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2006

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The success of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in the November-December 2005 Egyptian parliamentary elections—followed as it was by the resounding victory of Hamas in the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections—has bolstered both its domestic and international standing. The MB is now viewed as a possible alternative to the present Egyptian regime just when President Hosni Mubarak's era is coming to a close and Egypt is approaching a delicate succession process. By tracing the main lines of the MB's ideological discourse and political involvement following the elections, this article will explore if and how their results have influenced the movement's thinking and strategies. [1]

An Action Plan

While many domestic and foreign observers have expressed concern that the MB may now be contemplating a political takeover in Egypt, MB spokesmen have made a point of allaying such fears, stating that the movement is still far from assuming power. [2] The MB General Guide Muhammad Mahdi 'Akif asserted that the movement's first priority is not to gain the presidency of the state but to advance reform by educating the people. [3] This declaration accurately reflects a strong view within the MB that conditions are not yet ripe for them to be in power.

What, then, is the movement's agenda? Shortly after the elections, 'Issam al 'Aryan, head of the MB's Political Bureau, presented what he described as an action plan for the movement's next phase. [4] In the domestic arena, he enumerated four goals: to crystallize the MB's political project and to explain it to both the public and the country's elites; to achieve a balance among the organizational, educational, political and social activities of the MB; to translate the public's excited emotional support into productive political and social participation; and to consolidate cooperation and form partnerships with other compatible intellectual and political groups.

On the international front, the plan focuses on what it refers to as the threat to Egyptian and Arab national security. That threat emanates from the despotism and self-centeredness of the ruling elites, from the "Zionist entity" Israel and from American intervention in the region's affairs. In response, the MB proposes taking five steps: cooperating with elites and political forces against "the American and Zionist project"; mobilizing Arab and Islamic public opinion against "the project of hegemony and barbaric globalization"; building up a resistance force based on popular solidarity and elite consensus that will thwart this hegemonic project and demand reform of governments and the economy; working to balance relations with the American people and opening a dialogue with the American government to discuss, on an equal footing, a U.S. withdrawal from the region; and opening a

dialogue with Europe that will help the United States out of its military quandary and encourage Europe to bear its responsibility for "exporting the Zionist project to our countries." The MB plan also calls for a review of worsening minority problems in the region and for blocking what it terms Zionist and American efforts to capitalize on historical grievances of minorities in order to threaten the region's states and peoples.

Al-'Aryan said that the action plan fits within the context of "the MB's strategic plans." This larger project starts with reforming the self and gradually progresses to the wider stage—to forming the Muslim home; to guiding society; to liberating the homeland from any foreign rule or domination, be it military, political, economic, spiritual or cultural; to reforming government; and finally to the restoration of the international entity of the Muslim Nation (*al-kiyan al-dawli lil-ummah al islamiyyah*).

Clarifying the Message

The first item on the domestic agenda—namely, the crystallization and clarification of the MB's political project—came in response to widespread criticism that the movement's political message is vague and often self-contradictory, and that it purposefully avoids taking clear, detailed positions on matters of national policy. Since the elections, MB leaders have made statements about political and economic reform but have continued to speak in general terms. No comprehensive document outlining the MB's political program has been issued since the publication of the MB's Reform Initiative on 3 March 2004.

In February, for instance, an article entitled "What Will Happen If We Take Charge of the Government" by Deputy General Guide Muhammad Al-Sayyid Habib discussed aspects of the electoral and governmental systems that the MB endorses. But beyond saying that the constitution should state the powers of authorities based on the rules of Islamic law, it did not touch upon the question of what kind of state the movement seeks to set up or what place Islam will have in it. [5] Habib did not even refer in that context to the formula often used by MB moderates, who describe the MB's objective as the establishment of a civil state with Islam as its source of authority.

One indication of Habib's view on this question did come out in the same article, in the discussion of the status of Egypt's Coptic Christians. Habib wrote that the MB considers the Copts to be citizens who enjoy the full rights of citizenship (*muwatanah*), and that "consequently they have the full right to assume public posts, except the president of the state." That exception obviously reflects the Islamic principle that non-Muslims cannot rule Muslims. It raises the question of what "the full rights of citizenship" actually means, however, and suggests continued adherence to the vision of an Islamic state in which Copts have a secondary status as merely "people of the pact" (*dhimmis*). In the English language version of Habib's article, posted on the MB's official English website, the Copts have the full right to assume public posts "including that of the head of state." [6]

This ambiguity in the MB's public position on the nature of its planned state, and its repercussions for non-Muslims, has been a constant source of concern for the Copts—a concern that has naturally increased since the MB's strong showing in the parliamentary elections. Immediately after the elections, Guidance Council member 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, 'Issam al-'Aryan and other MB leaders met with

Coptic public figures in an effort to assuage their fears and, no less importantly, to limit the negative impact of such fears on the MB's international image. [7]

In those meetings, the MB representatives said that the Brotherhood no longer supported the 1996 fatwa requiring non-Muslims to pay a poll tax (*jizya*), which had been issued by the MB's then-General Guide Mustafa Mashhur. [8] But while Islamic reformers explicitly maintain that the dhimmah pact is obsolete and that the Copts are equal citizens as stated in the Constitution, the MB has not yet formally adopted this position. The MB representatives assured the Copts only that the movement was not aiming to set up a religious Islamic state, saying that it sought to establish a civil state (*dawlah madaniyyah*) with an Islamic source of authority (*marja'iyyah*). By "source of authority", they said, they meant Islam as a civilization and a social and political system; it consisted of general principles that would govern the functioning of a state with a Muslim majority. Do not democrats everywhere respect their nation's superior source of authority?, they asked. Does not a democrat in Germany, for example, respect the state's source of authority in rejecting any Nazi party? [9]

The Coptic representatives found the formula of a "civil state with a religious source of authority" much too vague, and urged the MB to issue an official document clarifying its position. [10] Such a document has yet to appear. When asked about the MB's position regarding the Copts, General Guide 'Akif replied: "We in the MB apply Allah's rules in dealing with them." [11]

The MB's attitude toward other minorities reflects a similar approach. When Alexandria's Administrative Court issued a ruling on April 4, 2006 instructing the Interior Ministry to allow a citizen's identity card to state that the holder was a Baha'i, the Brotherhood reacted with outrage. In the May 3, 2006 parliamentary debate on the ruling, MB deputies said that the Baha'is were apostates who should be killed. Quoting a *hadith* attributed to the Prophet Mohammed to support their position, they declared that they would draft a law making Baha'ism a crime and branding the Baha'is apostates. [12]

'Akif had responded to previous criticism of the MB for linking religion and politics and for seeking to establish a theocracy by saying that the MB is, in fact, proud of linking politics with religion and struggles to do so. Any conception of Islam that limits it to the sphere of worship (*'ibadat*) and morals (*akhlaq*), and that dispossesses it of its role in leading mankind and governing human affairs (*siyasat umuriha*), contradicts both the truth of Islam as presented by the Prophet Mohammed and the will of Allah. [13] In answer to the same criticism, 'Akif's deputy Habib stated on the MB's English-language website: "Islam, as Imam al-Banna said, is a comprehensive program that encompasses all aspects of life: it is a state and a country, a government and people, ethics and power, mercy and justice, resources and wealth, defense and advocacy, an army and an idea, a true belief and correct acts of worship." [14]

Friction Within

Where the election results have enlivened genuine debate within the MB is on the matter of al-'Aryan's second domestic action point—"ensuring a balance between the various dimensions of MB activity"—which goes to the heart of the movement's nature and strategies. The debate is between the two main ideological currents within

the movement: the *dawa* trend, which upholds the MB's traditional, pan-Islamic emphasis on missionary, educational and social work, and on constructing a massive, quasi-secretive organization; and the "political" current, which views political action as the most effective way of achieving the movement's objectives. This debate is not new, but the MB's electoral gains have given it a new significance.

The *dawa* approach is based on the doctrine formulated by the Brotherhood's founder, Hassan al-Banna. He envisioned the Islamization of society, the creation of an Islamic state and the eventual restoration of the Caliphate as a gradual, "bottom-up" process. (This is the doctrine to which al-'Aryan referred when he spoke of "the MB's strategic plans.") The first task is to form the Muslim individual by making the individual adopt the MB's vision; next comes the task of forming the Muslim family and, then, the Muslim society. During these stages, the movement's activity should be solely missionary and educational. Only after society as a whole endorses the MB's Islamic message will the movement be in a position to start implementing its vision of an Islamic state in public and political life. And only at that stage should the movement shift its energies from missionary and educational work to political work. Although al-Banna was actively involved in politics, he held that the MB should focus on education (tarbiyah). "When the people have been Islamized," he argued, "a truly Muslim nation will naturally evolve." [15] The MB should exercise power only when the nation had been truly Islamized and is thereby prepared to accept the principles for which the Brotherhood stands. [16]

The *dawa* approach is advocated by both MB leaders from the "old guard" (who, like 'Akif, were formed in the organization's Secret Apparatus and in President Nasser's prisons) and younger members who were formed by the MB educational system and subscribe to its traditional message. The political approach is promoted mostly by MB leaders from "the second generation"—that is, student activists of the 1970s who rose through the ranks as trade union leaders and are more open to politics and negotiation. These leaders, such as Abu al-Futuh and al-'Aryan, have given the movement an increasingly higher profile in the media and in politics. For years Abu al-Futuh has been arguing openly that political change will be achieved not through *dawa* but through the ballot box, and that the MB should transform itself from a *dawa* movement into a political party. [17]

The MB's electoral gains have raised the question of whether the time for the MB to shift focus has arrived. With large segments of society so clearly supporting the Brotherhood's vision, shouldn't the movement now seek power through full-fledged political work? [18] 'Akif referred to this issue when he said that the harbingers of victory of the MB's project, and of society's readiness to accept the Islamic state, are now coming from Palestine and other Muslim countries. [19] 'Akif used the term tamkin ("empowerment" of the MB), a key concept in al-Banna's teachings that relates to the stage at which society is ripe for the MB to start implementing Islamic rule. [20]

An entry on the MB website asked if this stage had indeed been reached, and the reply is telling. The electoral gains of the MB and Hamas do indicate that stage has begun, it said, as a large segment of the population now demands the implementation of an Islamic system in public affairs, politics and legislation. Yet this achievement has been the fruit, not of political work, but of the missionary, educational and social

work of the MB—work that has spread the movement's thought and assured it a public following. While the election victory might cause some to expect that the movement would now focus on political work, the opposite is true. It will focus on the educational work that provides the basis for further political gains. [21]

A similar argument holds that the MB was set up by al-Banna to reflect Islam's total, comprehensive message. It was formed as a social, missionary, economic and political movement in one, and not just as a political movement. It was the movement's social basis that secured its survival, moreover. Had it been a political movement only, it would not have survived. [22]

Leaders favoring a more political approach, meanwhile, are openly pressing for the MB to move away from what they call its siege mentality, which was fostered by years of persecution, and from its related emphasis on its own organizational activities. They want the MB to engage other political actors in both the opposition and the government, and to formulate a clear political message that proposes specific solutions to remedy Egypt's many ills. [23] But proponents of the old order contend that the movement's internal organization is not only the foundation of its social base and the machinery that assures its survival, but also—as the parliamentary elections in Egypt and Palestine demonstrated—the key to mobilizing its supporters and to effecting change. [24]

The MB's official website posted a detailed explication of one of al-Banna's missives, "What Are We Calling the People To," with a section asserting that the movement should not seek power at this stage. [25] Quoting al-Banna, it maintained that it would be a mistake to assume power now and make the state responsible for educating the people. Just as the Prophet Mohammed spent thirteen years in Mecca solving no problems and making no laws but, rather, consolidating the belief in God in people's hearts, so the MB is committed to forming a truly Islamic society and nation from which the Islamic government will then emerge. [26] In the same vein, a top MB official argued that the MB should rule only when society is prepared to accept its rule, and at the present time it is not. He said that it would be impossible to deal with such problems as interest banking, tourism and the sale of alcohol before citizens had reached "full belief in the implementation of Allah's Law." [27]

To Be or Not To Be a Political Party

A related internal debate continues over the question of setting up a political party. In principle, the MB could have done so and applied for an authorization from the state. Refusal to grant permission to a political entity that won twenty percent of the seats in Parliament in a democratic election would de-legitimize the state and give the MB a moral victory, but the MB has yet to go down this road. Its formal position is that its legitimacy comes from the masses that support it and not from the state committee in charge of authorizing political parties; it will set up a party only when that committee ceases to exist and real freedom to form political parties prevails. [28]

Those opposed to forming a party can point to the experience of the Hizb al-Wasat al-Jadid ("New Center Party"), which was established in 1996 by MB members who split from the movement, and is still fighting a legal battle for official recognition as a political party. To get around the constitutional prohibition against religious parties,

Hizb al-Wasat al-Jadid has defined itself as "a civil party with a religious source of authority [*marja'iyyah islamiyyah*]," [29] "a civil party with an Islamic background [*khalfiyah islamiyyah*]," [30] and "a civil party with an Islamic reference point" [31]—all to no avail.

But the MB's reluctance to form a political party, let alone transform itself into one, reflects the consideration that such a party would then be just one of many, expressing just one more point of view, and would lose the advantage of claiming to represent the one, absolute, divine truth. MB leaders stress, therefore, that if and when they do set up a political party, it would not replace the movement—which would go on as a general Islamic society—but would be only a much removed extension of the movement. [32]

The absence of a political party has obviously not prevented the MB, under the cover of recognized parties and independents, from taking part in parliamentary elections in the last two decades. This participation was recently attacked by al-Qaeda's ideologue Ayman al-Zawahiri. In response, the MB defended its recognition of the nation as the source of power and its support of free and fair elections by emphasizing that it also holds that all laws issued by Parliament must conform to Islamic *sharia*. [33]

Reaching Out

The absence of a political party has also not prevented the MB from implementing the fourth action point on al-'Aryan's domestic agenda—consolidating cooperation and forming partnerships with other intellectual and political groups that share common interests. The MB's recent rapprochement with the Nasserists and the Arab Democratic Nasserist Party is especially significant. While old guard MB leaders have long viewed Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser as the archenemy responsible for their movement's persecution and their own personal travails during the 1960s and 1970s, the second generation leaders, who did not share that experience, see today's Nasserists as potential allies in the struggle against the Mubarak regime, the United States, globalization and Israel. They calculate that an alliance with them, for example in "The Patriotic Front for Change" (a coalition of opposition groups, which was formed on October 8, 2005 and included the MB, the leftist al-Tajammu' Party, the Nasserist Party, al-Wafd, Kifayah and smaller groups) would increase the MB's legitimacy among elite groups, which remain wary of it, and make it harder for the government to isolate the Brotherhood.

This rapprochement has met considerable opposition within the movement. When the old guard member Shaykh Muhammad Hilal verbally attacked Nasser's personality, other MB leaders—including 'Akif, who spent twenty years in prison following Nasser's 1954 crackdown on the Brotherhood—apologized. [34] These apologies angered many in the movement's ranks, reportedly forcing Muhammad Khairat al-Shatir, Second Deputy to the General Guide, to declare that the apologies were merely tactical and that what Hilal had said was a true expression of MB belief. [35]

Another conciliatory gesture that generated internal dissent was directed toward Egypt's secular and liberal elite. In December, Abu al-Futuh and another second generation leader, Hisham Hamami, paid a symbolic and unprecedented visit to the author Najib Mahfuz, considered by many in the MB to be a heretic because of his

book Awlad Haretna ("The Children of Our Neighborhood"). The visit, and what was said during it, was strongly condemned by many in the MB ranks, who came close to labeling 'Abu al- Futuh an apostate. [36] The resistance to these overtures came not only from the old guard, but also from middle-aged and younger members educated in the movement's *dawa* institutions. Al-'Aryan has complained that the curricula in these institutions, developed when the MB was being persecuted, are imbued with *salafi* radicalism and suspicion of others and need to be reformed. [37]

Abu al-Futuh described his visit to Mahfuz as a way of assuring artists, writers, and others with an interest in literature and culture that the MB is not against creative freedom and culture. [38] He was supported to some degree by Habib, who declared that the MB "in principle is not against culture, arts and creativity," and that political reform should include freedom of the press, of criticism and of thought. He emphasized, though, that the people's representatives should "bring to accountability those bodies or institutions that promote pornography, homosexuality or moral perversion under the guise of creativity. It is essential to subject those so-called creative works to examination and review by specialized and expert people." [39]

Proceeding with Caution

It is significant that al-'Aryan's domestic action plan includes only measures designed to increase the MB's cohesion, effectiveness and attractiveness as a political movement, and makes no reference to any specific objectives in the area of political reform. This emphasis may well reflect a realistic assessment that reform is highly unlikely right now. Moreover, by elevating the MB's stature, the parliamentary elections made it a greater threat to the regime. As was reported, the majority of the young voters born in 1983 and added to the voter registry before the elections, cast their ballots for MB candidates. [40] And given the MB's proven electoral power, the government will find it more difficult to justify Gamal Mubarak's inheriting the presidency from his father on the grounds that no widely supported, viable political alternative exists. The MB thus had to take into account that the elections actually reduced the regime's tolerance for its activities.

The government has indeed made this attitude known. It has pressured the MB by harassing members of its parliamentary block, which provoked the government's ire by attacking its record on a variety of issues. According to MB reports, the security services obstructed social activities of the MB deputies in Parliament, warned local officials in provincial administrations to avoid contact with MB deputies, and instructed provincial village notables to discourage their people from seeking out MB deputies to help solve their problems. [41] More specifically, the authorities have sought to minimize the MB's public opposition on two issues—the extension of the emergency laws and, more importantly, Gamal Mubarak's succession.

In force since 1981, the emergency laws allow the government to arrest people and hold them indefinitely without charge or trial, as well as to prosecute civilians in military tribunals. It allowed the Egyptian authorities to arrest about three thousand MB members during the wave of street demonstrations for change in the Spring of 2005, and apparently those arrests persuaded the Brotherhood to strike a deal with the authorities, in which it dropped its opposition to Mubarak's reelection that September in exchange for the members' release. During the presidential campaign, President

Mubarak declared that he wanted to replace these laws with anti-terrorism legislation, but now maintains that the new legislation will require up to two years to complete. As a result, the government argued, the emergency laws, which were to have expired in May, needed to be extended to prevent a legal vacuum.

Another hurdle to the MB's political ascendancy is clause 76 of the Egyptian constitution, which deals with presidential elections and formerly required a single candidate, nominated by Parliament and endorsed by a referendum. Amended in February 2005, the clause now provides for multiple-candidate elections, but it sets conditions for nominating candidates that, in effect, prevent the MB from selecting any. The MB had intended to use the elections to local councils, scheduled for April 2006, to increase the number of its elected public officials—officials needed under clause 76 to endorse presidential candidates. The government frustrated this strategy in February 2006, however, by passing legislation that postponed the local elections for two years. The MB reacted furiously. While stressing that the Brotherhood had no plans to contest the next presidential election, [42] its spokesmen accused the government of postponing the elections simply to deny the MB the ability to field or support a presidential candidate. [43]

The MB then launched a protest campaign against the extension of the emergency laws. It consisted largely of student demonstrations on university campuses. In response, the government arrested dozens of activists, including a member of the Guidance Council who directed the student activities and who had criticized the government and Gamal Mubarak's succession. [44] MB members interpreted the arrests as means of acquiring a bargaining chip: the government would release the detainees in exchange for the MB's softening of its opposition to the emergency laws. [45]

Likewise, the MB interpreted other government actions—an accusation that the MB was training volunteers to fight in conflict zones like Iraq and Palestine in order to acquire fighting skills, [46] and an announcement on April 19 that a new takfiri terrorist cell had been uncovered—as a rationale for extending the emergency laws and for continuing to deny legal status to the MB. [47] The editor-in-chief of the MB's official website implied that the government actually orchestrated the Easter attacks on Coptic churches in Alexandria, and the ensuing violent clashes between Copts and Muslims, to serve as yet another justification for the emergency laws. [48] The MB realized that the extension of the emergency laws could not be stopped, however, and settled for merely registering its opposition. The laws were indeed extended on April 29, five days after the terror attack on Dhahab in Sinai, with very little public protest.

The Politics of Succession

Regarding the crucial issue of Gamal's succession, the MB's position is now murky. Before constitutional clause 76 was amended, the MB clearly opposed that succession, but recently it has been less forthright. [49] On the declaratory level, movement spokesmen have stated their opposition to the succession "in principle" [50] (which apparently leaves room for compromise), but also "under any circumstances." [51] The MB's Guidance Bureau was reportedly split on the matter. 'Akif and his allies were said to have argued that the movement must strongly object

to the succession or lose credibility with the public and with others in the political opposition. But a second group supposedly held that opposing Gamal's succession would wrongly divert the MB from more important issues that affect the movement's long-term interests. Rather than opposing the succession, the MB should try to exploit the regime's difficulties with getting the succession through in order to end the state of emergency and change clause 76. [52] This position was reportedly advanced by al-Shatir, who is said to be a key figure in the MB's organization despite his low media profile. [53]

There has indeed been public speculation that the MB might strike a deal with the government, reducing the latter's difficulties with passing Gamal's succession. Members of the ruling NDP's Policies Committee, which is headed by Gamal Mubarak, were rumored to have met with MB leaders to secure the MB's neutrality and nonparticipation in opposition activities against the succession. But MB spokesmen denied those rumors; Habib stated that the movement opposed Gamal inheriting the presidency and had had no contact with the ruling party on this issue. [54] Muntasar al-Zayyat, an Egyptian expert on Islamist movements and a former member of Jama'at al-Jihad, has nonetheless suggested that, eventually, the MB will covertly cooperate with the regime to help it pass Gamal's succession. [55]

The possibility of a deal between the MB and the government has generated much internal debate on the MB main website. Entries against any deal have advanced numerous arguments: A deal would have no value because periods of calm in the MB's relations with the regime are inevitably followed by escalation of repressive measures designed to block the movement's political activities; the regime has nothing to offer because it refuses to legalize the MB and rejects its demands for political reform; even if the regime granted a license to a MB political party, it could revoke that license at any time unless it abrogated its political parties legislation; and the MB must oppose Gamal's succession because it contradicts the very reform the MB calls for, because it is rejected by the movement's grassroots members, and because not doing so would undermine the MB's credibility among the Egyptian masses. [56] More circumspect entries, however, warned that the MB should neither lead a civil disobedience movement against the succession nor join other opposition groups in street demonstrations on the issue because that would simply intensify of the government's campaign against the MB. [57]

This campaign has come as no surprise. Within the last year, governmental efforts to weaken the opposition and thus prevent large-scale protests against Gamal's succession led to the collapse of two vocal opposition parties, al-Ghad and al-Wafd, and indicated what lay in store for the MB. [58] A government-orchestrated public scandal directed at the General Guide fits the pattern. Remarks 'Akif made in a press interview were called insulting to Egypt and Egyptians, which created a public uproar and which the MB saw as an attempt to discredit it in advance of the presidential succession. [59]

The MB and the West: Dialogue or Conflict?

The MB's achievement in the parliamentary elections, along with the defeat of the liberal and secular alternative, accentuated the West's quandary about whether or not to engage the MB in a dialogue on the future of Egypt. Simultaneously, it enlivened

debate within the movement regarding its attitude toward, and future relations with, the United States. Al-Zawahiri has already accused the Brotherhood of collaborating with the United States in spreading the thesis that al-Qaeda's violent acts are counterproductive. [60]

MB discussions propose two main approaches to the United States—a black-and white one that accepts inevitable conflict and rejects any form of dialogue, and a more nuanced vision that allows for dialogue but only under seemingly prohibitive conditions. The first approach, reflecting traditional MB attitudes, sees no room for engagement with the United States because the MB's agenda and the American agenda are totally at odds. [61] 'Akif, who holds this position, has dedicated several missives to portraying the United States as the embodiment of evil.

In the new American global order, he maintains, mankind is divided into ten classes: Americans and Zionists are in the first one, Europeans in the second, and lastly the tenth class is comprised of the inhabitants of the Arab, Muslim and Asian worlds. [62] That global order—or global nightmare—is actually run surreptitiously by the Sons of Zion. [63] Since the United States raised the battle cry in its war on terror, the international community, particularly the West, has followed it and apparently accepted its flawed analysis. The American government insists that whoever joins its alliance is a "democrat" and whoever disagrees with its means of fighting terror is a terrorist himself or a supporter of terror. [64] The MB, 'Akif says, has been in the vanguard of those who view the American call for democracy and freedom with suspicion. The United States has, after all, a dark history of imperialism, continues to aid despotic regimes, is in total alignment with the Zionist project, and craves our resources. [65] Speaking in March at the fourth conference of the "International Campaign Against the American and Zionist Occupation"—which was held in Cairo using the slogan "For the Resistance in Palestine and Iraq; Against Globalization, Imperialism and Zionism"—'Akif called for an economic boycott of imperialist states. He said that cultural products should be included in this boycott because they are designed to transform thoughts, morals and behavioral patterns and to increase susceptibility to imperialism. [66]

Taking a more moderate approach, some members of the second generation faction have declared an interest in opening a dialogue with the United States, but they recognize the multiple risks involved. The Egyptian government might accuse the MB of colluding with foreign powers. *Takfiri* and *jihadi* groups, Iran, Hizbollah, and even radicals within the movement itself might accuse the MB of treason. Finally, the MB might be manipulated by the Americans. Shortly after the parliamentary elections, al-'Aryan nonetheless stated that the MB welcomed dialogue as a cultural and human value, within the context of its revivalist vision of Islam and its commitment to the gradual and flexible implementation of *sharia*. It welcomed open and public discussion with any segment of American society other than the U.S. administration, he said. MB members have participated in meetings with members of Congress and are willing to continue to do so. Even meetings with official representatives of the administration would be possible if they were public, known to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, and served the interest of Egypt and the Arab homeland. [67]

But al-'Aryan questioned the aims of the American government, saying that its conflicting values and interests account for its lack of clear positions. Does the United

States really support democracy, he asked, even if it transfers power to its political rivals? And does it really support multiculturalism, or the continued spread of American culture and the patterns of American civilization under the cover of globalization? Is the American elite still determined to extend U.S. hegemony around the world and construct a global empire? [68] What he called the American project of empire is antithetical to the MB project of Islamic reformist revival. The latter, he said, seeks to liberate Muslim lands from any foreign hegemony—military, economic, cultural and spiritual—and to reform governance in Muslim countries. In this way it will create real Arab unity and an international Islamic entity ('*kiyan dawli islami*). [69]

In its fight against Western hegemony, the MB played a predictably active role in the protest campaign over the Danish cartoons. It not only called for a boycott of Danish products, and subsequently American ones as well, but also inter alia posted on its website the names and logos of businesses to be boycotted. [70]

Palestine

The MB attributes part of its conflict with the West to the Israeli-Palestinian problem. It contends that the West planted Israel in the Arab region in order to control Arab states and to undermine Arab and Islamic identity. Israel is a Western state with a history and culture foreign to the region. Having no right to exist under international law, it should be abolished and its Jewish inhabitants absorbed into a Palestinian Arab state that would rightly replace it. [71] It is noteworthy that these arguments for de-legitimizing Israel reflect classic Arab nationalist discourse rather than the Islamist discourse that claims Palestine as a *waqf*, or land endowed to Muslims by God.

The MB celebrated the Hamas election victory as its own: "The Muslim Brotherhood has reached power in Palestine," declared Habib in a clear endorsement of the political approach. [72] But the Deputy General Guide also stressed that Hamas's political enterprise would not interfere with its continuing resistance and armed struggle. [73] Al-'Aryan urged the Palestinians, in fact, to develop a new strategy to liberate all the national land and to form a "single democratic state" that could then join a "Greater Syria" (*bilad al-sham alwasi'ah*) covering Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. [74] (He did not, however, use the historic term Suriya al-Kubra for this entity.) The "single democratic state" is obviously an Islamized version of the "secular democratic state" advanced by the PLO before al-Fatah and other groups accepted the principle of a two states solution. The reference to a Greater Syria apparently reflects the hope that the combined force of the MB branches in the four constituent countries would give the movement's eventual control of the new entity.

Al-'Aryan went on to advise Hamas to learn from the example of the Zionist movement and the Jewish state—that is, to use a lot of talk about peace to disguise its true aims. Hamas should simultaneously work hard to build a strong, united Palestinian society capable of achieving its real goal of replacing Israel with a Palestinian state. [75] Al-'Aryan further counseled Hamas to play hard to get. It should not appear to yearn for negotiations or dialogue, or to knock on the doors of the Jews, Europe, or the United States. Let everyone come knocking on the Palestinians' door, he said. [76] To a large extent, these tips indicate the MB's own tactics in dealing with such matters.

Conclusion

The MB's new, post-election political position has yet to generate any noticeable changes in its strategies, much less its objectives. While continuing to debate whether the movement should remain a missionary, social and religious society or become a political party, the adherents of these two main ideological currents seem to be happy with the fact that it is, in reality, both. The advocates of political engagement provide the organization with a more moderate face and busy themselves with political field work; the devotees of *dawa* use the MB's powerful organization—with which no secular opposition organization can compete—to mobilize massive popular support and secure the movement's continuity. The MB's "new look," systematically cultivated by the media savvy figures involved in the political arena, at best only camouflages the persistence of the movement's orthodox ideology.

Since the 1980s, many have accused the Egyptian MB of just pretending to be a religious revival movement while actually remaining ideologically and intellectually conservative, even stagnant. It focused almost exclusively on cultivating its organization and its members' loyalty, they charged, and suffocated innovative, creative thinking. Several of its most prominent thinkers defected, and its stature among the world's other MB organizations declined. Though formally it still holds the leadership of the International Organization of the MB, such figures as Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (who left the Egyptian MB), or the non-Egyptians Rashid al-Ghannouchi, Hassan al-Turabi and Faisal al-Mawlawi, have become the leading religious and intellectual authorities in the international movement.

But the Egyptian MB views its indisputable success in the 2005 elections as a vindication of its approach. Though external pressure may have forced Mubarak to allow for some degree of free elections, which in turn allowed the MB to assert electoral power for the first time, this electoral power was created by the MB, through its *dawa* and social activities. Its electoral success, therefore, can be expected to strengthen the hands of those in the MB who reject change. If the movement is getting stronger the way it is, they may well argue, why change its methods, let alone objectives? If the slogan "Islam is the solution" resonates with hundreds of thousands of voters, why replace it with another, more neutral slogan that might mollify the Copts but also produce a scantier harvest of votes? And why risk dangerous confrontations with a declining regime fighting for its survival when the MB now has the momentum?

The predominant view within the MB seems to be that the movement should not now actively seek the regime's demise. The time is not yet right for assuming power because society is not yet ready for an Islamic state that will implement *sharia*. The MB has no real interest in fighting Gamal Mubarak's succession, therefore, though the issue gives the movement a valuable card for extracting concessions from the government. As a result of this assessment, the MB is unlikely to deploy its tens of thousands of members and supporters in street demonstrations over the succession, but rather do the minimum necessary to preserve its opposition credentials—much as it did with regard to the extension of the emergency laws.

The MB's anti-American line has an obvious tactical advantage: it helps the leadership retain legitimacy in the face of some harsh criticism. Hard line rank-and-

file members object to any dialogue with secularist groups, for example, and also push to tackle the regime head on. In *jihadi* and al-Qaeda circles, the MB is castigated for participating in democratic elections and in a Parliament that issues manmade laws. But because the anti- American line is such a central feature of the MB's Islamic fundamentalist, Arab nationalist worldview, it would seem to preclude any kind of meaningful engagement with Americans. The only MB-U.S. dialogue apparently envisioned by al-'Aryan is a discussion of conditions for the United States' surrender.

NOTES

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8. Ahmad al-Qa'ud, "'Issam al-'Aryan Yu`akkidu Taraju' al-Ikhwan," **http://www.alquds.co.uk/**, 22 December 2005.

9. Interview with 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, **http://www.al-araby.com/**, no. 996, 12 February 2006.

10. "Al-Bahith al-Qubti Samir Murqus Yashrahu Hawajis al-Aqbat min Su'ud al-Ikhwan," **http://www.ikhwanonline.com/**, 19 April 2006.

11. Interviewed by Faraj Isma'il, **http://www.alwifaq.net/**, 22 February 2006.

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15. Richard P. Mitchell, The Society of the Muslim Brothers (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 308.

16. Ibid., 103.

17. **http://www.al-araby.com/**, no. 990, 25 December 2005; **http://harakamasria.org/**, 16 January 2006.

18. Rafiq Habib, "Al-Ikhwan wa-Bidaya Jadida," **http://www.ikhwanonline.com/**, 20 December 2005.

19. **http://www.ikhwanonline.com/**, 16 February 2006.

20. This term is heavily charged: It was the title of a MB internal document, outlining the movement's plans for penetrating key sectors of society and the state and for reaching power. The document was seized by the authorities and made public in 1994.

21. Rafiq Habib, "Al-Ikhwan wa-Marhalat al-Tamkin," **http://www.ikhwanonline.com/**, 28 March 2006.

22. Rafiq Habib, "Al-Ikhwan: al-Rajul wal-Risalah wal-Tandhim," **http://www.ikhwanonline.com/**, 14 March 2006.

23. Muhammad 'Izz al-'Arab, "Al-'Aryan: Mutalabun bil-Tassaluh ma'a al-Nizam," **http://harakamasria.org/**, 9 February 2006.

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25. "Sharh Risalat ilaayy Shay` Nad'u al-Nas," **http://www.ikhwanonline.com/**, 18 February 2006.

26. Ibid.

27. Khairat al-Shatir, Second Deputy to the MB General Guide, in al-Hayat, 31 October 2005.

28. 'Issam al-'Aryan in Al-Sharq al-Awsat, 23 November 2005; Muhammad Mahdi 'Akif in **http://www.ikhwanonline.com/**, 5 December 2005.

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37. Muhammad 'Izz al-'Arab, "Al-'Aryan: Mutalabun…," **http://harakamasria.org/**, 9 February 2006.

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