

The Crisis of the Arab Brotherhood

by Israel Elad Altman

PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT IN THE RECENT HISTORY of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) movement has been its adoption of participatory politics as a major strategy. The Brotherhood's engagement in the political process has been accompanied by the embrace of a new, pro-democracy narrative in which the movement claims to seek the creation not of a religious state, but of a "civil state with an Islamic source of authority." In some countries, the Brotherhood's embrace of electoral politics has also led to the formation of political parties.

In light of these developments, it has been argued that the Brotherhood will become moderated as it integrates more fully into the political process, and conversely, more radicalized, should it be excluded. But has the MB's own track record provided any evidence to support this hypothesis? Has the Brotherhood's participation in politics brought about a fundamental ideological change in the movement, and led it to alter its radical nature and objectives?

Two cases, both of which will be examined in this paper, shed some light on these questions: that of Egypt, where the Brotherhood is officially outlawed, and that of Jordan, where the Brotherhood is legal and has formed its own political party. In both cases, the Brotherhood's embrace of politics has rewarded it with some considerable electoral successes in the recent past. At the same time, those achievements have also compelled the Egyptian and Jordanian regimes to move firmly to deny the Brotherhood new electoral gains and to try and reduce its political role. The Jordanian Brotherhood has complained that the government rigged recent elections, causing the Brotherhood's party to perform poorly. And yet, despite these claims, Jordanian experts say the Brotherhood's electoral setbacks can not be ascribed entirely to

governmental manipulation alone. Instead, it seems that the Brotherhood has not been able to persuade the masses of its ideological agenda.

Meanwhile, Hamas's victory in the January 2006 legislative elections didn't help the group accomplish its own professed goals of liberating and Islamizing Palestine. Instead, Hamas ended up politically isolated in Gaza. Moreover, in Morocco, the Brotherhood-inspired Justice and Development Party did not perform as well as expected in the legislative elections of September 2007, which were relatively free and fair compared to elections in other Arab countries.

All of this suggests that the Brotherhood's political strategy has recently come up against some genuine limits—including limits imposed not only by states to curb the MB's political ascendancy, but also limits to the Brotherhood's own ability to mobilize voters on the basis of its slogan "Islam is the solution." The more the MB has advanced in the polls, and the more the possibility of its assuming power loomed on the horizon, the more the movement was expected, at home and abroad, to offer pragmatic solutions to people's problems and to make the sort of compromises required of political parties in a pluralistic political order. But the Brotherhood has not met those expectations, and as a result, has suffered in the political arena in recent times.

It appears, then, as the Egyptian analyst Khalil al-Anani has recently put it,¹ that "the Islamist Spring" may well be coming to a close. But if the MB's political strategy has reached a dead end, what will its various branches choose to do now and in the future? Hamas provided one response to this dilemma when it took over Gaza by force. That response may well be a model that other Brotherhood branches will follow in the future. On the other end of the spectrum, however, is the example offered by the Islamic AKP (Justice and Development Party) in Turkey, which won victories in the 2002 and 2007 legislative elections—but only after distancing itself from traditional Brotherhood ideology. This achievement suggests that an Islamic political party can assume power and keep it in a civil state, so long as it is willing to accept the sovereignty of that political order and reject the ideological objectives of establishing an Islamic state. But is the MB at large willing to take this step? On this question, the views of the Brotherhood regarding the AKP's model and success are especially revealing, and will also be examined in this paper.

Between Dawa and Siyasa

THE BROTHERHOOD WAS FOUNDED WITH THE EXPRESSED PURPOSE OF ESTABLISHING the sovereignty of *sharia* (Islamic law), uniting Muslim lands, liberating them from all foreign presence, and eventually spreading Islam worldwide. Over the course of its history, the MB has pursued these objectives in a variety of ways—including

through jihad, but primarily, and especially since the period of repression it experienced during Nasser's reign in Egypt, through *dawa*, or missionary and social activities. When the Brotherhood chose to engage in the political and electoral process, it conceived of this new political approach not as replacement for *dawa*, but as a supplement or extension of its established activities, including its efforts to establish the Islamic state. As such, MB organizations as a whole have not abandoned their founding principles and transformed themselves into civil political movements that accept the separation of religion from politics and the sovereignty of the nation state.

It is important to understand the relationship between *dawa* and politics (*siyasah*) in Brotherhood organizations. In politics, the Brotherhood may claim to seek the creation of a civil state. But at the level of *dawa*, the MB doesn't make compromises with its basic ideological objectives, because divine truth, as it see it, cannot be subject to political negotiation. The Brotherhood's political activities are meant to advance the Islamizing objectives of the Brotherhood as a *dawa* movement.

MB political parties in Arab countries are, organizationally speaking, not separate from the *dawa* organization. This is so even in Morocco, where the Brotherhood's political party—the Justice and Development Party (*Hizb al-Adalah wal-Tanmiyah*)—is widely regarded as having gone further than other MB parties in distancing itself from the *dawa* organization and the revivalist movement from which it sprang, the “Monotheism and Reform Movement” (*Harakat al-Tawhid wal-Islah*).²

In many ways, the two strategies of *dawa* and *siyasah* are contradictory and inevitably produce deep ambiguities in the Brotherhood's ideological message. For example, as a *dawa* movement, the Brotherhood calls for the implementation of *sharia* and the establishment of an Islamic state, and cannot accept non-Muslims as citizens fully equal to Muslims, which should be a *sine qua non* for a civil political party. Moreover, engagement in political activity and elections requires dialogue and partnership with other political forces, including with ideological rivals. As such, the Brotherhood's political activities have sometimes found themselves in conflict with the message of the *dawa*. These tensions have given rise to the famous “grey zones”—the ambiguous positions on ideological and political issues that provide key benchmarks for gauging an organization's commitment to democratic and pluralistic values.

A Civil or Sharia State?

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE EGYPTIAN BROTHERHOOD'S INVOLVEMENT IN electoral politics in the 1980s, its public statements have emphasized its commitment to promoting democracy, freedom, justice, human rights, and common citizenship for members of religious minorities. The Brotherhood's participation in politics

has also created a felt need within the movement's ranks to form a political party.

The Egyptian Brothers most in favor of establishing a political party belong to the "second generation" or "middle generation" (*jil al-wasat*). These men, many of whom were activists in Islamist student organizations in the 1970s, are skilled and politically savvy, and more interested in political work than in *dawa*. Some of these activists have advocated setting up a party *alongside* the Brotherhood's *dawa* structure, while others have suggested that the Brotherhood *transform* itself entirely into a political party. Today, the Egyptian Brotherhood's discourse is abuzz with discussion about the future Brotherhood party, which is often described as "a civil party with a religious source of authority" (*marja'iyyah*).

Contemporary Islamist writers ordinarily describe this concept of a "civil state with an Islamic source of authority" as an alternative to the traditional Brotherhood concept of a state operating on the principle of divine rule (*hakimiyyah*), which requires the full implementation of *sharia*. But while the Egyptian Brotherhood gives lip service to the creation of a civil party and a civil state, it continues to adhere as an organization to the principle of *hakimiyyah*. It regards itself as a comprehensive movement that combines religion and the state and seeks to implement *sharia* in all aspects of human activity.

The Brotherhood's mission statement, which is permanently posted on its official Arabic-language website,³ defines the Brotherhood as a Muslim community (*jama'ah*) that preaches for and demands the rule of Allah's law (*tahkim shar' allah*). It recapitulates the Brotherhood creed first formulated at its fifth conference (January 1939) that declares that Islam is a complete and total system and is the final arbiter of life in all its aspects, in all nations and in all times.⁴ The "Reform Initiative," which the Brotherhood launched in March 2004, states clearly that the ultimate goal of Islamic reform is the implementation of *sharia*. It also says:

We have a clear mission—to implement Allah's law, on the basis of our belief that that it is the real, effective way out of all our problems—domestic or external, political, economic, social or cultural. That is to be achieved by forming the Muslim individual, the Muslim home, the Muslim government, and the state which will lead the Islamic states, reunite the scattered Muslims, restore their glory, retrieve for them their lost lands and stolen homelands, and carry the banner of the call to Allah in order to bless the world with Islam's teachings.⁵

In the Egyptian context, even the most ardent advocates of the *siyasah* strategy have neither accepted the separation of religion and state, nor abandoned the principle that Islam is both religion and state (*din wa-dawlah*). These advocates also uphold the

Brotherhood's identity as a religious *dawa* movement that is committed to Islam's total and universal nature. Thus, according to Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, one of the most outspoken "second generation" advocates of the political strategy, the most important achievement of the Brotherhood has been its success in spreading the concept of a universal and comprehensive Islam and of the inseparability of state and religion.⁶ Issam al-Aryan, another prominent second generation leader and promoter of the *siyasah* strategy, defined the Brotherhood's objective as:

the construction of a total revival on the foundations and principles of Islam, which begins with reforming the Muslim individual, the Muslim home and the Muslim society, continues with reforming government and restoring the international entity [*al-kiyan al-duwali*] of the Islamic nation, and ends with being the masters of the world [*ustadhiyat al-'alam*] through guidance and preaching [*bil-hidayah wal-irshad wal-dawa*].⁷

This concept, that the Brotherhood is a *guide* to society, obviously does not conform to the idea of a civil party, one among many that compete with one another without claiming possession of the absolute truth or pretending to guide the others. Neither is the Islamic concept of the "Guide" as the title of the Brotherhood's leader indicative of a democratic organization. The Brotherhood has, therefore, made it a point to refer to its leader as the "Chairman of the MB group" on its English-language website, to his deputy as the "Deputy Chairman" and so forth. On the Brotherhood's Arabic-language sites and in its publications, however, the leader is still the "General Guide" (*al-Murshid al-'Aamm*), the organization's highest institution is the "Guidance Bureau" (*Maktab al-Irshad*), etc.

Far from regarding itself as one political actor among many, the Brotherhood views itself as speaking for Islam. The Brotherhood's claim to be the true representative of Islam is reflected in its electoral slogan, "Islam is the Solution" (*al-Islam huwa al-hal*). The slogan has been sharply criticized, but the Brotherhood has refused to give it up. The MB believes their movement represents the real and true Islamic community. That is why the Brotherhood would not transform itself into a political party: if Islam is comprehensive, and the MB is Islam, then it cannot be reduced to a political party.

The Egyptian MB Party's Program

IN 2006 THE EGYPTIAN BROTHERHOOD MADE SEVERAL PUBLIC RELATIONS mistakes—including the display of force by MB students performing martial arts in al-Azhar University (10 December 2006)—that hurt its efforts to project itself as a

nonviolent, civil movement. These mistakes, in turn, helped the regime paint the Brotherhood as a violent movement that poses a threat to Egypt's national security. Facing the regime's pressure and wanting to improve its image and acquire legitimacy as a civil movement seeking democratic reform, the MB started in early 2007 to focus public attention on its future political party and its program. The Brotherhood announced that it had decided to establish a party and was on the verge of publishing the party's program. Although this party has not been established and its official program has not been published, unofficial draft texts of its platform—not formally endorsed by the Brotherhood—have been circulated and have aroused public debate.

The unofficial texts not only support the supremacy of *sharia* in the Brotherhood's future state, but also institutionalize it. Thus, the future party seeks to implement "the authority of Islamic Sharia" (*marja'iyat al-shari'ah al-Islamiyyah*) in the following manner:⁸

- The legislative branch should consult an assembly of religious scholars. The president of the state must also consult this assembly of religious scholars whenever he issues decisions that have legal power.
- Whenever there is a definitive *sharia* ruling, backed by a definite holy text (*nass*), the legislative branch has no authority to legislate differently. When a clear holy text is not available, the position of the assembly of scholars can be put to vote in the legislative branch. Rejecting that position requires an absolute majority of the members of the legislative branch.
- The assembly of religious scholars should be elected by religious scholars, and enjoy total freedom from the executive branch.

The Brotherhood thus seeks to institutionalize *sharia* rule by establishing its own version of the radical Shia concept of "rule of the jurist."

The draft program further says that the state has *fundamental religious functions*, as it is responsible for protecting and defending Islam. Those religious functions are represented by the head of state, and consequently *the head of state must be a Muslim*. That is also so because decisions on matters of war are *sharia* decisions, requiring that whoever makes them will be a Muslim. (Other drafts have specifically stated that the president must be a Muslim male.⁹) The draft declared as well, however, that the state will be based on the principle of citizenship (*muwatanah*), that all citizens will have equal rights and obligations, and that "the woman will enjoy all

her rights, to be practiced in conformity with the fundamental values of society.”

How does the MB square the equality of all citizens with the exclusion of non-Muslims and women from the top state position? What are “the fundamental values of society” that govern women rights, and who defines them? Those and similar questions emerged following the appearance of the drafts. First Deputy General Guide Muhammad Habib clarified what he described as the Brotherhood’s “red lines” on these issues: Copts and women, he stressed, cannot be the head of state.¹⁰ Moreover, the Brotherhood’s leadership rejected a proposal to insert wording into the draft that presented the authority of *sharia* as reflecting the people’s, rather than the divine, will. The rejected formulation stated: “The authority of the Islamic *sharia* is a constitutional principle chosen by the nation by its free will.... That authority is not imposed on the nation, and becomes an authority only due to the nation’s choice.”¹¹

On all of these issues, the draft program met with harsh criticism, including from within the MB itself. In defense of the draft, Abd al-Futuh argued that any misunderstanding resulted simply from “mistaken phrasing,” and that the assembly of religious scholars would be a consultative body only and that a woman could be the head of state. He did not say, however, that a non-Muslim could be head of state.¹²

The Brotherhood in Face of a Political Crisis

SINCE THE NOVEMBER 2005 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT has undertaken a series of measures that have aimed to deny the Brotherhood any political role. Those measures have included large-scale and ongoing arrests that have targeted, among others, top MB leaders; the use of military courts; a crackdown on the Brotherhood’s financial infrastructure; and constitutional amendments, adopted in March 2007, designed to undercut the Brotherhood’s electoral activity. As a consequence of these actions, not one Brotherhood-supported candidate was elected in the Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) elections of June 2007.

As the government has imposed these constraints, the Brotherhood’s political strategies have come under increasing criticism from within both the Islamist movement and the Brotherhood itself. In early 2007, Ali Abd al-Hafiz of Asyut University led a group of Brotherhood members out of the organization, and formed what he called “the Alternative Trend” (*al-Tayar al-Badil*). He called on the Brotherhood to separate itself entirely from the political realm, arguing that one cannot claim to be a religious and moral guide to society while, at the same time, competing in elections against those one pretends to guide.¹³

In January 2007, Abdullah al-Nafisi, a former Brotherhood member and renowned Islamist scholar, went even further. He argued that the Brotherhood’s political

strategy had exhausted the movement by involving it in endless skirmishes with the regime, and had few valuable achievements to show for it. By being so immersed in daily political struggles, the Brotherhood had lost strategic direction and long-term systematic thinking, and had become a burden on the Islamist movement itself. It was better for the Brotherhood to dissolve itself, he concluded, and transform itself into a school of thought.¹⁴

In a similar argument, Muhammad Salim al-Awa—a well-known Islamist thinker, former Brotherhood member and close associate of Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi—urged the Brotherhood in June 2007 to leave politics altogether for ten years. He pleaded that the movement should focus instead on educational, cultural and social work. The Brotherhood’s political action had given nothing to the Muslim people of Egypt, he argued, adding that the right way to fight injustice and tyranny is not by running for parliament, but by educating the people and caring for them.¹⁵

So far, the Brotherhood’s leadership has reacted both to the regime’s new constraints and to criticism from Islamists by staying its course. It did not resort to public protests and demonstrations in response to the regime’s crackdown, nor has it shown signs of changing its strategy. In response to its critics, the leadership has told its followers that the movement had seen worse repression in its long history, and that it has survived in the past through patience and perseverance.

Moreover, the MB leadership has rejected ideological and organizational change, asserting that the movement has a course, a set of “constants” or “fixed principles” (*thawabit*), and a historical heritage that must be adhered to. Whoever chooses to follow a different path that is not in harmony with the movement’s course is free to do so—but only *outside* the movement. As such, the fixed and constant principles of the MB must always be respected and followed, lest the movement disintegrate into factions and parties. It is “our belief that Islam is total, comprehensive, and an integrated whole ... it is unimaginable therefore that someone from the ranks should show up, calling for the breaking up of Islam, trying to push the movement into the unknown,” wrote Muhammad Habib.¹⁶ (Those “calling for the breaking up of Islam” are either the advocates of separating *siyasah* from *dawa*, or those that favor abandoning the political strategy altogether.)

The Brotherhood’s rejection of separating the religious and political realms derives from its view of itself as a comprehensive movement that is committed to the application of *sharia* in all realms of human life. But why has the Egyptian Brotherhood chosen to refrain from violent reaction? This is apparently explained by the Brotherhood’s doctrine of pursuing power.

That doctrine is based on the Brotherhood’s long-term *dawa* strategy of Islamizing society from the bottom up. According to this plan, the Brotherhood will be able to take power only at the stage of *tamkin*, when the movement will have won the hearts

and minds of a significant majority, if not all, of the people. At this stage, all the necessary steps to prepare society as whole for the embrace of a fully Islamic order will have been taken. These steps entail, among other things, the penetration and ideological indoctrination of such “influential institutions” as the military, the police, the media, educational institutions like al-Azhar, legal institutions and the parliament. Moreover, the external, international environment also needs to be prepared for the Brotherhood’s ascension to power.¹⁷

The Brotherhood’s reaction to the Mubarak regime’s imposition of constraints on its activities seems to reflect its assessment that the ground is not yet sufficiently prepared for it to attain power. The Brotherhood’s leaders have in fact publicly stated that the organization is not yet ready to assume complete power. The MB’s General Guide Muhammad Mahdi Akif has even characterized all the recent cases in which Islamists have assumed power—in Sudan, Iran, Afghanistan and Somalia—as failures, because those regimes were not raised to power by the people’s will. He added that the Brotherhood will be ready and able to assume power only when the people accept its message and desire its rule.¹⁸ In light of these statements, it appears the Brotherhood leadership has chosen to avoid making any provocative moves, as it does not want to provide the regime with a legitimate reason for taking measures that could put the movement at risk.

Hamas’s election victory in Gaza in 2006 and its subsequent formation of a government did not conform to the Egyptian Brotherhood’s concept of reaching power either. Both the domestic and external environments were unprepared for it. Indeed, in August 2007 Deputy General Guide Muhammad Habib stated that Hamas’s election victory had “negatively affected the political reality in Egypt and in the Arab world”¹⁹ (that is to say, Hamas’s victory has damaged the prospects of the Brotherhood in the region).

It should be clear that the Brotherhood has not ruled out the use of violence in principle. Although Akif did indeed say in March 2007 that violence would not be one of the Brotherhood’s means for reacting to its exclusion from the political system,²⁰ he later qualified that remark in August 2007. At that time, he did not abjure violence, but argued that violence should not be undertaken when the regime is favored in the balance of power and thus, likely to win in a conflict. As Akif said, “It is not in everyone’s interest that violence or a clash take place *now*, and it is not in [our] interest *now* to conduct resistance against the government, because it has millions who have been prepared to confront protests, to repress demonstrators, and to beat and arrest them” (emphasis added).²¹

In light of this, it seems that the Brotherhood’s leadership likely believes that there is little advantage in risking further trouble now. Rather, it apparently opts to prepare for the day after President Hosni Mubarak departs, when the Brotherhood

will have a chance to play a key role in shaping the new order. Patiently waiting for that time seems to be the Egyptian Brotherhood's chosen option—at least for now.

The Jordanian MB

THE JORDANIAN BRANCH OF THE BROTHERHOOD WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1945 TO pursue the Islamization of society, the creation of an Islamic state that would implement *sharia*, the conduct of jihad to liberate occupied Muslim lands, the unification of the Muslim nation, and the liberation of the globe from idols (*tawaghit*).²² In the 1950s and 60s, the Jordanian Brotherhood formed an alliance with the Jordanian state to oppose their common enemy, Nasser's pan-Arabism and socialism. That alliance ended in the 1980s, however, when Islamism became the main ideological rival to the monarchy.

Since then, the Jordanian MB has come under the influence of the radical, *takfiri* ideology of Said Qutb, Abdullah Azzam and others. It has also become increasingly influenced by Hamas. This has led to the Jordanian MB's increasingly confrontational posture toward the state and, in turn, the regime's efforts to contain and reduce the Brotherhood's power.

In 1992, the Jordanian MB formed a political party—the Islamic Action Front (IAF). One reason for the creation of this party was to protect the Jordanian MB's *dawa* activities from any measures the government might adopt against its political activities. The IAF's declared objectives include fostering a return to Islamic life and applying *sharia* in all fields, preparing the Muslim Nation for jihad against Zionist and imperialist enemies, helping the Palestinian cause and seeking to liberate Palestine achieving national unity and liberty, confronting imperialist and foreign influences, and establishing a system of government based on democratic principles and *shura*, or consultation.²³

The party's blueprint for a new Jordan, entitled "The Islamist Movement's Vision of Reform in Jordan," demands the implementation of Islamic law, and states that "*sharia* is the source of the laws and of legislation" (*al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyyah hiya masdar al-qawanin wal-tashri'at*). The document further states that the "Islamic Movement" seeks to establish Allah's *sharia* on earth and to construct life on the basis of justice and liberty, in a civil society whose source of authority is Islamic.²⁴ Far from abandoning the idea of creating an Islamic state that will implement *sharia*, the MB has established a political party committed to advancing that goal.

The Brotherhood and the Political Crisis in Jordan

THE MB AND IAF OPPOSE THE JORDANIAN GOVERNMENT ON THE MOST CRITICAL strategic issues. Several *fatwas* issued by the IAF's committee of *sharia* scholars denounced Jordan's alliance with the United States and its assistance to American and allied forces in Iraq. They also attacked the Jordanian king directly, stating that a ruler who allies himself with the enemies of his religion and his nation becomes one of them.²⁵ Another IAF fatwa proclaimed that Jordan's relations with Israel contradicted the *sharia* and must be severed. It said that maintaining those relations amounted to a betrayal of Allah, the Prophet and the Muslim Nation.²⁶ The IAF has additionally supported the Iran-Hezbollah-Syria-Hamas axis and maintained close contacts with the Syrian regime, despite that regime's persecution of the Syrian branch of the MB.

The Jordanian Brotherhood's strong ties to Hamas raise the question of whether it still is a truly Jordanian organization. Unlike their Egyptian counterparts, the Jordanian Brothers have stated clearly that their aim is to reach power without delay. Following Hamas's 2006 victory in Gaza, IAF leaders expressed confidence that they, too, would soon win an electoral victory, boasting that the Islamic movement was ready to assume political power.²⁷

As the Jordanian MB has become more radical, however, the government has moved to limit its power and influence. It passed legislation limiting the Brotherhood's *dawa* activities and implemented new measures to control the movement's financial arm and thus reduce its ability to sustain its country-wide network of social, educational and religious institutions. In July 2007 the MB escalated the stand-off with the government by withdrawing from municipal elections while they were in progress, accusing the government of fraud, and threatening to boycott the November 2007 legislative elections. The government responded by signaling that it might ban the Brotherhood from politics.

This confrontation led to an internal dispute within the Brotherhood. Ultimately, more pragmatic voices overcame the opposition of hardliners, and the Brotherhood participated in the legislative elections. But it won only 7 out of the 22 seats that it contested, compared to the 17 it had won in the previous elections.

The Jordanian Brotherhood subsequently claimed that the elections were rigged by the government. But according to reliable observers, the Brotherhood's electoral setbacks can not be ascribed wholly to the government's interference. Observers believe that some voters may not have supported the Brotherhood because of its close association with Hamas, whose popular appeal has been waning somewhat especially since its violent takeover of Gaza. In any case, the disaffection of voters with

the Brotherhood is cited as a major factor in that electoral defeat. As Muhammad Abu Rumman, the Jordanian expert on the MB, has explained:

The organization has totally failed to offer the public a convincing political discourse which would transcend resounding slogans. The people are fed up with those slogans and know for certain that they are unrealistic and incongruous with the citizen's concerns and grave economic conditions. The Brotherhood's electoral campaign was characterized by old, used-up phrases which exposed its candidates as being devoid of any realistic political vision.²⁸

This political failure was only one more demonstration of the Jordanian Brotherhood's crisis. That crisis has produced criticism of the MB leadership and calls for a dramatic change of direction. Even before the elections, Ibrahim Gharaibah, a former senior MB member, proposed sweeping organizational and ideological changes, arguing that the Brotherhood had outlived its original mission and that it had lost its direction. He further said that the Brotherhood must choose between three different courses of action—namely, *dawa*, politics or social work—because it was impossible to combine them. He urged the Brotherhood to become a social movement that would focus on organizing and leading the middle classes in the face of new challenges posed by globalization and privatization. Alternatively, he suggested that the Brotherhood movement could either transform itself completely into a political party or turn its political arm into a party that was truly independent of the wider movement.²⁹

An article on the Jordanian MB's official website offered yet another strategy, urging the Brotherhood to think "creatively" about new ways to confront repressive regimes. It proposed changing the rules of the political game—for example, by organizing large-scale civil disobedience. It called for an end to the "Meccan period" in the Brotherhood's thinking—an allusion to the time when the Prophet Mohammed and his followers were persecuted by the tribes of Mecca, which Mohammed ended abruptly by immigrating to Yathrib. The article further suggested that the MB should react more aggressively to regime repression and follow Hamas's example. "If the Brotherhood's bones are to be broken, why not break the enemy's bones too?," asked the writer.³⁰

MB Views of the "Turkish Model"

THE AKP'S JULY 2007 VICTORY IN THE TURKISH ELECTIONS GENERATED MIXED reactions amongst MB branches throughout the Arab world. Some saw the AKP's success as a vindication of the Brotherhood's strategic decision to participate in

electoral politics. Others expressed strong reservations to the very idea of considering the AKP an Islamist party, and voiced doubts about whether the AKP's victory should rightly be considered a victory for the Islamic movement.

Among the AKP's supporters, Shaykh Faisal Mawlawi, the head of Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyya, the Lebanese Brotherhood branch, had no problem with the AKP's professed commitment to secularism. The AKP did not abandon its Islamic principles, he said, but only tried to achieve what was possible in difficult conditions. Moreover, he argued that the AKP had succeeded in moving a step closer to an original Islamic solution that could be developed and implemented in the age of materialistic globalization.³¹ Abdelilah Benkirane, a leader of the Moroccan Justice and Development Party, was more skeptical. As he said, the AKP "are far more advanced in politics than us: we are still in the *dawa* phase. And they may be a role model, but they make too many concessions on Islam: they even serve alcohol at their official receptions, it's shameful."³²

For their part, the leaders of the Egyptian Brotherhood rejected any suggestion that their organization was analogous to the AKP. That was probably in reaction to calls for the Egyptian MB to emulate the AKP by shedding the traditional *Ikhwani* ideology, which some have described as unpopular and hence, useless in the political arena. Additionally, the Egyptian Brotherhood's leadership argued forcefully that the AKP was not the right role model for the Islamic movement.³³ Among other things, they claimed that the AKP's goal was merely to wield political power without generating a tangible, substantive Islamic change in society. The Brotherhood, by contrast, seeks political power for the purpose of creating a fully Islamic society. Furthermore, the Egyptian MB leaders pointed out that Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan adheres to the rules of the Turkish political system, to Turkey's constitution, and to the country's secular identity. This adherence to secularism—or the "AKP's choice," as the Egyptian leaders described it—cannot be the Brotherhood's position in any form. They said that Brotherhood seeks to revive the unified Islamic nation, restore its leading global role, and reestablish the Islamic Caliphate, whereas the AKP has no universal Islamic agenda—and even worse, seeks integration into Europe.

The MB and the United States

NEUTRALIZING AMERICAN OPPOSITION TO THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IS A KEY objective in the Egyptian MB's plan to prepare the way for its future assumption of political power. The Brotherhood's "Reform Initiative," which was launched in March 2004, aimed to persuade outsiders that the Brotherhood was in fact a "moderate Islamist" movement. The MB remains unwilling, however, to pay for dialogue with the United States by making any substantial ideological or political concessions. And as the

self-appointed leader of the Arab Islamic struggle, the Egyptian MB continues to hold firm to the idea that its overall project is in total conflict with that of the United States.

In the view of General Guide Akif, the policies of the United States are particularly hostile toward the Arab and Muslim world.³⁴ He stated in a recent missive that Islam is the only way to save the international community from American tyranny, which is bound to spread a “destructive chaos” (a swipe aimed at what the MB perceives to be the American notion of spreading “constructive chaos” in order to reform the Middle East) and destroy the whole world.

In another recent missive Akif called on young jihadis, like those who committed the suicide attacks in Morocco and Algeria, to direct their efforts, using all possible means, “against the real enemy of the Nation (Umma), the enemy which occupies, kills, desecrates and plunders ... in al-Quds, in Baghdad and in Kabul.”³⁵ Akif’s deputy, Muhammad Habib, said that the role of the Brotherhood was to resist “the American project, which seeks to bring the Nation down to its knees, to weaken its faith, to corrupt its morality, to plunder its resources, and to eradicate its cultural particularity.”³⁶

Second generation MB leaders like Issam al-Aryan have expressed interest in dialogue with the United States. But al-Aryan, too, has held firmly to the position that the Brotherhood’s project is fundamentally opposed to the American one. He welcomed dialogue “as a cultural and human value,” but at the same time pointed to a basic conflict between, on the one hand, “the growing American project of empire and hegemony,” and on the other, the Brotherhood’s project of constructing an Islamic revival, liberating Muslim lands from any foreign influence, unifying the Arabs, and creating an international Islamic order (*kiyan dawli islami*).³⁷

In July 2007 al-Aryan called for opening relations with the West, but he warned that the Muslim Brothers should not submit to Western dictates and unfair preconditions. The purpose of any dialogue with the West, as he saw it, was to demand that the West respect the right of Muslims to choose their way of life and to be ruled by the *sharia* (*wa-shari’atihim allati tahkumuhum*). The West should not impose another system on Muslim countries.³⁸

The Brotherhood and the Shi’a Question

WHILE EGYPTIAN BROTHERHOOD LEADERS HAVE VOICED CRITICISMS ABOUT IRAN’S role in Iraq and the Shi’a resurgence, they also see Iran and Hezbollah as major partners in the struggle against Israel and the U.S. In the past, this has meant that the Egyptian MB has routinely rejected the view that Iran constitutes a strategic threat to Arabs. Moreover, it has generally welcomed Iran’s nuclear program by reiterating the Iranian regime’s claim that the program was for peaceful purposes, while at the same time

adding that any possible military purpose would “create a sort of a balance” between the Arab and Islamic world, on the one hand, and Israel and its allies on the other.³⁹

The Egyptian MB has also tended not to show much concern over Iran’s efforts to spread Shi’a Islam in Arab countries. Akif has repeatedly dismissed the phenomenon of Sunni conversions to Shi’a Islam in Egypt as insignificant, and has rejected the idea of a rising, increasingly powerful “Shi’a crescent” as neither logical nor realistic.⁴⁰ His position has been that the rivalry between Sunnis and Shi’a should be postponed until the day when the Muslim Nation has won its battles with the West and the Muslims have recovered all their rights.

In May 2007, however, the Egyptian Brotherhood’s public pronouncements about Iran and the Shi’a as a whole seemed to change somewhat after meetings between the United States and Iran were announced. Akif, for instance, warned that such negotiations were likely to make Iran the dominant regional actor and thus would threaten the power of Arab Sunni states.⁴¹ More recently, the Deputy General Guide Habib said that Iran’s role in the Middle East was “raising concerns,” and that Iran was seeking to enlarge its sphere of influence into Arab societies. He added, however, that Iran’s strategy was a legitimate response to American policies in the region, and roundly criticized what he called the “Arab moderate axis” for serving American interests. He further urged Arab countries to stand up to the United States and support Islamic “resistance projects” (*mashru’at al-muqawamah*) worldwide.⁴²

Generally speaking, the Jordanian MB’s attitude toward Iran and toward Shiism as a whole appears to be much less coherent than that of the Egyptian branch. In fact, the MB’s Jordanian branch appears to be internally deeply divided on the Shi’a question. The *takfiri*, anti-Shi’a sentiment within its ranks conflicts with its professed solidarity with Hamas, Iran’s ally. Therefore, while the Jordanian MB highly values Iran’s support of the Palestinian cause, it has also been deeply critical of Iran’s role in the destruction, sectarianism, and violence against Sunnis in Iraq, going so far as to allege that Iran actually facilitated the American invasion of that country. It has also been claimed that Iran helped the United States topple the Sunni Taliban regime in Afghanistan.⁴³

Conclusion

IN BOTH EGYPT AND JORDAN, THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD’S PARTICIPATION IN electoral politics has not occasioned any changes in its basic ideology or objectives. The MB remains committed to the creation of an Islamic state. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the Egyptian MB’s draft party program calls for a state ruled by *sharia*. The novelty of the draft program lies in the way the MB seeks to institutionalize

that rule, namely through the assembly of jurists. That may help explain, incidentally, the Egyptian Brotherhood's professed solidarity with Iran, which first implemented the concept of rule of the jurists during its revolution in 1979, in addition to the Brotherhood's identifying with Iran's anti-American and anti-Israeli positions. From the MB's point of view, Islamic parties like Turkey's AKP represent an adjustment to new global realities and a desire to integrate into the global system whereas by contrast, the Iranian regime, like the MB, rejects the current world order, and seeks to construct an alternative, Islamic one.

The crisis in which the MB organizations in both Egypt and Jordan find themselves is very much a product of the MB being both a *dawa* movement, committed to the creation of an Islamic order, and a political actor that is forced to work within the existing framework of nation states and popular politics. Despite the ideological incongruities and incoherence that these dual approaches and roles produce, the MB has shown itself to be unwilling to alter its basic ideological agenda or to modify its organizational structure. Some point to a generation gap inside the Brotherhood and presume that a younger generation is more pragmatic and political and less ideological than the old guard. They argue that this younger generation will ultimately transform the MB into a political organization, which will, in turn, moderate the Brotherhood's radical ideology. In fact, however, the generation gap does *not* correspond to an ideological one. Although they may differ in their choice of tactics, the "second generation" leaders in Egypt share the ideological commitments of their elders regarding the Brotherhood's objectives.

Muhammad Abu Rumman, the Jordanian journalist and expert on the Islamist movements, has suggested that Arab Islamists have tolerated and even justified the ideological stagnation within their movements by the fact that their adherents are too preoccupied with state repression to be able to develop and change. But the Turkish Islamist movement, he remarks, was also besieged and persecuted for decades, but its leaders nonetheless managed to develop, innovate and thus lead the movement out of the constraints imposed on it by the regime.⁴⁴ Neither can regime repression explain the modest electoral gains of the Moroccan Brotherhood's Justice and Development Party. According to the Egyptian analyst Khalil Anani, those electoral gains may indicate that Arab societies as a whole are not deeply convinced of the effectiveness or desirability of "the Islamic solution" offered by the Islamists.⁴⁵

The Muslim Brotherhood's generation-old project is being blocked, and the movement is being called on to reexamine its objectives and strategies. So far the Brotherhood has not opted to make any fundamental change. It survived major crises in the past by being able to exploit opportunities and turn adversities to its advantage. But the question of how the Muslim Brotherhood will emerge from its present crisis remains to be answered.

NOTES

1. Khalil al-'Anani, "Hal Iktamal Qaws Intikasad al-Islamiyyin al-'Arab?" <http://www.daralhayat.com/opinion/09-2007/item-20070926-42f60a75-c0a8-10ed-00c3-e8c477ec2c9e/story.html>, 27 September 2007.
2. Idris Lagrini, "Al-Harakat al-Islamiyyah al-Musharikah fi al-Mu`assasat al-Siyasiyyah fi al-Bilad al-'Arabiyyah wa-Turkiya," <http://www.islamismscope.com/index.php?art/id:220>; Amru Hamzawi, "Anmat Musharakat al-Harakat al-Islamiyyah fi al-Siyasah al-'Arabiyyah," *Al-Hayat* (24 July 2007); 'Abd al-Salam Tawil, "Qira`ah fi al-Masar al-Siyasi li-Hizb al-'Adalah wal-Tanmiyah al-Maghribi," www.islamismscope.com/index.php?art/id:332; Husam Tamam, "Al-Maghrib-Dars fi al-'Alaqah bayna al-Da'awi wal-Siyasi, fi Manhajiyat al-Tamyiz wa-Idaratih Waqi'iyah," <http://www.islamonline.net/arabic/Daawa/movement/2006/07/03c.shtml>, 25 July 2006.
3. www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=120&SecID=0.
4. Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 14.
5. www.ikhwanonline.com, 3 March 2004.
6. "Inside the Muslim Brotherhood—an Interview with Abdul Moneim Abu El-Foutouh," *Islamism Digest* (August 2006), www.cfsot.com/publications/ISLAM~2.pdf.
7. "Dr. al-'Aryan Yaktub: Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun wa-intikhabat Majlis al-Shura, limadha Nashtarik?" <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=28550&SecID=390>, 22 May 2007.
8. "Barnamaj Hizb al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin, al-Isdar al-Awwal," <http://www.islamonline.net/arabic/Daawa/2007/08/ikhwan.pdf>, 25 August 2007.
9. Muhammad Baha`, "Barnamij Hizb al-Ikhwan- Iyjabiyat wa-Silbiyyat," http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=article_C&cid=11899593748568&pagename=Zone-arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout, 24 September 2007.
10. First Deputy General Guide Muhammad Habib, quoted in http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1184649919338&pagename=zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout, 16 August 2007.
11. "Ta'dilat Mufakkir Qubti 'ala Barnamaj al-Ikhwan," http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=articleA_C&cid=1188044035567&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALout, 3 September 2007.
12. "Abu al-Futuh Yahki Qissat Barnamij al-Ikhwan," http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1190886237309&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout, 9 October 2007.
13. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (30 June 2007); www.masrawy.com/News/2007/Egypt/Politics/May/28/ikhwan-asiut.aspx, 28 May 2007. See also Mamduh Thabit, "Qiyadi Munshaq 'an al-Ikhwan Yad'u ila 'Tayar Badil," www.almasry-alyoum.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=62839, 31 May 2007; 'Abdullah al-Tahawi, "Kuntu Ikhwanian," www.masr.20at.com/newArticle.php?sid=10315, 21 May 2007; "Al-Tayar al-Badil," <http://elbarode.maktoobblog.com/?post=340200>.

14. 'Abdullah ben Fahd al-Nafisi, "Al-Halah al-Islamiyyah fi Qatar," *Al-Manar al-Jadid*, no. 37 (January 2007), www.almanaraljadeed.com/show.asp?newid=31783&pageid=18.
15. "Al-'Awa: Ad'u al-Ikhwan ila Tark al-'Amal al-Siyasi," *Islamonline* (10 June 2007), http://www.islamonline.net/servelet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1181062529733&pagename=Zone-Arabic-News/NWALayout.
16. <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=29851&SecID=391>, 21 July 2007; <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=30193&SecID=391>, 5 August 2007; Muhammad Habib, http://www.islamonline.net/servelet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1184649919338&pagename=zone-arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout, 16 August 2007.
17. "Al-Watha`iq al-Sirriyyah lil-Ikhwan al-Muslimin" (The Secret Documents of the MB), *Al-Musawwar Weekly* (3 June 1994): 20-23, 70-73; "Khuttat al-Ikhwan lil-Istila` 'ala al-Hukm" (The MB's Plan to Take Over Power), *Al-Musawwar Weekly* (10 June 1994): 14 -19, 78.
18. Interview in <http://www.alwatan.com.kw/Default.aspx?pageId=84&MgDid=483589>, 27 March 2007.
19. www.ikhwanonline.com, 15 August 2007.
20. Interview in <http://www.alwatan.com.kw/Default.aspx?pageId=84&MgDid=483589>, 27 March 2007.
21. Interview in <http://www.al-araby.com/docs/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=130746>.
22. "The Objectives and the Means" of the Jordanian MB, posted on the organization's official site, www.ikhwan-jor.org/ikhwan_jo_ahdaf.htm.
23. IAF's Fundamental Regulations-The Seventh Edition, posted since 1 August 2002 on the IAF's official website, www.jabha.net/body4.asp?field=doc&id=2.
24. <http://www.jabha.net/aslah.ASP>, accessed 17 September 2007.
25. www.jabha.net/body5.asp?field=ftawa&id=3.
26. "Fatwa Shar'iyyah Sadirah 'an Lajnat 'Ulama al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyyah fi Hizb al-'Amal al-Islami," www.jabha.net/body5.asp?field=ftawa&id=15, 8 April 2002.
27. IAF leader Zaki Bani Irshid interview on www.ikhwanonline.com, 13 May 2006.
28. Muhammad Abu Rumman, "al-Ikhwan ba'd al-Hazimah," *Al-Ghad*, 22 November 2007, <http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?article=7597>.
29. Ibrahim Gharabiah, "Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi Muwajahat al-Mustaqbal," <http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?article=6424>, 30 May 2007; Ibrahim Gharabiah, "Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun wa-Tahawwulat al-'Amal al-Siyasi," <http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?article=6462>, 5 June 2007.
30. Usama Abu Irshid, " Hamas Tudashshin Bidayat Nihayat 'al-Hiqbah al-Makkiyyah' fi al-Tafkir al-Ikhwani," <http://www.ikhwan-jor.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=672>, 22 June 2007.
31. <http://www.egyptwindow.net/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=6034>, 24 July 2007.
32. Quoted by Wendy Kristiansen, "Can Morocco's Islamists Check al-Qaida?" *Le Monde diplomatique* (August 2007), <http://mondediplo.com/2007/08/06morocco>.

33. Jum'ah Amin 'Abd al-'Aziz, *Al-Mas'alah al-Turkiyyah wa-Tawdhih al-Afham*," <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtId=30131&SecID=390>, 2 August 2007; Muhammad Mursi, "Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimun wal-Ahزاب al-Islamiyyah al-Mu'asirah," <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=30200&SecID=390>, 5 August 2007.
34. "Amrika Tanshur al-Fawdhah fi al-'Aalam," <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/print.asp?ArtId=28784&SecID=213>, 31 May 2007.
35. "Al-Mashru' al-Amriki al-Sahyuni," <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/print.asp?ArtID=27784&SecID=213>, 19 April 2007.
36. <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/print.asp?ArtID=28606&SecID=390>, 24 May 2007.
37. "Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimun wa-Amirika," www.ikhwanonline.com, 21 December 2005.
38. Issam al-'Aryan, "Hal Yumkin an Yatakarrar fi al-'Alam al-'Arabi ma Hadatha fi Turkya?" <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/print.asp?ArtID=30042&SecID=390>, 30 July 2007.
39. "Misr: al-Ikhwān al-Muslimun la Yumani'un fi Hiyazat Iran Silahan Nawawiyyan," *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (18 April 2006).
40. Akif in <http://www.alwatan.com.kw/Default.aspx?pageId=84&MgDid=483589>, 27 March 2007; <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/print.asp?ArtID=26281&SecID=210>, 11 February 2007.
41. <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/print.asp?ArtID=28784&SecID=213>, 31 May 2007.
42. www.ikhwanonline.com, 15 August 2007; http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1184649919338&pagename=zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout, 16 August 2007.
43. Muhammad al-Najjar, "Ikhwān al-Urdun wa-Iran-Bidayat Talaq am Muraja'at 'Alaqa?" <http://www.aljazeera.net/News/archive/archive?ArchiveId=1032410>, 12 February 2007.
44. Muhammad Abu Rumman, "Islamiyyu al-Sharq fi Hadhrat al-Ustadh Erdogan," <http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?article=6832>, 29 July 2007.
45. Khalil al-'Anani, "Hal Iktamal Qaws Intikasad al-Islamiyyin al-'Arab?," <http://www.daralhayat.com/opinion/09-2007/item-20070926-42f60a75-c0a8-10ed-00c3-e8c477ec2c9e/story.html>, 27 September 2007.