Al-Banna inspired thousands of Muslims with his project to regenerate society through Islam. Although he was not a prolific intellectual, he wrote a series of "epistles" addressed to his followers in Egypt and the Arab world to set out his reform program. This massive movement, however, led to the politicization of Islam as Al-Banna combined the religious and the political, and that led to a different conception of religion. Al Banna has introduced Islam as an integral or totalitarian system (Soage, 2009).

Al Banna was strongly influenced by the fascist ideologies that were popular in 1920a and 30s and he introduced Islam as a holistic and all-embracing system (Soage, 2009). In one his *Ras'al*, tracts, titled "Our Mission", Al-Banna wrote under the title "Our Islam" that:

"We believe that Islam is an all-embracing concept which regulates every aspect of life, adjudicating on everyone its concerns and prescribing for it a solid and rigorous order.[..] Some people mistakenly understand that Islam is restricted to religious practices or spiritual exercises. [..] On the contrary we understand Islam broadly and comprehensively, regulating the affairs of men, in this world and the next. Yes, indeed, our mission is 'Islamic' in every sense of the word confined to the Book of Allah, the Sunnah of his Apostle, and the lives of the pious predecessors" (pp. 46-47).

In another tract titled "To What We Summon Mankind", Al-Banna stressed how Islam is superior to other systems devised by Man:

"If you examine the teachings of Islam, you will find that it promulgates the soundest principles, the most suitable regulations, and the most precise laws for the life of the individual, man or woman, for the life of the family [..], and for the life of nations [..], and sanctions ideas before which even reformers and leaders of nations have stood hesitant" (p.87).

Al-Banna continues emphasizing the superiority of Islam to all other man-made systems saying that:

"Internationalism, nationalism, socialism, capitalism, Bolshevism, war, the distribution of wealth, the link between producer and consumer, and whatever [..] preoccupy the statesmen of the nations and the social philosophers, we believe that all of these have been dealt with thoroughly by Islam" (p.87).

The ideas of the comprehensiveness of Islam and that Islam is superior to all man-made government system as it provides a flawless model that deals with every aspect in Life, are reiterated in a number of AL-Banna's messages or

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tracts. He rejected that Islam should be confined to the private realm, as the notion of the separation of religion and state is a foreign innovation (*bed'a*) to him. He believed that Islam combines the executive and the Judicial authority (Soage, 2009). Such ideas have been developed later by Qutb who envisions Islam as a perfect system as God knows what is suitable for human nature, and all other systems based on Man's limited intellectual abilities and selfishness are *jahili*, "barbaric" (Wright, 2006).

## The Monopoly of Islam & Rejection of the Other

In a number of messages to his followers, Al-Banna emphasizes the superiority of Muslim Brotherhood's belief. In his message to Muslim Brotherhood youth titled "Oh Youth", he says that:

"Allah [God] has honored you by making Himself known to you, by making you have faith in Him and by upbringing you according to His religion. Also, Allah has decreed upon you a level of superiority, and dignity in this world. He has chosen you not only to lead humanity to His path but to become the teachers of the world as well."

In another message titled "Between Yesterday and Today", he told his followers that "Allah [God] prepares you to exalt His word and reveal His Sacred Law and reestablish His state [..] and spread the Islamic creed: a religion, a nationality, and a creed uniting all Muslims" (P.31-32). In an article published by Hassan Al-Banna in the monthly magazine titled "Al Ukhwan Al-Muslimun" (The Muslim Brothers), on the November 1944 issue, he describes his group as follows: "We are the call of the Quran, the all inclusive and comprehensive call for the Right- we combine all that is good".

By postulating the superiority of Muslim Brother's Islamic creed, Al-Banna claims monopoly on Islam and implicitly rejecting any other understating of Islam that does not conform to his totalitarian conception. He bestows a divine nature on his group and followers by claiming that they have been selected by God to be his embodiment on earth and spread his message. Accordingly, it is only natural that Al-Banna's conception of Islam is the "right" one and all other groups or individuals apart from his group members are inferior to the Muslim Brothers group members, the abbots of the night and the knights of the daytime as Al-Banna once described them.

The idea that Al-Banna's understanding of Islam is the only proper religion is also emphasized in his Al-Banna's book *Advocation and the Advocator* where he actually states in his description of the Muslim Brothers program that "Every Muslim has to believe that this program is totally Islamic and that any deduction of any part of it is a deduction of the paper Islamic idea" (p.231). In his "Our Mission" tract, Al-Banna even classified Muslims to four groups according to their attitude to his conception and group: the believer "anyone who has faith in [his] mission", the undecided, the opportunist, and the prejudiced and he asked his followers to deal with them according to this classification (p. 40).

In his message "Between Yesterday and Today", Al-Banna introduces the idea of Muslim Brotherhood as the vanguard group or as a savoir group of believers that shall lead the world to the right path:

"The Brethren, you are neither a charity society, a political party nor a body with objective goals and limited purposes, but you are a new spirit that runs in the heart of this nation to save it by the Quran and a new light that rises to disperse the darkness of materialism through the knowledge of God" (p.36).

It can be entailed, thus, that the Muslim Brothers members are the only true Muslims, whereas anybody else is not. Given the definition of Jihad presented in the theoretical part, the close relation of Al-Banna's ideas and teachings to the jihadist's ideology becomes fairly evident. The fact that traditional Salafist thought explicitly requests true Muslims to fight infidels and even unorthodox Muslims until they either convert to Islam or if already formally Muslims to commit themselves to the so called proper Islamic values and way of life, is yet another case in point.

There is also a clear relation between these ideas and Qutb's concept of *jahilia*, the un-Islamic world, versus, the world of Islam, Qutb went further explaining that those who do not belong to the party of God, i.e. do not adhere to his project, are by default in the party of Satan (Soage, 2009). He also mentions the selective revolutionary vanguard who are going to fight the *jahilia* world.

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It may be worth mentioning, in this respect, that such a concept of jihad can be easily traced back to old Islamic scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya, based on a decontextualized interpretation of what is usually referred to as "the sward verse" in the holy Qur'an[7], but it has to be also emphasized that when Al-Banna started his movement in the 20s of last century, the general stance to jihad in the Muslim world in general and in Egypt in particular was hardly in favor of that concept of jihad. It was the time when Kemal Ataturk had already established a nationalist state in Turkey and put an end to the Ottoman Caliphate in 1923 (http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/ataturk_kemal.shtml). It was also the time that the Azhar scholar Ali Abdel Raziq, a religious judge, and government minister, debated the role of religion and Islamic history in 20th century politics and government in his 1925 book *Islam and the Foundations of Governance*[8]. He argued against a role for religion in politics or the political prescriptive value of religious texts and asserted that Islamic texts were and should remain neutral in political debate and civil institution building. Hence, it may be fairly maintained that the roots of contemporary Islamist fundamentalism stem from Al-Banna's ideas and teachings. If he had not invented the extremist notions in question, he, at the very least, had revived them anew.

## Islamic *Umma* & Patriotism

There are a number of references in Al-Banna's writings that his mission aims at building the Islamic *Umma*, the Islamic nation, which does not recognize boundaries. In his "Our Mission" tract, al-Banna states it clearly that he defines patriotism according to "the standard of creedal belief" and not "the territorial borders and geographical boundaries" (p. 50). Al-Banna believes that in every region in the world, where is a Muslim who says "there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the apostle of the God" is part of the *Islamic Ummah*, and it is the duty of every Muslim to give his blood and wealth in order to carry out the banner of Islam on high above the regions of the earth (p.51).

In his message to the Muslim Brotherhood youth entitled "Oh Youth", the ideas of Islamic Umma as a part of Muslim Brotherhood have become evident. Al-Banna clearly states that:

"We [Muslim Brothers] do not accept these political divisions and these international agreements that have torn the Islamic nation into small and weak mini-states that can easily be swallowed by their aggressors. [..] We also do not disregard the usurpation and violation of freedom of these nations. 3. For Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Hijaz, Yemen, Tripoli, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and each span of a land containing a Muslim who bears witness that, [There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah] constitutes an essential part of our great motherland that we strive hard to liberate, rescue, free and unify" (p.12).

For Al-Banna, his mission is to make "the banner of Islam rise high and wave over those lands, which were cheered, for a certain period of time with Islam". He wants regain all lands of Islam that were lost to non-believers. "Andalusia, Sicily, the Balkan, South Italy and Roman Sea Islands were all Islamic lands that had to be restored to the homeland of Islam. The Mediterranean and Red Sea should equally be part of the Islamic Empire as they were before" (p.12). Al-Banna even cites Mussolini as an example to be followed, saying:

"As Senior Mussolini believed that it was within his right to revive the Roman Empire, which was founded upon greed and personal desires, similarly, it is our right to restore to the Islamic empire its glory that was based upon Justice, equity and the spread of light and guidance among human beings" (pp.12-13).

Al-Banna concludes his message to youth summarizing the mission of Muslim Brotherhood and his own ideas and beliefs in the following lines: We want to: 1. Make our Da'wah [call to Islam] reach to the whole world, 2. Propagate it to all nations, 3. Spread it to the remotest parts of the earth, and 4. Subjugate every unjust ruler to its command. Al-Banna's ideas about the Islamic Nation have been reiterated in Bin Laden's "Declaration of War against the Americans", in which he describes "how the people of Islam have suffered from the aggression, inequality, injustice imposed on them by the Zionist crusader alliance" and the obligations of true Muslims to rise up and protect the Islamic *ummah*, the Islamic nation from "the American Crusader forces" (Euben & Zaman, 2009, p. 438-439). Indeed, the idea of the Islamic *umma* is a recurrent theme in most of the Islamist literature.

## Islamic Government

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As presented earlier, Al-Banna views Islam as a totalitarian system that covers all aspects of life and that presents a perfect system of government. Al-Banna in his "Our Problems in the Light of the Islamic Regime" wrote a whole section on Government in Islam. AL-Banna states that religion and state cannot be separated, and whoever thinks that they are separated is ignorant of this religion. Al-Banna states that "Parties and political party systems are not necessary for the establishment of a government that represents people". He even proceeds to assert that "political parties divide the nation and are incompatible with the Islamic system" (Al-Banna, p. 23-25). The same ideas are reemphasized in the "Al Ukhwan Al-Muslimun", The Muslim Brothers weekly magazine, where Al-Banna maintains that "It is time we raised our voices loud to put an end to the multi-political parties system in Egypt. It should be replaced by a regime that combines all views in one and puts all the efforts of the nation together in accordance with a valid national Islamic program".

In his letter on a Jihad or Islamic strife, Al-Banna presents his so called Islamic vision of an Islamic society that has got rid of the multi-party political system. He tells his addresses (possibly basically his own followers) that there shall be one political party only, established on the bases of a reformational Islamic program. He even gives Turkey and Russia as examples of successful one-party regimes, even though the first was a downright secularist state at the time, while the former was even a Marxist country that explicitly regarded religion as the opium of the people. In his famous letter to King Farouq in 1947 titled "Towards the Light", Al Banna proposes a number of points to amend the political system in Egypt, on top of them are: to put an end to party rivalry, and directing the political forces of the nation into a unified front, and to amend the law, such that it conforms to all branches of Islamic legislation.

In his message to Muslim Brothers youth entitled "Oh Youth", al-Banna states it clearly that:

"We [Muslim Brothers] do not confess any governmental system that does not observe the precepts of Islam. We do not recognize any governmental system that does not derive its rules and principles from Islam. We do not support political parties. We do not recognize these traditional systems whose laws had been forced upon us by "intellectuals" and the enemies of Islam. We will strive for the revival of the Islamic way of life in its entirety. And we will act in order to establish the Islamic government on the basis of this system" (p.12).

In short, al-Banna's conception of an Islamic government rejects the Western concept of democracy. He is against the multi-party politics, as it is a threat to the unity dictated by the Qur'an. He believes that the duty of the government is to enforce the rulings of Islam. And that the nation's representatives of the people could be only chosen from *ulema*, technocrats, and who ever has a leadership role. Finally the ruler can only be deposed if he disobeys God (Soage, 2008).

Qutb also reiterates the same ideas about government. He adds that government in Islam is based on justice on the part of the ruler, obedience on the part of the ruled as long as the ruler obeys Sharia, and consultation (*Shura*). Qutb, however, focuses more on criticizing the two prevailing government systems at that time, capitalism and communism. He concludes that both are equally evil, as they are both materialistic systems that relegate men to the status of an animal or a machine. For him, the real struggle is not between the cold war camps but rather between them and Islam (Soage, 2008).

## Jihad

The last theme of AL-Banna's writings is jihad. One of Al-Banna's main messages or tracts is dedicated to explaining jihad in Islam as he conceptualizes it. For Al-Banna, jihad is "an obligation from Allah on every Muslim and cannot be ignored or evaded". Al-Banna believes that

"Muslims were compelled to humble themselves before non-Muslims, and are ruled by unbelievers, their lands have been trampled over […]. Hence, it has become an individual obligation […], on every Muslim to prepare his equipment, to make up his mind to engage in jihad and to get ready for it until the opportunity is ripe and God decrees a matter which is sure to be accomplished" (pp. 150-151).

In an attempt at answering the question *Why Muslims Wage War?* in the same message, Al-Banna states that God

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ordained jihad for the Muslims not as "a tool of oppression or a means of satisfying personal ambition, but rather as a defense for the Islamic mission [..], and a means of implementing the Supreme message" (p.152). Al-Banna also rejects the widespread belief that fighting the enemy is the lesser jihad, while fighting the spirit is the greater jihad. He thinks that this is an attempt to divert people from the importance of fighting in order to rescue the territories of the Muslims and repel the attacks of unbelievers (p.155). Finally, Al-Banna concludes hiss message by encouraging his followers to die in cause of God. He wonders: "What is fancy that has reduced us to loving this world and hating death". He continues, saying that "God gives the *umma* is skilled in the practice of death ad knows how to die a noble death, an exalted life in this world and eternal felicity in the next" (p. 156). Addressing his followers, al-Banna concludes that "if you strive for an honorable death, you will win to perfect happiness. May God bestow upon us and upon you the honor of martyrdom in His way." (p.156).

Al-Banna's ideas and conception of jihad is quite evident. He advocates for jihad as a way to protect the Islamic *umma* and establish the Islamic laws. Although, there are no clear references in his message to the far and near enemies, that Muslims should invade the lands of the infidels, or get rid of their unbelievers.

Qutb reiterates the same ideas. He emphasizes, however, that those who consider jihad in Islam as a mere defense of the Islamic *umma*, diminishes the greatness of the Islamic way of life. The ultimate objective of jihad in Islam is not only to fight the jahili world but also to allow Islam to destroy all obstacles, step forward, and take control of the political authority so that Islam may establish the divine system on earth.

## Conclusion

Having presented underpinnings of AL-Banna's ideas, it could be fairly concluded that Al-Banna's ideas and teachings are the foundations of modern Islamic fundamentalism. Al-Banna's thoughts have led to the politicization of Islam and the fusing of Islam and government. His ideas of the superiority of Islam to any other religions, the superiority of his conception of Islam to others, and the monopoly of the absolute truth are indeed the first step to judge Others as unbelievers. He bestows a divine nature on himself and his followers and categories people according to their attitude towards his conception of Islam, as if his project were the religion itself. Al-Banna states it clearly that he rejects government that does not abide by Islam and Islamic laws or rather his vision of Islam. His aim is to establish the unified Islamic nation that does not recognize boundaries and to regain all the Muslim lands

Accordingly, the radical ideologies of those who are considered as the cannon of Jihad such as Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Faraj, Ayamn al-Zawahiri, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, Taliban, Bin-Laden and finally Muhammed Atta are merely a development if not even a more vocal replication of his ideas. Al-Banna's teachings give the moral and religious excuses for the undertaking jihad either against the unjust un-Islamic ruler of Muslims-majority countries or the western Infidels who have made the Islamic *ummah* to suffer, so it is time for true Muslims to rise and defend the Islamic *umma*.

Finally, this research has demonstrated that Chandler's and Gunaratna's (2007) idea of the enduring threat of terrorism. Al-Banna has founded what is currently referred to as political Islam or Islamicism, he established an ideology that, although sometimes described as reformist, has paved the way to radical and jihadi ideologies. Accordingly, a possible countering terrorism policy, when it comes to Radical Islamic terrorism, should address the underpinnings of Al-Banna's thought, and challenge it by promoting the counter moderate Islamic discourse.

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**Endnotes**

[1] Abul Ala Maududi is a Pakistani Islamist thinker who established Jama`at-i-Islami in 1941. He has a dialectic vision of the struggle between Islam and the West, the Un-Islam (*Kufr*). He believes that this struggle will finally culminate in an Islamic revolution and would lead to the foundation of the Islamic state (Rehmana, 2007).

[2] Abu al-Hassan Al Nadawi was an Indian Islamic scholar, who was loosely attached to Al-Maududi. Al Nadawi in 1949 was the first to introduce the modern concept of *jahiliyya*, a term used to refer to the pre-Islamic period. Al Nadawi introduced *jahiliyya,* the state of ignorance as an ever existing phenomenon (Zollner, 2009).

[3] See Youssef al Qardawi (2004). "The Last Word on Sayyid Qutb" (Kalima Akhira Hawl Sayid Qutb). Available at http://www.qaradawi.net/articles/86-2009-12-12-10-35-10/4143.html

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[4] The full compiled definition of Alex Schmid is available at http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/schmid-terrorism-definition/html

[5] See *The Complete Works of Imam Sheikh Mohammad Abdu*, edited and verified by Dr Mohammad Imara, published by Dar Al-Shorouq, Egypt, 1993, p. 404

[6] All the references to AL-Banna's tracts (messages or letters) are based on the translation of his work as presented in *Five Tracts of Hasan AL-Banna* translated by Charles Wendell or the translation of the complete work of Hasan AL-Banna available at http://thequranblog.wordpress.com/?s=Banna&submit=Search

[7] See The Books and Writings of Sheikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya

[8] Abdel Raziq, Ali (1978). *Al-Islam Wa Usul Al-Hukm: Bahth Fi-l Khilafa Wa-l Hukuma Fi-l Islam* (Islam and the Foundations of Governance: Research on the Caliphate and Governance in Islam). Critique and commentary by Mamdooh Haqqi Beirut Publishing House.

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