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# Moderate Islamists as Reform Actors

Conditions and Programmatic Change

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### **Moderate Islamists as Reform Actors Conditions and Programmatic Change**

Political reform in what has been termed the “Broader Middle East” has so far led to very little qualitatively significant expansion of political participation. Instead, reforms have remained largely restricted to the adaptation of authoritarian systems to the conditions of a changing world. Those who have often profited most from the limited political openings have been Islamist movements and parties, translating their popularity into sometimes impressive election successes or victories, for example in Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine. In many states, moderate Islamists are today the most important actors alongside the current or former regime elites. It is likely that in the long term they will have greater influence on political decision-making processes than radical or terrorist groups, at least barring a further escalation of the region’s conflicts.

Many of these groups entered the stage to pursue an explicit agenda of reforms. Although they mostly espouse socially conservative positions, they make progressive demands when it comes to reform of the political system. Prominent issues are the fight against corruption, expanding participation, introducing checks and balances and a division of powers, good governance, and respect for human rights. It is often said that Islamist calls for democratization are of a purely tactical nature and that, if they came to power, they would set about establishing authoritarian theocratic regimes. Indeed, the “risk” of political opening is that power could pass to forces where we cannot today know whether they will play by democratic rules. At the same time, however, it is obvious that political opening is not possible as long as it excludes those forces that have the greatest support among the population and often represent the only effectively organized alternative to authoritarian regimes.

It is almost impossible to make generalizations about whether moderate Islamists (could) act as forces for reform. The case studies of Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Palestine, Algeria, Bahrain, and Egypt show that this depends above all on the specific political and social circumstances (which are not least determined by international incentives), on the extent of Islamist participation in the political process, and on the form in which their parties and movements are organized. It can however be generally noted that the more consolidated and open the political system is and the stronger the political competition, the greater are both the pressures and opportunities for Islamist parties to act and argue pragmatically and to distinguish themselves as forces for reform.

If Europeans are still interested in better governance, respect for human rights, and political opening in the region, they should support the political integration of moderate Islamists and establish contacts with

them. However, the crux of the issue of democratization lies neither in a discussion of values with the Islamists nor in promoting them as reform actors by giving them special support and building them up as an alternative to the current regimes. Instead, influence should be exerted on the respective legal and political conditions that define the framework in which Islamists and non-Islamists alike are able to participate in social and political processes.

- ▶ **The legal and political framework:** The EU and its member states should above all work to influence the conditions for societal and political participation in the countries of the region. The goal is to establish procedures, laws, and institutions that will ensure that all relevant forces are included in democratically elected multi-party systems and power-sharing arrangements. These must include establishing effective safeguards for human rights (especially habeas corpus rights), the lifting of the state of emergency still in force in many countries, passing progressive laws governing political parties and associations, establishing independent electoral commissions, and granting freedom of opinion and assembly.
- ▶ **Elections and election monitoring:** When parliamentary elections are held and an Islamist victory is not unlikely—as for example in Morocco in the fall of 2007—a clear interest in free and fair elections should be signaled in advance. The EU should respond to Islamist calls for international election observers. In this context, Germany should also revive its proposal to set up—under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership—a system of reciprocal election monitoring based on the OSCE model. As a principle, the EU should recognize the outcome of elections (especially those which the EU itself had clamored for) and refrain from undermining elected governments. Otherwise, such policies will be seen as incoherent and will cause Europe to lose credibility when it comes to promoting democracy and, as has become clear in the case of Hamas, they do not serve to resolve the concrete problems.
- ▶ **Civil society:** The EU and its member states should send positive signals on the plane of civil society and involve Islamist groupings more closely than before in training, dialogue, and exchange programs aimed, for example, at boosting the effectiveness of parliamentary work, promoting women, and strengthening human rights. Of course, cooperation with secular actors should continue in order to promote maximum plurality in the political system and to support dialogue between Islamists and secular actors. The German party-political foundations have shown themselves to be in a favorable position to offer dialogue forums where various social forces are brought together for example to debate the priorities and goals of reform. Such forums, however, require at least implicit political support.
- ▶ **Dialogue:** The so-called “Islam dialogue,” initiated in 2002 under the auspices of the German Foreign Ministry, represents an instrument which can serve as a model to engage in meaningful discussion with Islamists and other actors in the Muslim world. It would be helpful to

build on past experience and institutionalize dialogue channels by encouraging the networking between the Commissioner for Dialogue with the Islamic world, other European officials responsible for relations with Muslim countries as well as other dialogue forums. However, it is dangerous to conduct a dialogue in which political differences and interests are shifted onto the plane of culture and values and thus transposed into questions of identity. There is no harm in mentioning value differences, but the main point of dialogue should be to address political interests, identify common goals, and outline ways to achieve them. Also, in order to counteract resurgent negative stereotypes, dialogue on the elite level is not sufficient, many more individuals in Europe and the region must be involved in exchange activities where they can share experiences on an equal footing.



# Introduction

*Muriel Asseburg*

Political developments of coming decades will be strongly influenced by Islamist movements, both in the Arab states and in the Islamic world as a whole. In many states today, moderate Islamists are already the most important actors alongside the current decision-makers, or are set to become so. They generally rely on the support of religious networks and a broad social base, they have the ability to credibly formulate popular messages, and they are demanding political participation in the existing systems. In the mid to long term, this will probably give them greater influence on political decision-making processes than radical or terrorist groupings have, at least barring a further escalation of the region's conflicts. Above all they possess a greater mobilization potential than any other opposition force. More often than not they are the only effectively organized alternative to authoritarian regimes.

In the contributions of this volume, the terms "Islamist" and "Islamists" are used to designate political actors who place their political views and demands (and sometimes their strategies too) in an Islamic frame of reference. This potentially covers a very broad spectrum. Political ideas and social policy concepts may be drawn from the Islamic texts and the traditions of Islamic law or borrowed from other traditions and legitimized as Islamic by religious authorities. Today many Islamists prioritize the participation in existing political systems and calls for reforms connected with good governance, political opening, and respect for human rights, while at the same time the setting up of an "Islamic state" has slipped into the background as a far-off abstract goal along with the application of Islamic sharia law—both the latter, incidentally, being concepts with vague content open to interpretation.

When we refer to "moderate" Islamists here, we are referring to those who are willing to participate within existing political systems and renounce the use of violence in domestic politics. Thus "moderate" should not be understood as a value judgment about the Islamists' political and social goals. Even if many Islamists call for reforms that involve political opening and democratic control, that does not mean that these groups in general necessarily espouse democratic values that would correspond with ours. Here—as with other forces in the region—we can find instead a broad spectrum of approaches ranging from the more ideological to the more pragmatic. Nor does the term "moderate" tell us anything about attitudes toward the use of violence in struggle against foreign occupation. In this sense the Palestinian Hamas is regarded as moderate, because it has in recent years taken a strategic decision to participate in the Palestinian Authority and to renounce violence in the domestic political arena. But

even at times when it has been observing a cease-fire with Israel, Hamas has still regarded armed “resistance” against the Israeli occupation as legitimate. Although Hamas has justified this position in religious terms, it is not a specifically Islamic one, but is shared by the other national liberation movements.

The justification of “armed resistance” by the secular and Islamist liberation movements is admittedly problematic in three different respects. Firstly from an ethical standpoint, their choice of means is to be criticized, particularly when it involves attacks on civilians. Secondly, the Islamists’ attitude to recognizing Israel’s right to exist is ambivalent. Thirdly, the spread of small arms and the existence of numerous militias and militant networks impact negatively on the domestic political process and on society as a whole. The central monopoly on violence is questioned, domestic political disagreements and power struggles often escalate violently, and the threat of violence is used as an instrument of power in domestic politics. In recent years these impacts on the domestic political process have become especially clear in Palestine and Lebanon, and have plunged both entities into deep crisis.

In public debate the assumption is often advanced that integrating Islamists and allowing them to participate would have the effect of making them more pragmatic and moderate. This may be true in individual cases, but cannot be generalized. Too varied are the development trajectories of Islamists’ agendas and priorities, too different their forms of organization and degree of involvement in the political process, too divergent the political and social starting points in the countries of the region.<sup>1</sup> For that reason, the authors of the contributions collected here analyze a wide range of exemplary cases. A spotlight is cast on the interactions between processes of change within moderate Islamist movements, their political integration, and progress and setbacks in political reform processes in selected countries (Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Palestine, Algeria, Bahrain, and Egypt).<sup>2</sup> The study focuses on the following questions:

<sup>1</sup> See also the case studies in Judy Barsalou, *Islamists at the Ballot Box: Findings from Egypt, Kuwait, and Turkey*, USIP Special Report no. 144 (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, July 2005); Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jean-Noël Ferrié, *La Parlementarisation de l’islam politique: La dynamique des modérés*, EuroMeSCo Paper no. 41 (Lisbon, September 2005), [www.euromesco.net/media/euromesco\\_paper\\_41.pdf](http://www.euromesco.net/media/euromesco_paper_41.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Here we find gaps in the research published so far in two respects. Firstly, many of the studies concentrate on discourses and debates. But such an approach does little to answer the question of which of the Islamists’ demands are of a tactical nature and which are strategic. A good example is Abdeslam Maghraoui, *What Do Islamists Really Want? An Insider’s Discussion with Islamist Leaders*, USIPeace Briefing (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, May 2006). Secondly, there are few anthologies or monographs that provide a systematic overview of current developments in the Islamist spectrum. An exception is Ivesa Lübben, “Der Islam ist die Lösung”? *Moderate islamistische Parteien in der MENA-Region und Fragen ihrer politischen Integration*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (unpublished manuscript, 2006), and the special issue of *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* on political Islam (2006, no. 3 [July]). Also, although slightly out of date, Laura Guazzone, ed., *The Islamist Dilemma:*

- ▶ What are the priorities of Islamist actors? What do their reform agendas look like?
- ▶ To what extent have the agendas of Islamists changed over the course of participation in parliament or through taking on (joint) responsibility of government?
- ▶ Does the integration of Islamists lead to a stabilization of authoritarian rule or does it promote political opening? To what extent does it strengthen the state's capacities?

The authors of the case studies in Section A examine those cases where Islamists are in power (Iran, Turkey) or have been elected but are only able to exercise limited power due to limited statehood and domestic strife (Iraq). In the case of Iran and Turkey these are largely consolidated political systems (of fundamentally different character), while the polities of Iraq and the Palestinian territories are unconsolidated and continue to be defined by violent conflict. In fact, when this volume was first published in German in early 2007, Hamas had formed a government on the basis of the January 2006 elections. The Palestinian territories therefore figured in Section A. However, due to the Hamas government's failure to effectively govern, a "National Unity Government" was formed in March 2007. The case study therefore was shifted to Section B. The authors of the case studies in Section B look at examples of Islamists operating as a strong opposition or participating in coalition governments: Algeria, Bahrain, and Egypt. Whereas the case studies concentrate on the development of Islamist agendas and their impact on the political systems, a contribution at the end turns our attention to the cost/benefit calculations of the ruling autocrats. For ultimately it is they who decide whether Islamist parties are legalized or allowed to take part in elections and whether they may take on the responsibility of government. The concluding chapter summarizes the lessons to be learned from the case studies and, on this basis, formulates recommendations to European decision-makers. An overview in the Appendix (pp. 90) provides information about the current status of Islamist participation in the Arab states, Iran, and Turkey, and about recent and upcoming elections.

This volume was first published in German and has since been substantially updated. It has been published with the kind support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. It builds on two events prepared jointly by the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and conducted with the participation of other experts in spring and summer 2006: a seminar on "Political Islam" in Berlin under the auspices of the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and a series of three panels on "Political reform and political Islam" at the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies 2 (WOCMES-2) in Amman. Brief details about the authors can be found in the Appendix (pp. 97).

*The Political Role of Islamist Movements in the Contemporary Arab World*, International Politics of the Middle East Series (Reading, 1995).



**Case Studies A:  
Islamists in Power**



# Iran: How Politics Emancipates Itself from Religion

Johannes Reissner

The revolution of 1979 not only brought Islamists to power in Iran, but also led to the creation of a unique kind of Islamic state. It is based on the construct of popular sovereignty derived from the will of God. Accordingly, the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran includes autocratic and democratic institutions. The head of state is the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution. He is elected by the eighty-six-member Council of Experts,<sup>3</sup> but the religious legitimacy of his office stems from the principle of “guardianship (often translated as rule) of the Islamic jurist” (*velâyat-e faqîh*) laid down in the constitution. This principle was formulated by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and is taken to refer to the representative of the twelfth Imam, the descendant of the son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed. According to Shi’ite doctrine, the twelfth Imam did not die in the eighth century but lives on in hiding and will return at the end of history. The constitutional amendment of 1989 made the rule of the Islamic jurist absolute.<sup>4</sup> Since Khomeini’s death that year, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has held the office of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution. He not only has the final say in appointments to all offices that answer directly to him, but also ratifies the appointments of office-holders such as the president who are elected directly by popular vote. The second most important religious and political institution after the Supreme Leader is the Guardian Council, whose job is to review legislation passed by parliament, which is directly elected by popular vote, to ensure that it is compatible with the constitution and with the principles of Islam. It also decides whether candidates qualify to run in parliamentary and presidential elections.

Though the state and its institutions are firmly embedded in religion, and despite the central role played by the Shi’ite clergy in the state and of the emphatically Islamic public discourse, politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran cannot be explained on the basis of the categories Islam or Islamism. Moreover, its foreign policy refers only occasionally to Islam and “Islamic solidarity”, and then predominantly with respect to the Palestine. In contrast, since the eight-year war with Iraq, 1980–88, nationalism has become a fundamental agent. In the dispute over Iran’s nuclear program it is national consensus that matters most. Although President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a lay Islamist, presents himself as completely devoted to the Supreme Leader, he utilizes overblown Islamo-nationalist rhetoric to gain leeway from the old guard of political clerics for his pragmatic populism.

<sup>3</sup> Farsi: *majles-e khobregân*. Elected directly by the people every eight years (last elections on December 15, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Silvia Tellenbach, “Zur Änderung der Verfassung der Islamischen Republik Iran vom 28. Juli 1989,” *Orient* 31, no. 1 (March 1990): 45–66.

## Religion and Political Decisions

In the development of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the following fundamental problem is apparent: Islamists define themselves by drawing a distinction between them and their general Muslim environment, which they do not recognize as a “truly Islamic” society.<sup>5</sup> Yet the criteria for distinguishing between Islamic and un-Islamic are fairly arbitrary. Once in power, Islamists have to make decisions in contingent situations where the concepts of Islamic and un-Islamic are not decisive. In those situations, contrary to the well-known Islamist slogan, Islam is not the solution. Instead, the problems just begin. The well-known reform theologian Mojtabeh Shebastari described this difficulty during a discussion in the late 1990s. After the revolution, he said, people had found that although they trusted each other unreservedly as revolutionaries and devout Muslims, they still reached divergent conclusions on manifold questions requiring urgent decisions. Revolution and Islam alone did not prove to be adequate decision-making criteria, and this encouraged the call for strong authority.

To counter this problem, Khomeini established by decree the Expediency Council, or, to give its full title, the Expediency Discernment Council of the System, a year before he died. Former Iranian president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani has been its chairman since 1997. The Council’s job is to mediate in disputes between parliament and the Guardian Council. Thus, its place in the institutional hierarchy is between the Guardian Council and the Supreme Leader. As the name indicates, the foremost criterion for mediation is the “expediency of the system,” which is generally interpreted as meaning “the national interest.” This takes priority even over the ordinances of the Koran, which, as Khomeini said, are sometimes overruled in the interest of the system.<sup>6</sup> Since the 1988 decree, the “national interest” has evolved into a recognized criterion and point of reference.

Remarkably, in Sunni Islam, the principle of taking the common good (*maslaha*) into account when establishing justice has been customary since around the ninth century. Among Shi’ites, in contrast, it appears to be seen as an innovation. Thus, at a workshop entitled “Sharia and the Rule of Law in Iran” in early 2006, one Iranian jurist commenting on Khomeini’s decree said, not without sarcasm, that it had taken twelve years’ practice of Islamic revolution to bring about what Shi’ite legal theory had been incapable of for twelve hundred years, that is the recognition of contin-

<sup>5</sup> Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York, 2004), 21.

<sup>6</sup> Johannes Reissner, “Der Imam und die Verfassung: Zur politischen und staatsrechtlichen Bedeutung der Direktive Imam Khomeinis vom 7. Januar 1988,” *Orient* 29, no. 2 (June 1988): 213–36.

gency (as regards determining whether facts with a legal consequence exist and, if so, what they are).<sup>7</sup>

Naturally, decisions were taken in line with the national interest before the Expediency Council was established, the most obvious example being the ceasefire with Iraq six months prior to Khomeini's decree. Yet this decree in fact introduced an underlying rationale that permits Islamic legitimization of the un-Islamic. The point is to enable a political decision to be reached without regard to religious criteria. Remarkably, Khomeini's solution clearly recalls forms of juridical treatment of contingency developed by Muslim jurists in the eighth and ninth century in connection with the relationship between Sharia law and politics. The *siyâsa*, the ruler's authority to take political decisions and make political rules (one could also call it "governance"), was seen as a separate realm outside Sharia law.<sup>8</sup> Not until the fourteenth century did Ibn Taimiyya call for "politics in accordance with the Sharia" (*as-siyâsa ash-shar'îya*). However, this was no more than a pious hope, and scholars are still arguing about the shape this politics should take.

## Law, Morality, and Repression

The relationship between the Islamic system of laws and standards on the one hand and the state on the other is problematic. True, the Sharia was created by jurists on the basis of the Koran and of handed-down dictums and exemplary deeds of the Prophet, independently of the state. However, it depends on the state for its application.<sup>9</sup> This feature has survived in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Sharia as law in practice is applied only in fragments and in constant conflict with secular law.<sup>10</sup> However, this by no means detracts from the Islamic self-image. That is because even among the Shi'ite Islamists who govern Iran the general feature that can be observed in Islamic or Islamist movements since the nineteenth century is that they see the Sharia not only as a legal system but primarily as a moral code.<sup>11</sup> The Sharia, and therefore also the religion, are made guarantors of morality. The primary function of religion, that is the reference to transcendence that is expressed in Islam by belief in the oneness of god (*tauhid*), is supplemented, indeed often overlaid, by its secondary function, to guarantee morality. In present-day conditions, the Sharia can only be applied fragmentarily, so it is enlisted all the more as a "moral institution."

<sup>7</sup> Institute of World Affairs/FRIDE, "The Relationship between Shari'a and the Rule of Law in Iran," Madrid, February 6–8, 2006, [www.fride.org/File/ViewLinkFile.aspx?FileId=929](http://www.fride.org/File/ViewLinkFile.aspx?FileId=929) (accessed January 31, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Definitive: Baber Johansen, "Staat, Recht und Religion im sunnitischen Islam: Können Muslime einen religionsneutralen Staat akzeptieren?" in *Contingency in a Sacred Law: Legal and Ethical Norms in the Muslim Fiqh* (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne, 1999), 263–338.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>10</sup> Sami Zubaida, *Law and Power in the Islamic World* (London, 2005) 197–219.

<sup>11</sup> Baber Johansen, "Die sündige, gesunde Amme: Moral und gesetzliche Bestimmung (hukm) im islamischen Recht," in *Contingency in a Sacred Law* (see note 8), 172–88 (187f).

Moralization of the Sharia signifies a degree of emancipation from traditional legal provisions tailored to pre-modern conditions. In addition, this moralization creates a distance from the authority of religious and legal scholars. This has been especially evident in lay Islamist movements in Sunni Islam since the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the first half of the twentieth century. The development is more complex in Iran on account of its hierarchically organized Shi'ite clergy. Nonetheless, lay Islamists played a crucial political role alongside the political clergy during the revolution, and they still do so under Ahmadinejad. At the same time, the example of Iran shows that if Islamism is in power the Sharia becomes a vehicle of the prevalent ideas of morality. Individual provisions of the Sharia are used to enforce these ideas in the name of order and for the purpose of repression. In addition to the judicial system, special police units are employed to aid enforcement, in particular the volunteer force (*basij*), which plays a similar role to that of the "religious police" (*mutawa'a*) in Saudi Arabia.

Thus, in its relationship with religion the Islamic Republic of Iran turns out to be an example of how the original motive for developing the Sharia in the eighth century can be turned into the opposite. Originally, by creating a religiously substantiated legal system, citizens (urban traders and craftsmen) aimed to protect themselves from arbitrary acts by their rulers.<sup>12</sup> Now, the emancipation of politics even from the legal provisions of the Koran (Khomeini's decree) and the moralization of the Sharia open the floodgates to arbitrary acts by authorities and bureaucrats, with only the competition between different religious interpretations to stop them. Admittedly, this competition is extensive and forces the participants to reach consensus.

Despite the absolute "guardianship of the Islamic jurist," which has even been enshrined in the constitution since 1989, political decision-making in Iran is by no means as hierarchical as the formal state structure may suggest. First, the president, parliament and, since 1998, local councils are elected directly by popular vote. However, in addition to these elected institutions, many politically influential movements and institutions play a role, vying for the Supreme Leader's attention so as to assert their ideas and interests.<sup>13</sup> Since Ahmadinejad's election, the differences within the conservative camp, which is by no means homogeneous, have become apparent, differences that strike at the very substance of the Islamic Republic of Iran's self-image. Thus Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi, head of the Khomeini Research Center and a leading figure in the *Haqqani* school, the cradle of many hardliners, denies that Khomeini would have wanted a republic with democratic institutions and argues that the word "Republic" should be deleted from the country's name. Under his influence, Ahmadinejad, too, speaks of the "Islamic government" rather than the "govern-

<sup>12</sup> Johansen, "Staat, Recht und Religion im sunnitischen Islam" (see note 8), 267.

<sup>13</sup> On this aspect of the situation after Ahmadinejad's election see Walter Posch, *Iran's Domestic Politics. The 'Circles of Influence': Ahmadinejad's Enigmatic Networks*, IESUE/COPS/INF 0521 (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, October 19, 2005).

ment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.” At the same time, after Ahmadinejad’s election, opposition was voiced from various camps to the principle of the “guardianship of the Islamic jurist.” One of these was the *Hojjatiyeh* movement, which originated in the 1950s. It rejects this principle formulated by Khomeini and after the revolution was banned for doing so. At the end of September 2006 Ayatollah Kazemeini Boroujerdi, a high-ranking conservative, was placed under house arrest because of his criticism of Khomeini’s principle and of the politicization of religion, which he had raised not only in the general public but also expressed to Kofi Annan among others.<sup>14</sup>

The groups and institutions with their different interpretations of Islam are economically independent, either because of religious taxes (Shi’ites are required to pay *khums*, or one fifth of their financial gain) or thanks to their access to petrodollars. In addition, the revolutionary guards, the volunteer force, and religious-revolutionary foundations (*bonyâd*) are power centers that dominate economic life and provision for the poor, orphans, and war veterans.<sup>15</sup> The large number of institutions with power and the rivalry between them help to create leeway for democratic institutions. At the same time, they compel consensus in the interest of preserving the system. It is the Supreme Leader’s job to announce the sustainable consensus on a particular issue. Islamically legitimized by the office he holds, he states which of many possible Islamic interpretations is politically valid in a particular context. That, however, constitutes neither decision-making that is Islamic per se nor a fundamental, dogmatic stipulation that a specific interpretation of Islam is solely and eternally valid. Religious dissent, especially among those religious scholars who are high-ranking members of the clergy, has so far been accepted provided that it has not been used for political ends.

How Iran’s “Islamists in power” treat rival Islamists in their own country is determined by power criteria for which “Islamic” justification is provided as and when necessary. Depending on the specific case in question, this involves choosing from a broad spectrum that ranges from ignoring, via discussion, debate, and integration through to prosecution, prison, or worse. These are typical methods available to all rulers and are not specifically Islamic.

### Consequences for Western Policy on Iran

The ruling Islamists have secured for themselves a high degree of freedom from historical Islamic rules and ideas concerning political decisions. In view of this, attempts to understand Iranian politics by way of Islam or Islamism are doomed to failure. The Islamist arguments given for the

<sup>14</sup> Nazenin Ansari, “An Ayatollah under Siege ... in Tehran,” *Qantara*, October 18, 2006, [www.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-476/\\_nr-662/i.html](http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-476/_nr-662/i.html).

<sup>15</sup> On the role of these after Ahmadinejad’s election see Bernard Hourcade, “Iran’s Internal Security Challenges,” in *Iranian Challenges*, ed. Walter Posch, Chaillot Paper no. 89, 41–58 (43–47) (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, May 2006).

Iranian leadership's generally anti-Western attitude and its rejection of Western ideas of social and political order are of significance for Western policy because the Iranian regime tries to influence the region with them. Yet the particular Islamic or Islamist legitimization of interest-driven political decisions is irrelevant to Western policy on Iran. Nor can the present, seemingly insurmountable, differences in the nuclear dispute be attributed to Islam or Islamism, but to a far greater extent to Iranian nationalism, which there is often no attempt even to embellish with Islam.

Fundamental discussions such as those on Islam, democracy, and civil society are highly significant for Western politicians and confront them with the problem of how to react appropriately to them. The ruling political clergy saw in the Khatami era's reform movement (1997–2005) the danger that its position of power could be undermined. This view was reinforced when the United States threatened regime change, leading the political clergy to emphasize the function of Islamism as a bulwark. Since Ahmadinejad's election, lay Islamists of his ilk have become established in leading positions in the political administration. A new political elite molded by the eight-year war with Iraq (1980–1988) is gradually replacing the old guard of political clergy of the revolution. Besides petrodollars and naked repression, it uses Islamo-nationalist agitation not only to secure its position domestically, but also to make its mark in the region.

For Islamists in Iran, there has never been a politically favorable constellation such as that which emerged for the Justice and Development Party in Turkey when, at a particular time, rapprochement with Western ideas of reform and political and social order converged with its own interests,<sup>16</sup> nor is such a constellation imaginable in the near future. Yet the ruling elite is not monolithic, and the relationship between state and society is dynamic. True, state and religious institutions permeate the entire society. At the same time, due to their many different orientations and conflicting interests they create leeway for society and necessitate consensus, which has constantly to be renegotiated. Because the West focuses on the Islamism of the Islamic Republic, too little account is taken of this diversity and these dynamics in political dealings with Iran. The variety of views and interests in Iranian society did not die when Ahmadinejad came to power. The setbacks suffered by his supporters at the elections on December 15, 2006, are clear evidence of that.<sup>17</sup> Ahmadinejad's policies consist of shrewd mobilization of the masses in order to strengthen his own position. However, other groups besides him exist: the traditional conservatives, with a large group in parliament, who set store by the "proper" conduct of politics; supporters of Rafsanjani, who are intent on a realistic course and want to prevent Iran from becoming isolated; and, despite all the repression, still some reformers. Western politicians must seek points of contact for a fruitful political and cultural debate. Taking their own

<sup>16</sup> See the contribution by Ioannis Grigoriadis in this volume, pp. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Johannes Reissner, *Iran: Wahlschlappe und Sanktionen*, SWP-Aktuell 2/07, January 2007, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, [www.swp-berlin.org/en/common/get\\_document.php?asset\\_id=3608](http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/common/get_document.php?asset_id=3608).

interests in Iran as a starting point, they must explore common interests and possibilities for asserting them. Given Iran's history of negative experience of Western politics, there is ample scope for exploiting nationalism and religion in order to preserve the system and the regime—as Ahmadinejad's election demonstrated once again. Western policy on Iran must be self-critical in taking account of this. Otherwise, it runs the risk of being dismissed in advance as an attempt to undermine the “Islamic system.”

## The First “Democratic Islamic” Party? The AKP and the Reform of Political Islam in Turkey

Ioannis N. Grigoriadis

The Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or AKP) exemplifies the ability of political Islam in Turkey to adapt to changing political conditions. Since the AKP joined government and the ideal of an Islamic state largely lost its appeal in Turkey, the party has abandoned its Islamist rhetoric and has taken to pursuing a pragmatic, moderate course in its core policies. This has resulted in new alliances with supporters of domestic reforms both in Turkey and abroad. The long-standing issue of religious freedom is one of the problems that should be solved by the reform process necessary for meeting the criteria of the EU. Additionally, the AKP is attempting to address the question of secularism from a liberal perspective. The reform of political Islam in Turkey is not yet complete, but progress to date may be considered a good sign that political Islam is compatible with liberal democratic principles. The course of Turkey’s EU accession negotiations may have a considerable impact on that process.

After giving a short overview of the history of political Islam in Turkey, this essay will examine the policies of the Development and Justice Party. These policies represent a challenge both for the secular bureaucracy and for traditional political Islam. The main focus will be on the AKP’s political agenda, the reasons for the reform of political Islam in Turkey, and the limits of this reform.

### The Formation of the AKP

The relationship between religion and politics was one of the most controversial issues in the modernization of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. The setting for the development of political Islam after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 was a Jacobin-like secularism and the complete banishment of religion from public life. After the introduction of the multi-party system in 1946, Islam gradually regained its political significance.<sup>1</sup> However, the first real Islamist movement did not arise until 1967, when the Milli Görüş movement (“National Vision”) was born. Led by Necmettin Erbakan, this movement and its National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi or MNP) marked the beginning of an era during which political Islam developed into an independent and significant force in

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed treatment of the conservative perspective on secularism see Nuray Mert, “Muhafazakârlık ve Laiklik,” in *Muhafazakârlık*, ed. Ahmet Çiğdem (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003). On the pragmatic approach of the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi, AP) in the 1960s see Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, “Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in Republican Turkey,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 2 (May 1996): 239–40.

Turkish politics. Despite the subsequent ban on Islamist parties, political Islam proved its resilience in Turkey. The Welfare Party (Refah Partisi or RP) won a plurality of 21.4 percent in the 1995 parliamentary elections and joined a coalition government in 1996. Erbakan, as the leader of the party, became prime minister. This development caused an upset in Turkey's political life and shocked the international community. The latent crisis between the military and the coalition government came to a head in the "silent coup" of February 28, 1997. During a meeting of the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu or MGK), its military members called for drastic measures to curb the threat of an Islamist takeover of the country.<sup>2</sup> The government yielded to the ultimatum and Erbakan resigned in June 1997. The Welfare Party was banned in 1998 by the constitutional court. Its successor, the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi or FP), was banned in 2001. The FP was succeeded by two new parties, the traditionalist Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi or SP) and the reformist Justice and Development Party (AKP). At the parliamentary elections in November 2002, the AKP received 34.3 percent of the vote and won an absolute majority in parliament while the SP gained only about 2.5 percent. Subsequently, the AKP became the first party with Islamist origins to form a one-party government.<sup>3</sup>

### The AKP's New Political Agenda

To evaluate the changes in the Islamist spectrum, it is necessary to examine the election program of the AKP more closely and to compare it with the agendas of previous Islamist parties. The Islamist concept of the "Just Order" (*Âdil Düzen*) formed the core of every Islamist party agenda in Turkey and contained an "occidental" interpretation of western civilization.<sup>4</sup> According to this interpretation, the West might have attained material wealth and military power, but it suffered from an acute moral and spiritual deficit which led to injustice in Western societies and thus to their eventual decline and fall. The moral and spiritual corruption of the West meant that it was destined to be superseded by Islamic civilization, which was portrayed as morally superior and just. In contrast, the "Just Order" aimed to lay the groundwork for a values-based social order dominated by the principles of Islamic law (*şeriat*). The AKP's political agenda, however, bore scarcely any resemblance to that of a conventional Islamist party. Rather, it formulated a policy which viewed the West—and the European Union in particular—as an ally in the quest to abolish the privileges of the military and bureaucratic elites and to improve the social

<sup>2</sup> On the events of February 28, 1997, see Ümit Cizre and Menderes Çınar, "Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2/3 (spring/summer 2003): 322.

<sup>3</sup> For the details see Ali Çarkoğlu, "Turkey's November 2002 Elections: A New Beginning?" *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA)* 6, no. 4 (December 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Burhanettin Duran, "Cumhuriyet Dönemi İslâmcılığı," in *İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay, 144–51 (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004).

situation of AKP voters. The reforms of the law courts and the National Security Council are examples of this policy.<sup>5</sup> Thus the State Security Courts (Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri or DGM), which had been created in 1973 as extraordinary courts to prosecute crimes against a vaguely defined “national security,” were abolished in 2004. In 2001, a constitutional amendment gave civilians the majority of the seats on the National Security Council, whose advisory function was confirmed by the 2004 reform package. Subsequently, the first civilian secretary-general was appointed. These measures not only supported the AKP’s efforts to limit military and bureaucratic influence on the state and society in Turkey, but were also in compliance with the stipulations for political reforms in Turkey in many reports by the EU Commission. The AKP pursued this reform process in order to meet the Copenhagen criteria. Its efforts were supported by secular liberals who had long been marginalized in the secularist camp, but who now assisted the government in implementing its reform agenda.

The AKP also distanced itself from the rhetoric of its Islamist predecessors in the field of economic policies.<sup>6</sup> Conforming to the political recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it began increasingly to take into account the needs of a growing Islamic business elite. Thus the AKP pursued a neo-liberal policy geared towards reducing public spending, bringing the national debt under control, and increasing the pace of privatization, while simultaneously maintaining close ties with the country’s economic elite, with which it cooperated in working towards Turkey’s accession to the EU. After many years of economic instability and recurring crises, Turkey’s economy experienced a phase of considerable, stable growth under the AKP government, while inflation dropped below the 10 percent mark for the first time in decades. The contrast between these policies and the interventionist, statist economic program of the Milli Görüş parties is obvious. These parties were equally distrustful of international organizations and the private sector and viewed foreign investment as a threat to Turkey’s economic sovereignty and cultural values. The success of the Turkish government in being given a date for the start of accession negotiations with the EU also contributed towards stabilizing the economy and created greater trust in market forces. The consolidation of the economy only a few years after a series of grave financial crises was one of the most remarkable achievements of the AKP government.

The changes in the AKP could also be seen in the fact that the party leaders refused to ascribe an Islamist identity to the party. They described the AKP as a “conservative democratic” (*muhafazakâr demokrat*) party; in other words, as an Islamic country’s answer to the Christian democratic

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the reforms see Ergun Özbudun and Serap Yazıcı, *Democratization Reforms in Turkey (1993–2004)* (Istanbul: TESEV Publications, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> See Ziya Öniş, “The Political Economy of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party,” in *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Islam, Democracy and the AK Party*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006).

parties of the west. In this way, religion was not excluded completely from the sphere of politics, but neither did it represent the core of the party's agenda. Religion supplied certain cultural values which influenced the party's stance on a series of domestic issues, but it did not serve as the basis for a model of an alternative political order.

### The Causes for the Reform of Political Islam

There are a number of reasons for these unusual reforms of political Islam in Turkey, most of which are related to domestic strategies, the role of European institutions, and the decreasing popularity of the Islamist state as an ideal form of government.<sup>7</sup> Many observers believe that the pressure of bureaucracy and the military, which culminated in the “post-modern coup” of February 28, 1997, was the decisive factor in triggering the reform of political Islam. This incident showed very clearly that the plan of creating an Islamic regime in Turkey was doomed to failure. The court decisions to ban the RP and its successor, the FP, which were taken after the collapse of the coalition government in 1997, narrowed the scope for Islamist activities in Turkey's political system.

Even more significantly, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) responded to an appeal by the head of the banned RP, Necmettin Erbakan, by confirming the ruling of the constitutional court. This decision was significant for two reasons. Firstly, it expressed the fact that, while Europe supported the processes of democratic consolidation and liberalization in Turkey, European institutions did not underestimate the threat posed by militant political Islam to Turkey's democratic system. Secondly, Erbakan's appeal to the ECHR had a significant symbolic value.<sup>8</sup> For decades, Erbakan had been fighting the “corruption” and “injustice” of Western civilization with every means at his disposal—and now he was appealing to a European court to demand his rights. The recognition of the legal authority of the ECHR represented the swan song of the “Just Order,” which Erbakan had championed throughout his long political career. This enabled the reformers of political Islam to gather their strength and convincingly argue that the “Just Order” was obsolete and that a new approach to politics was needed. The appeal of this line of argument became clear in the November 2002 parliamentary elections. Although traditional political Islam did not vanish from the scene in these elections, its poor performance at the polls proved that it had been forced onto the fringes of Turkish politics and no longer constituted a threat to the supremacy of the AKP.

Additionally, two underlying reasons can be adduced for the remarkable changes in political Islam. Firstly, the election results showed that, while voters approved of religion and the public role of Islam, this did not mean

<sup>7</sup> Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, “AKP and the Paradox of Islamic Europhilia,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 3, no. 1 (spring 2004): 65–70 (66–68).

<sup>8</sup> İhsan D. Dağı, “Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization,” *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 1 (winter 2005): 21–37 (28).

that they wanted to see an Islamic regime come to power in Turkey. Opinion polls in the late 1990s showed that only 19.8 percent of respondents were in favor of an “Islamic legal order” (*şeriat düzeni*) in Turkey. In certain areas of Islamic law, like polygamy and inheritance and divorce law, the rate of approval dropped to between 10 and 14 percent.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, the AKP went through a process of adjustment to liberal political values which redefined its political identity, its agenda, and its style of argumentation. On the fundamental question of secularism, for example, the AKP developed a position which differed noticeably from that of its predecessors: the AKP did not attack secularism as such, but confined itself to opposing its Kemalist/Jacobin version. The author of an article that appeared on the AKP’s official web site commented:

“The AKP sees ‘secularism’ as an institutional attitude and process that ensures that the state remains neutral and equidistant to all religions and worldviews. Differences of religion and/or denomination and differences in ideology can be articulated by peaceful means without resulting in social conflicts. The party believes that secularism must be supported by democracy and must act within a conciliatory environment in order to function as a mechanism for ensuring fundamental rights and freedoms under the protection of the constitution.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus secularism was viewed not as an obstacle, but as a means of protecting democracy and human rights: “an indispensable prerequisite for democracy and a guarantor of freedom of religion and conscience.”<sup>11</sup> The party believed that both Kemalist secularism and Islamism should be replaced by a “passive” secularism, which it defined as “a means of orientation for the state, but not for the individual,” “a means of freedom and social equity,” and “a guarantor of freedom of conscience.”<sup>12</sup>

The changes in Islamic political identity in Turkey were also fostered by the fact that the political agenda for change overlapped with many points of the EU’s agenda for reform.<sup>13</sup> As the measures for fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria matched the AKP’s agenda for domestic reforms, the party became a dedicated supporter of the criteria, hoping that sensitive issues like the headscarf question could be dealt with more easily if they were presented as necessary stages of the democratization process and as conditions for the start of EU accession negotiations rather than merely aspects of the AKP’s party policy. Thus the abolition of restrictions on wearing headscarves in public could be presented not as an Islamist

<sup>9</sup> For details see Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak, *Türkiye’de Din, Toplum ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Yalçın Akdoğan, *AK Parti ve Muhafazakâr Demokrasi* (Ankara: AK Parti Yayınları, 2004), [www.akparti.org.tr/muhafazakar.doc](http://www.akparti.org.tr/muhafazakar.doc) (accessed July 7, 2006, author’s translation).

<sup>11</sup> Ahmet İnsel, “The AKP and Normalizing Democracy in Turkey,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2/3 (spring/summer 2003): 293–308 (304).

<sup>12</sup> Metin Heper and Şule Toktaş, “Islam, Modernity, and Democracy in Contemporary Turkey: The Case of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan,” *The Muslim World* 93, no. 2 (April 2003): 157–85 (176).

<sup>13</sup> For details see Dağı, “Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey” (see note 8).

political measure geared towards restoring respect for Islamic legal and moral principles, but rather as the expression of a liberal attitude which aimed to ensure freedom of religion and freedom of opinion for all Turkish citizens. Just as most western European states viewed the headscarf as a private matter protected by constitutional rights and therefore rejected legislation on the issue, so Turkey too was to redefine the wearing of the headscarf as a matter of fundamental personal freedom. This redefinition of the headscarf issue was highly significant in that it expressed the spread of liberal ideas in political Islam in Turkey and also illustrated the change in tactics by the AKP to satisfy its voters' expectations.

To avoid serious political disagreements with the military and the bureaucratic elite, the AKP government did not openly put the headscarf issue on the agenda. Instead, it hoped to legalize the wearing of headscarves in public through a ruling by the ECHR. In this way, the issue could have been presented not as part of an Islamist agenda but rather as a European precondition for Turkey's accession to the EU. However, the ECHR's ruling on the headscarf issue was not what the AKP had hoped for. In the case of "Leyla Şahin vs. Turkey," the court ruled that Article 9 of the European Human Rights Convention (freedom of thought, conscience, and religion) had not been violated.<sup>14</sup> The plaintiff had been prevented from registering at a university and sitting examinations because she wore a headscarf. While this ruling was a disappointment to the AKP government, it had no effect on liberal discourse within the AKP about the headscarf issue,<sup>15</sup> although it did raise concerns about the application of double standards by the ECHR when it came to issues of religious freedoms for Muslims.

### The Limits of Reform

The reform process put pressure on the Kemalist public administration. The bureaucracy could not resist the reforms that curtailed its privileges because the European Union had made them a precondition for the start of accession negotiations. Turkey's accession to the EU would be the culmination of the Westernization policy which was begun by the Ottoman elite and continued by the Kemalist-secularist elite—a policy which aimed to disassociate Turkey from its Ottoman past in the Middle East and place it on course toward European culture and European politics. However, even though the bureaucracy did not openly oppose the reforms, it remained extremely skeptical of the AKP's publicly propagated intentions. Many supporters of secularism believed that the AKP was pursuing a policy of dissimulation (*takiyye*) and secretly pursuing a hidden Islamist agenda that would emerge when the time was right.

<sup>14</sup> European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), "Leyla Şahin vs. Turkey," Fourth Section, 2004, 1-27 (26).

<sup>15</sup> The court's ruling actually neither hindered nor promoted the lifting of the restrictions. See Taha Akyol, "Anayasa, Laiklik, Siyaset," *Milliyet*, April 27, 2005.

The transformation of the AKP to a “democratic Islamic” party is still not complete. Among the questions still left unresolved is the party’s attitude to the Alevites, the largest non-Sunni Muslim group in Turkey. The AKP’s skillful ideological orientation towards liberalism has not yet had a significant effect on the party’s policy towards the Alevites. The AKP government continues to cling to a one-sided official religious policy that favors the Sunnis. The Religious Affairs Directorate (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), the authority that regulates religious matters, remains a Sunni-dominated institution whose financial resources and scope for representation are open only to Sunni Islam, while the Alevites, along with other Muslim groupings and non-Muslims, are excluded. Although several reforms were suggested that would have ensured equal access to this authority for all religious denominations, they all fell on deaf ears in government circles. It appears that the urgency of remaining loyal to liberal principles begins to wane as soon as these principles question the supremacy of Sunni Islam over other faiths.

### Conclusions

The transformation of the AKP into a “democratic Islamic” conservative party is one of the most interesting current developments in political Islam. The party, which has its roots in Islamism, successfully redefined its political identity according to liberal democratic principles as the result of political pragmatism and an adaptation to European political values. Turkey’s efforts to meet the Copenhagen criteria in order to qualify for EU membership turned the European Union into a decisive force in Turkish domestic policy and helped the government shed its Islamist identity. The reform agenda and the AKP’s success in starting accession negotiations with the EU provided added legitimization for the government’s actions in spite of skepticism among the military and bureaucratic elites, and confirmed that the accusation of dissimulatory tactics was unjustified. It is one of the ironies of history that a party originating on the fringes of Turkish society, which according to Western and secularist fears should represent a threat to the Kemalist reform project and Turkey’s orientation towards the West, has ultimately done more than any preceding secularist government to achieve the ultimate purpose of this reform process, namely Turkey’s accession to the EU. This state of affairs also illustrates that democratic principles have spread beyond the limits of Turkish elites. The efforts of the AKP to achieve political reforms proved that democratization was no longer a matter for the political elites alone, but also an issue of interest to the majority of the population. Finally, the example of the AKP shows that the marriage of Islam to liberal political principles can be more than a pipe dream, which, however, still needs a foreign political anchor. To facilitate the consolidation of the success of the AKP experiment, European institutions need to treat Turkey fairly in the accession negotiations and continue promoting its political liberalization, including issues of religious freedom for Muslims.

## Between Pragmatism and “Confessional Cleansing”: Shi'ite Islamists in Iraq

*Guido Steinberg*

It is too early to tell to what extent the Iraqi political system will endure in its present form. Strong currents in Iraqi politics reject the constitution that was passed in 2005 and the federal system it provides for. Nor, as demonstrated by the decision at the end of September 2006 to set up a constitutional review commission, has the constitution actually been finalized. Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that the civil war will escalate and that Iraq could break apart into two or more entities. The extremely unstable security situation is already ensuring that the political institutions of the new Iraq are emerging only very slowly. For these reasons any analysis of the behavior of the Islamists in Iraq must be of the same provisional nature as the country's emerging political system itself. This study concentrates on the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), because after the transitional government took office in April 2005 SCIRI succeeded in exerting decisive influence on the new constitution and on Iraqi politics as a whole (admittedly working in close cooperation with American officials). The Daawa Party of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari (from April 2005) and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (from May 2006) is also included in the analysis because at least until December 2005 it functioned as SCIRI's junior partner. The question here is how the Islamists have integrated themselves into the political process in cooperation with the American administration, and to what extent their integration helps to stabilize the country.

### Islamists in Iraq and Regime Change from Outside

Even before the invasion was launched in spring 2003, the U.S. Administration had established contacts with Iraqi Shi'ite Islamists in exile in Tehran, London, and Damascus, believing that their cooperation would be vital for establishing a stable post-war order. Since 2003 the occupation authorities and their successors have been working closely together with Islamist groups.<sup>1</sup> The most prominent of these are SCIRI and the Daawa Party, which used their good relations with the United States to consolidate their position in the central government and in the majority Shi'ite provinces of southern Iraq. The SCIRI-dominated United Iraqi Alliance of Shi'ite parties succeeded in winning the January 2005 elections to the transitional parliament, which allowed it to form the government in April 2005. Since then SCIRI and the Daawa Party have held the reins of national

<sup>1</sup> After formally handing over sovereignty to the Iraqi transitional government under Iyad Allawi, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was dissolved in June 2004. Since then its role has effectively been taken over by the American embassy in Baghdad.

government together with the two Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), even if the American government continues to exercise a decisive influence. Thus Islamists came to power in Iraq through a military regime change initiated and conducted by the United States and in practical terms today govern together with the United States.

After the old regime was toppled it quickly became clear that even under Saddam Hussein many Iraqis had already been close to Islamist currents. After the former ruling party had been forced underground, Islamist organizations on both the Shi'ite and Sunni sides quickly came to mobilize numerous supporters and received funding from sponsors in neighboring countries. Shi'ite Islamists are supported by state bodies in Iran, while the Sunnis receive financial backing from public and private sources in Syria and the Gulf states.

On the Shi'ite side SCIRI, led by the religious scholar Abdalaziz al-Hakim, is currently the strongest Islamist group. At the December 2005 elections it won about 30 of the 275 seats and holds the majority in eight out of nine regional assemblies in the provinces in the south of the country. SCIRI's most important ally is the Daawa Party, which won 28 seats, followed by the movement of the populist preacher Moktada al-Sadr, which is also part of the United Iraqi Alliance and won 30 seats in parliament in December 2005.<sup>2</sup>

The Sunni Islamists keep a distance to the new government of Iraq. They were late to organize, and less rigorous when they did. Their most important representatives are the Iraqi Islamic Party and the Association of Muslim Scholars, both of which emerged from the Iraqi branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Islamic Party has to date shown itself to be open to compromise, and plays an important role in the political process. It dominates the Iraqi Consensus Front, the electoral alliance that won 44 seats and is also part of Prime Minister Maliki's government of national unity. Another important organization is the moderate Islamist Kurdistan Islamic Union, which won five seats at the December 2005 elections.

Altogether Islamist parties and organizations won about 177 of the 275 seats at the elections, a clear sign of the extent to which Islamist ideas have permeated political life. Almost all the parties have formed along either religious or (in the case of Kurdish and Turkmen parties) ethnic/religious lines. Lists bridging religious and ethnic divides were able to attract only a small share of the vote. This is the outcome of a retreat into the religious community, the ethnic group, and the tribe, a process which began in response to the collapse of the legitimacy of the state under Saddam Hussein but intensified yet further in the catastrophic security situation after 2003.

<sup>2</sup> The number of seats cannot be determined exactly, because deputies' allegiances are not always absolutely clear. Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: Elections, Government, and Constitution*, Report for Congress, updated June 15, 2006, Congressional Research Service, Washington, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/68287.pdf>. The United Iraqi Alliance includes numerous independent candidates.

## SCIRI and the Daawa Party in Power I: Pragmatic Cooperation

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq was founded in Tehran in 1982 by Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim (1939–2003), a member of one of Iraq's leading scholarly families. It is obvious from the time and place of the founding that Tehran was interested above all in organizing and subsequently instrumentalizing the Shi'ite opposition-in-exile in its war against Iraq (1980–88). Originally the grouping, which set up its headquarters in Tehran, was to function as an umbrella organization. But its function as an Iranian front prevented it from exerting any great influence on Iraqi Shi'ites and their organizations. SCIRI was completely dependent on Iranian support. In 1984 it set up its own military wing, the Badr Brigades, which were trained and controlled by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and fought on the Iranian side in the war against Iraq.<sup>3</sup> SCIRI's dependency on Tehran was also reflected in the organization's ideology. It followed Khomeini's teachings of the "rule of the religious jurist" (Farsi: *velâyat-e faqîh*), according to which—until the return of the twelfth imam—the best-qualified religious leader should exercise power in the Islamic state, and accepted first Khomeini and then Khamenei as the supreme religious leader. From 2002, when it became clear that the Bush Administration was determined to bring about regime change in Baghdad, Hakim attempted to present himself as being independent of Iranian control. He intensified SCIRI's existing contacts with the American government in order to be able to play a political role in post-war Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

After Hakim returned to his home country in May 2003 SCIRI quickly became the most important Shi'ite grouping in Iraq. Although the organization did not formally relinquish its goal of setting up an "Islamic state" and the "rule of the religious jurist," it actually showed enormous flexibility in working together with American government officials. Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim and his brother and successor Abdalaziz (as of August 2003) pursued a tactical cooperation with the Americans. Although they worked closely with them, they also made it clear that they would demand the withdrawal of foreign forces at the earliest possible date.<sup>5</sup> SCIRI even accepted the principle of democratic elections and called for a government that reflected Iraq's ethnic and religious diversity. In this respect it followed the example of the leading Shi'ite scholar in Iraq, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who forced U.S. Civil Administrator Paul Bremer to agree to the holding of early direct general elections to a transitional parliament. At the January 2005 elections Sistani supported—although not absolutely explicitly—the United Iraqi Alliance of the Shi'ite parties, in which SCIRI

<sup>3</sup> The Badr Brigades were renamed Badr Organization after 2003.

<sup>4</sup> "In Iraq's Disorder, the Ayatollahs May Save the Day," *New York Times*, July 6, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> International Crisis Group, ed., *Iraq's Shiites under Occupation*, Middle East Briefing no. 8 (Brussels, September 9, 2003), 13. Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim was killed on August 29, 2003, in a suicide car bombing by the Zarqawi network in a crowd leaving the shrine in Najaf.

and the Daawa Party held a dominating position.<sup>6</sup> Because Shi'ites make up about 60 percent of Iraq's population, these parties hoped to be able to dominate the new transitional government and thus the process of drawing up a constitution. Sistani's gamble paid off. The Alliance won 140 of the 275 seats and Abdalaziz al-Hakim negotiated the wording of the constitution almost exclusively with the two Kurdish parties, the PUK and the KDP—with decisive involvement on the part of the American ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad.

At the December 2005 elections to the Iraqi parliament the United Iraqi Alliance was able to repeat its success with only minor losses, winning 128 of 275 seats and joining the government again. Now, however, the balance of power within the Alliance itself had shifted. The Sadr movement, which had entered parliament with just eight deputies in January, had joined the Alliance before the elections and won 32 seats in December. It pursued a much more clearly anti-American line than SCIRI and called for a strong central state that was irreconcilable with the federalism of the constitution drawn up by SCIRI and the Kurdish parties. The Sadr movement's increased share of the vote gave it great influence on the process of forming a government. It prevented the nomination of SCIRI's representative, Adil Abdul Mahdi, as the Alliance's candidate for the office of prime minister, instead supporting the prime minister of the last transitional government, Daawa leader Ibrahim al-Jaafari. Although a compromise candidate was found in the person of Nuri al-Maliki, the episode clearly revealed the limited influence of SCIRI, which now provided only the finance minister and a vice-president.

Critics of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution often claim that it only took part in the 2005 elections in order to gain power in Baghdad. As soon as Abdalaziz al-Hakim and his followers had established themselves and the American forces had reduced their presence in the country, the critics said, they would attempt to set up an Islamic republic on the Iranian model. Because there has been no sign of a fundamental review of SCIRI's ideological principles, this argument cannot be rejected out of hand. All the same, for four years already, SCIRI has turned out to be a reliable partner for the American government in Iraq, and has shown considerable flexibility in the process. The same also applies to the Daawa Party, which has an ambivalent relationship to the theory of "rule of the religious jurist," but is generally regarded as more strongly ideological than SCIRI.

### **SCIRI and the Daawa Party in Power II: "Confessional Cleansing"**

Ideological flexibility and pragmatic willingness to compromise of the kind found in SCIRI's relationship with the United States are, however, largely lacking in its conduct of the domestic affairs of government. In

<sup>6</sup> Reidar Vissar, *Sistani, the United States and Politics in Iraq: From Quietism to Machiavellianism?* NUPI Paper no. 700 (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2006), 1–37 (11–13).

that field, the assumption of office by Jaafari's cabinet led to a heightening of religious conflict in which SCIRI politicians played a decisive role.

Shortly after the assassination of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, SCIRI leaders already called for Iraqis to be given greater powers in matters of security. This pressure intensified as anti-Shi'ite attacks by insurgents mounted. Certain groupings under the leadership of the Zarqawi network (which was later renamed al-Qaida in Iraq) tried deliberately to provoke a civil war between Sunnis and Shi'ites.<sup>7</sup> Although the American government initially resisted SCIRI's calls, it also proved unable to disarm the Shi'ite militias, especially the Badr Organization and the Sadr movement's Mahdi Army. SCIRI was able to rebuff demands for dissolution of the militias with the convincing argument that neither the army nor the police were capable of protecting the Shi'ite population and its religious and political leadership. In the face of constant attacks on Shi'ite civilians during the course of 2004 it became increasingly difficult to hold the Shi'ite militias back from acts of retribution against Sunnis.

SCIRI and Daawa Party leaders and—even more importantly—Grand Ayatollah Sistani repeatedly urged the Shi'ite population to remain calm, certain in the knowledge that the political process would put the levers of power into the hands of the Shi'ite alliance. The situation changed once the transitional government of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari had been installed in April 2005 and a SCIRI politician and senior functionary of the Badr Organization, Bayan Jabr al-Saulagh, was appointed minister of the interior. He purged Sunnis from the interior ministry and police forces and had them replaced in large numbers by new Shi'ite recruits.<sup>8</sup> From August 2005 reports began mounting about kidnappings and murders of Sunni civilians from Baghdad and the southern suburbs, shot in the head before having their corpses dumped in remote places. Among those responsible were the police forces of the interior ministry, especially its paramilitary units, which were increasingly infiltrated by Shi'ite militias.<sup>9</sup> These were mostly members of the Badr Organization, which has at least ten thousand fighters in Iraq. In mixed Sunni/Shi'ite neighborhoods and regions the activities of police and militias took on the character of "ethnic" or "confessional cleansing." The extent of the ministry's practices only came to light, however, in November 2005 when American forces discovered a secret underground prison in Baghdad belonging to the interior ministry. Its Sunni inmates had been tortured, and this was apparently a widespread phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> Sunni insurgents also intensified their anti-

<sup>7</sup> Guido Steinberg, *Der nahe und der ferne Feind: Die Netzwerke des islamistischen Terrorismus* (Munich, 2005), 225–28.

<sup>8</sup> "How Iraq Police Reform Became Casualty of War," *New York Times*, May 22, 2006. After taking office in June 2004, the prime minister of the first transitional government, Iyad Allawi, had integrated many Sunnis (including former members of the military and security forces) in the new security structures. This policy had drawn heavy criticism from all Shi'ite organizations.

<sup>9</sup> International Crisis Group, ed., *The Next Iraqi War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict*, ICG Middle East Report no. 52 (Brussels, February 27, 2006), 1–43 (17–21).

<sup>10</sup> "How Iraq Police Reform Became Casualty of War" (see note 8).

Shi'ite attacks in order to prevent the new state from stabilizing, and from summer 2005 the country started descending increasingly rapidly toward civil war, which finally erupted in spring 2006.

Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, the SCIRI leadership and Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari bear responsibility for the actions of police forces and the Badr Organization. The inclusion of Shi'ite Islamists from the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution was a decisive factor that worsened the violence between the confessions in Iraq and further destabilized the country.

### **SCIRI between Pragmatism and Religious Violence**

The Iraqi experience in dealing with Shi'ite Islamists has so far produced very ambivalent results. For four years now SCIRI and the Daawa Party have shown themselves to be reliable partners for the United States, and demonstrated considerable ideological flexibility in the process. It was a big step to suspend the principle of "rule of the religious jurist" and accept the idea of democratic elections instead. But SCIRI has to this day been unable to dispel the suspicion that consolidating its position in Baghdad was merely to serve as the first step toward founding an Islamic state. And integrating SCIRI in the government allowed the Badr Organization to infiltrate the Iraqi police forces. The forces' subsequent acts of violence against Sunnis give reason to fear that SCIRI's aim is not a political system that integrates all groups in society, but instead to establish a Shi'ite Islamist dictatorship in Iraq.

Iraq today can be considered a test bed for American policy toward Islamists. If it wishes to stabilize the country, the U.S. administration will have to cooperate with Islamist organizations. This means that SCIRI and the Daawa Party as well as several other Shi'ite and Sunni Islamist organizations have a role to play in the political process. Since spring 2005 the Americans have been putting pressure on the Kurdish parties and the Shi'ite alliance to integrate the Sunnis in the political process, primarily in the guise of the Islamist-dominated Iraqi Consensus Front. If, despite all the difficulties, Iraq can be successfully stabilized with the help of at least some of these organizations, this will probably shape American policy toward Islamists across the whole region. Here, Germany and Europe can play no more than an observer role at present.

However, European policymakers must prepare for the consequences of Islamists taking power in Baghdad and the provinces. The overwhelming majority of politicians—and to all appearances the population too—are demanding a society and a political system where Islamic law not only provides the basic legal framework but governs even the smallest details of everyday life. Cooperating with the United States in the big political questions has allowed SCIRI, the Daawa Party, and other Islamists to implement their social policy ideas—which are often very similar to those of the Iranian leadership—in the Shi'ite-populated regions. With the exception of the Kurdish regions, Shi'ite and Sunni Islamists have already imposed

their purportedly Islamic behavior codes, sometimes using violence. The new rulers in Baghdad will in future cite "Islam" as they increasingly vigorously rebuff Europe's calls for political reforms, observance of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, and promotion of civil society.



**Case Studies B:  
Islamists in Opposition and in  
Governing Coalitions**



# Algeria's Legal Islamists: From "Fifth Column" to a Pillar of the Regime

Isabelle Werenfels

No Arab state has changed its policy toward Islamist parties as radically in the last two decades as Algeria has done. In the course of an abrupt democratic opening, a reform-minded government in 1989 legalized several Islamist parties, among them the Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut, FIS). Its victory in the first round of the 1991 general election ushered in a new phase in dealing with Islamists. The military cancelled the election, seized power, banned the FIS, and persecuted its leadership and sympathizers in the most brutal fashion. The civil war that followed lasted several years. In a third phase that began in the mid-1990s and is still ongoing, the Algerian regime adopted a strategy of allowing Islamists to participate formally in the political process and of integrating Islamist parties into government.<sup>1</sup> However, the government is selective in applying this strategy. It does not legalize all Islamist parties that are prepared to comply with the formally democratic, but actually highly authoritarian, rules of the Algerian presidential system. After nearly a decade of selective integration, a number of effects on the Islamist spectrum and the political system are apparent, some of them paradoxical.<sup>2</sup> They are elucidated below on the basis of four theses. I also explore the extent to which generally applicable conclusions can be drawn from the different Algerian experiences of dealing with Islamists.

**Thesis 1:** *Selective integration of Islamist parties in Algeria has played a major role in fragmenting and thereby weakening the non-violent end of the Islamist spectrum.*

Three categories of Islamist parties are now present in Algeria:

- ▶ Legal parties that participate in government. At present, there is only one party in this category, the MSP (Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix, formerly the Algerian Hamas). In 1997 it became the third-strongest force in parliament, but dropped to fourth place in 2002. That was mainly because voters increasingly see the MSP as part of government, although it tends to present itself as being in semi-opposition.
- ▶ Legal Islamist opposition parties with representatives in parliament. These include al-Islah (or Mouvement de la Réforme Nationale, MRN),

<sup>1</sup> A few years earlier a number of pro-regime Islamists had already been integrated into the system through individual agreements. Noura Hamladji, *Co-optation, Repression and an Authoritarian Regime's Survival: The Case of the Islamist MSP-Hamas in Algeria*, EUI Working Paper, SPS no. 7 (Badia Fiesolana, San Domenico: European University Institute, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> For more on state strategies and their effects see Isabelle Werenfels, *Between Integration and Repression: Government Responses to Islamism in the Maghreb*, SWP Research Paper 39/2005, December 2005, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, [www.swp-berlin.org/en/common/get\\_document.php?asset\\_id=2800](http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/common/get_document.php?asset_id=2800).

which broke away from the now almost insignificant Ennahda. In 2002 al-Islah, profiting from the decline in the MSP vote, became the third-strongest force in parliament and the strongest legal Islamist party. It is unlikely to do as well in the 2007 parliamentary elections. The party's bank accounts were frozen in June 2006 after party dissidents made allegations of misappropriation of funds. The party leader was relieved of his duties, and the party was brought to the verge of a split.

- ▶ Banned or illegal Islamist parties that are striving for (re)legalization and are willing to work within democratic processes. Along with Wafa, which has never been legalized and which could equally well be called Arab nationalist as Islamist, this category includes most groupings within the banned FIS, which has split into several wings, thereby becoming considerably weakened. Prior to that, it had to cope with serious losses as many leading figures in the party were persecuted, imprisoned, or murdered.

What all actors in these three categories have in common is, first, their emphatic rejection of violence as a means to achieve political ends. This is not least a result of the civil war and of the events of September 11, 2001, which, nationally and internationally, drastically lowered the threshold of tolerance for violence as a means of achieving political ends. Second, these Islamist parties share the same central sociopolitical concerns, such as social justice and stronger realization of Islamic values. They have also called for the strengthening of parliament and the justice system, for a clear division of powers to be practiced, and for a fight against corruption. Their political agendas focus almost exclusively on Algerian national issues.

In everyday politics, the common ground that the different actors share is of less consequence than their differences in official status. As a result, the Islamist parties pursue divergent interests, vie with each other for supporters and political influence, and collaborate increasingly with non-Islamist parties. With few exceptions, al-Islah has been voting in parliament with the Trotskyite party, whose dirigiste economic and (ultra-)nationalist rhetoric it shares. In the 2004 presidential elections, the al-Islah candidate cooperated closely with the candidate of a radical, secular Berber party. The MSP, on the other hand, rather than supporting the al-Islah candidate or putting up its own candidate, campaigned for the incumbent president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Since acquiring status, influence, and privileges, the MSP has shown a noticeable tendency to take decisions more with an eye to holding on to power than to short-term implementation of its religiously inspired sociopolitical agenda.

**Thesis 2:** *The legal Islamist parties have become more willing to compromise and more pragmatic as a result of integration, and are adapting to the informal rules of the system.*

Although the MSP and al-Islah are still fixated on the Arab-Islamic heritage and have opposed the strengthening of Berber identity, in 2002 they voted to make the Berber language an official language under the constitution.

By doing so, these legal Islamist parties demonstrated a tolerance towards cultural diversity extending beyond mere lip service. Moreover, after initial resistance the MSP finally decided to support certain educational reforms that are designed to teach universal values and to upgrade the teaching of French, and in 2005 it backed a reform, albeit a marginal one, to change the personal status law, which had been extremely discriminatory against women. In this way the MSP regularly extracts compromises from the president. For instance, the 2005 ban on using French as the principal language of instruction in private schools was a concession to the Islamists, and to conservative forces in Algeria's strongest party, the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale). This same conservative alliance also prevented a more progressive reform of the personal status law.

Pragmatic reasons were behind the decision in 2005 by the MSP and al-Islah to support the 'Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation' launched by the President even though it guaranteed freedom from prosecution to members of the security forces involved in the killings of Islamists, and included provisions foreclosing any future political activities of leaders of the banned FIS.<sup>3</sup> The legal Islamist parties' decision to endorse the charter was certainly based on power-political considerations. Rehabilitation of the FIS would have spelled serious Islamist competition.

Moreover, the Algerian Islamists are increasingly adapting to the informal rules of the political system. True, Islamist party elites see corruption and clientelism as central problems of the Algerian system. Nonetheless, Islamist deputies at the local and national levels increasingly form part of cross-party clientelist networks and are themselves mixed up in corruption and embezzlement affairs. In January 2006 the MSP (like almost every other party) opposed a clause in a new anticorruption law that would have forced parliamentarians to reveal more details about their personal wealth.

Thus the Algerian example shows that, in everyday political life, Islamist parties behave no differently from non-Islamist parties, and that, if allowed to participate in a pluralistic process, they become a "normal" political quantity. They split, argue with each other, and adapt their agendas to changing external circumstances.

**Thesis 3:** *Selective integration of Islamist parties is a double-edged sword insofar as the authoritarian Algerian system's capacity for reform is concerned.*

Islamist participation has led to (slightly) more representative formal political institutions and to a more pluralist political debate. The MSP and al-Islah have persistently called for greater independence of the judiciary, for the strengthening of parliament, and for transparent political processes. They have done so not only for ideological reasons but also because

<sup>3</sup> This Charter was the second national reconciliation initiative launched by the president, after the *Concorde civile* in 1999, seeking to close the chapter of the civil war and to halt violence by armed groups. The main instrument of both initiatives was a partial amnesty for (former) armed fighters provided that they gave up their arms and/or renounced violence.

these two parties would stand to profit most from such reforms. In an internal charter for elected members published in 2002, al-Islah stipulated that the party's members of parliament were only to vote in favor of laws that offered the prospect of greater justice and social security and that did not contradict the principles of Islam and Sharia law. Though the charter did not define Sharia precisely,<sup>4</sup> neither al-Islah nor the MSP see Western concepts such as good governance, the rule of law, and democracy as contradicting the Sharia. However, apart from an election law reform initiated by al-Islah in 2002, that was designed to create greater transparency at the polls, Islamist pushes towards democratization and the rule of law have not been crowned with success.

Instead, and paradoxically, selective Islamist participation has had the effect of reinforcing rather than softening existing authoritarian structures. It has bestowed greater legitimacy on the Algerian regime both nationally and internationally, but hardly changed real power relations at all. MSP and al-Islah party elites have largely refrained from calling for all Islamist parties to be legalized because by doing so they would create more competition for themselves. The MSP, which set out to change the system from within,<sup>5</sup> has to a great extent allowed itself to be seduced by power. Now, in practice it does not so much pursue its own political reform agenda as one of strengthening the president. It propagates the rule of law, but during the 2004 election campaign it supported the course taken by President Bouteflika, who was increasingly stifling the press and instrumentalizing the judiciary. The litmus test for the reform-mindedness of the MSP in particular will be its stance on Bouteflika's plan to amend the constitution to enable him to stand for a third term, possibly of seven years rather than five.<sup>6</sup> Al-Islah has voiced its opposition to amending the constitution in this way. However, it is uncertain whether the party will stick to this position, given its internal differences and external pressure.

Both, the MSP as a party of government and al-Islah as an opposition party impede political change, not least indirectly through their conservative sociopolitical agenda. In several key areas of policy, such as education, the Islamists, despite a number of minor concessions, have been obstructing fundamental reforms (in this case of curricula) because they fear that by implementing them Algeria will import Western values. By doing so, however, they are also preventing realization of their own demands, such as reinforcing civic values. Yet the Islamists are by no means alone in their skepticism about educational reforms. In this area of policy, too, little separates them from the conservative FLN mainstream.

<sup>4</sup> It is, anyway, often unclear what is meant by a call to apply the Sharia. Is it its norms, its method of establishing justice, its criminal law provisions, or only civil law areas? See also the contribution by Johannes Reissner in this volume, pp. 15ff.

<sup>5</sup> From interviews with MSP office holders conducted in 2002, 2004, and 2006 in Algiers and Berlin.

<sup>6</sup> Bouteflika announced that a referendum on the constitutional amendment would be held at the end of 2006, but then postponed it indefinitely.

**Thesis 4:** *Selective Islamist participation has helped to re-stabilize the “failing state” of Algeria. Nonetheless, it is not a recipe for enduring stability.*

The re-stabilization of the Algerian state in the late 1990s is partly, but not primarily, due to the selective integration of Islamists. This has helped to fragment, and thus to weaken, the Islamist spectrum, and to (slightly) enhance the regime's legitimacy. However, other factors have had a more critical influence in bringing about the marked decline in violence,<sup>7</sup> the almost complete restoration of the state monopoly on violence, and the resulting stabilization of the Algerian state. They included military action against armed Islamist groups, a ceasefire negotiated in 1997 between the army and the armed wing of the FIS, and the reconciliation initiatives in 1999 and 2005, when armed Islamists were offered a far-reaching amnesty in return for relinquishing their weapons. Moreover, the massacres of thousands of civilians in 1996 and 1997 led the population to withdraw support from the armed Islamic groups.<sup>8</sup> Last but not least, positive macro-economic developments due to the high price of oil enabled the state and the regime to consolidate. The state was able to initiate extensive infrastructure projects, providing jobs for more (young) Algerians and thereby reducing violence and conflict potential.

Nonetheless, neither selective integration nor the other factors mentioned can guarantee enduring stability, as the resurgence of violence by armed groups in early 2007 demonstrated. Many of the structural causes of the violent conflict between the state and Islamists in the 1990s have not been eliminated and were also the focus of the Berber uprisings in 2001 and 2002 in Kabylia. Political participation is still restricted, enormous social injustices persist in spite of the wealth derived from oil and natural gas, and the national identity issue remains contentious. Moreover, Algeria has not come to terms with the civil war. Not only does selective integration offer no solution to these problems, it actually creates a problem because it is based on the partial exclusion of important actors.

## Lessons from Algeria

Algeria was for many years a prime example of how not to deal with Islamists. Enough is known about the consequences of exclusion and suppression of Islamists in the 1990s, which can be summarized as civil war and the establishment of a military regime. Still, to attribute Algeria's destabilization in the 1990s to the state's exclusion and suppression strategy alone would be too simplistic. Destabilization was also a consequence of the abrupt opening up of the one-party system in 1989. This coincided with a profound economic and social crisis and with conflicts over

<sup>7</sup> Some armed groups are still in existence in 2007. The largest is the GSPC (Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat), which renamed itself al-Qaida fi-bilad il-Maghreb al-islami in early 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Accusations by former members of the Algerian security forces did little to alter this. They claimed that the armed groups had been manipulated by the secret service in order to discredit the Islamists.

what constituted the official Algerian identity. With the political system in upheaval, the institutional framework for the democratization process was fragile. A further problem was that virtually no restrictions were placed on political parties: the FIS was legalized even though the law prohibited political associations based on religion.

Consequently, one lesson to be drawn from the Algerian experience is that both the point in time and the nature of inclusion determine its outcome. The time is doubly important, first as regards the social and economic context and second as regards the evolution of an Islamist actor. The MSP and Ennahda (from which al-Islah split off in 1999) were integrated at a time when their mobilization potential was relatively weak and they had already moderated their positions.

In view of these lessons from the case of Algeria, European policy should call for, and support clearly, the (gradual) inclusion of Islamists in particular if integration is likely to take place without massive destabilizing consequences. This is currently the case in Algeria's neighboring state Tunisia, where Islamists are completely excluded from the political process. Tunisia's general socioeconomic conditions are not precarious, institutions are consolidated, and the Islamist movement is both weak and moderate.

On the other hand, in view of the Algerian experience it would be wrong to expect too much. Selective integration of Islamists is not a recipe for democratization. Even if Algerian Islamists are seriously keen to promote the strengthening of parliament and of the judicial system, even if they were to oppose a further term in office for President Bouteflika, and even if they are calling for a free and fair election campaign and balloting process for the 2007 parliamentary elections, their hands are tied due to general conditions in the authoritarian Algerian system. The EU and its member states should therefore support Islamist demands to enhance political competition.

# The Paradox of Bahrain: Authoritarian Islamists through Participation, Pro-Democratic Islamists through Exclusion?

Katja Niethammer

Almost everywhere in the Arab world, and even beyond, large parts of the Islamist movement have abandoned the model of an undemocratic and often vaguely defined Islamic state.<sup>1</sup> They have studied the processes of democracy and law and order in theory—and in practice too, though only within the limits set by the ruling autocracies—and entrenched these processes in their discourse. The “learning hypothesis” that frequently appears in scholarly debates is that participation in parliaments would further advance this development. According to this view, Islamist groups are believed to moderate their political stance and to develop a pragmatic agenda thanks to their experiences as candidates in elections and as representatives in parliament.<sup>2</sup> Because of this circumstance, it has become popular to maintain that Islamists are virtually predestined to participate in Western reform initiatives. However, it is often forgotten that Islamists are not necessarily part of the opposition and that they may just as frequently be interested in preserving the status quo of authoritarian regimes. Islamists hostile to reform are particularly likely to be found in countries where society is religiously fragmented and where resources are unevenly distributed among the population groups.

The example of Bahrain provides an especially vivid illustration of the spectrum between reformist and “status quo” Islamists while casting doubt on the existence of a simple causal relationship between participation and moderation. In the small kingdom of Bahrain, it was precisely those Islamist groups who had decided *not* to participate in the 2002 parliamentary elections which became moderate and pragmatic.<sup>3</sup> The Islamists in question belong to two Shi’ite political parties, al-Wefaq al-Islami al-Watani (Islamic National Accord) and al-Amal al-Islami (Islamic Action), whose pro-democratic discourse appears to mirror the Broader Middle East Initiative.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The most comprehensive German-language study of Sunni Islamist concepts of the state is Gudrun Krämer’s *Gottes Staat als Republik: Reflexionen zeitgenössischer Muslime zu Islam, Menschenrechten und Demokratie* (Baden-Baden, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> An examination of the learning hypothesis using several case studies is offered by James Piscatori, *Islam, Islamists, and the Electoral Principle in the Middle East* (Leiden: International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, 2000). See also Judy Barsalou, *Islamists at the Ballot Box: Findings from Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, and Turkey*, USIP Special Report 144 (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, July 2005).

<sup>3</sup> All the Islamist groups took part in the elections of November 25, 2006 (second round on December 2, 2006). Al-Wefaq gained seventeen of the forty seats in parliament and represents the largest parliamentary group. This analysis is based on the 2002–06 legislative period.

<sup>4</sup> In Bahrain registered political groups are called “associations” or “societies” rather

Different and more complex developments can be observed in the case of those Islamists who decided in favor of participation in parliamentary politics in 2002, namely the two Sunni groups of al-Asala (Purity) and al-Minbar al-Islami (Islamic Platform). Al-Asala is a Salafist organization which models its rhetoric on Saudi examples—and Saudi sponsors—while al-Minbar is a group that emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>5</sup> The Salafist group in particular became more radical in its demands for an Islamized state in the course of its participation in parliament. Neither of the Sunni groups was conspicuous in parliament for proposing reforms; rather, both of them strengthened the dominance of the authoritarian government.

If participation in, or exclusion from, parliament is not the variable that determines the degree of moderation in Islamist groups, other factors allow for more plausible explanations. The political system is one such factor. The degree and kind of possible participation is crucial for the specific scope of action available to the Islamists.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the agenda of Islamist protagonists is governed by their interests and is therefore influenced by the attitude of their supporters to those in power. In particular, societies that are fragmented along religious lines frequently give rise to Islamist groups whose interest in preserving the status quo is almost as great as that of the ruling authorities.

The following paragraphs will briefly highlight the background conditions for political participation in Bahrain and the religious and ethnic fragmentation of the country and will then outline the agendas and strategies of the four Islamist parties. Based on these outlines, we will propose four theses and highlight their implications for the interaction between external protagonists and Islamists in party-political organizations.

than parties. The debate over the designation of political organizations relates less to their function than to the compatibility of the term *hizb* with Islamic ideas. Leftwing and Shi'ite groups prefer the term "party," while Sunnis and conservatives favor "association" or "society." Irrespective of the discussion over names, the "associations" function as parties. They draw up political programs, recruit members, put up candidates, publish party magazines, and have the internal structures of a party (conference, executive, internal elections). In early summer 2006 it was decided that all associations participating in the elections would receive basic funding from the state. In the following, political associations are also referred to as parties, on the basis of the functional equivalence.

**5** *Salafīyya* (Salafism) is an amorphous current of historical Islamic thought whose adherents take the life of the pious ancestors (*as-salaf as-salih*) as their model. Characteristic of Salafism is recourse to the religious sources and rejection of the traditions of theology and jurisprudence. Although *salafīyya* originally designated the modernizing reformers of the second half of the nineteenth century, the term's usage has nowadays transformed into almost the opposite. Today it denotes a strict and intolerant puritan interpretation of Islam. Contemporary Salafists often give their respect for the pious ancestors outward expression by emulating the clothing and customs they believe to be authentic for the early Islamic period.

**6** For detail see Katja Niethammer, *Voices in Parliament, Debates in Majalis, and Banners on Streets: Avenues of Political Participation in Bahrain*, EUI Working Paper RSCAS, no. 27/2006 (San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute, 2006).

## The Limits of Political Participation

The island state of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf remains under autocratic rule despite the political reforms that have been under way since 1999 and which have resulted in the country promoting itself to the rank of a kingdom. However, the reform-oriented new ruler, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, has significantly enlarged the scope for citizens to participate in politics. The media can now report rather freely, civil associations can operate largely unhindered, public political debates take place frequently and without disruption, and the right to demonstrate and hold public gatherings is—with few exceptions—granted liberally. In 2002, parliamentary elections for which political parties were allowed to nominate candidates were held again for the first time since 1973.<sup>7</sup> The next parliamentary elections took place in November and December 2006. These elections will not be analyzed here as the effect of their results on the Islamist groups cannot yet be assessed.

Compared to the neighboring Gulf states, these freedoms make Bahrain look like a model liberal state. Contrary to the claims of official rhetoric, however, it is hardly justifiable to speak of a process of democratization as the (appointed) executive authority dominates the people's elected representatives with overwhelming force:

- ▶ Legislative authority is divided between two parliamentary chambers of equal size, only one of which is elected. The second chamber is nominated by the king, who thus indirectly controls legislation.
- ▶ The electorate does not decide on the composition of government, directly or indirectly. A disproportionately large number of cabinet members belong to the royal family.
- ▶ The civil rights granted by the constitution are limited by law through references to national unity and traditional and religious values. Thus legal security cannot be guaranteed.
- ▶ The country's division into constituencies in the election law discriminates against the Shi'ite population. Although over 70 percent of the country's citizens are Shi'ites, the Shi'ite vote is weighted at only about 50 percent.<sup>8</sup>

## Denominational Dimensions

Political debates in the country are dominated by the conflict between Shi'ites and Sunnis. This development is exacerbated by conditions in Iraq,

<sup>7</sup> After independence from Great Britain in 1971 Bahrain experienced an initial brief phase of liberalization. In 1973 deputies were elected to the first parliament, but in 1975 the chamber was dissolved.

<sup>8</sup> In fragmented societies there are, in theory, good arguments to be found for giving privileges to minorities. In the Bahraini context two things are problematic in this connection: a) the minority is already strongly overrepresented in the executive; b) rather than presenting their electoral law as a Bahraini concordance model, decision-makers deny that constituency boundaries are drawn along denominational lines at all.

which resemble or amounts to a civil war. The Bahraini parliament frequently becomes the scene of violent altercations over declarations of solidarity with one or the other side in the Iraq conflict.

In the past (and to a lesser extent in the present too), Shi'ites in Bahrain were not granted equality by the state. They are discriminated against in the election law and are given fewer opportunities for employment and advancement in the civil service, especially in the security sector. Senior posts in the army and the police force are reserved exclusively for Sunnis, whose loyalty is considered more trustworthy by the Sunni royal family. Additionally, the state has in the past neglected the development of infrastructure in Shi'ite villages.

The latent discontent of the Shi'ites did not express itself in political activism until after the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. Unrest finally broke out in the early 1990s. This "Bahraini Intifada" met with repression from the state, and many activists and clerics were arrested while hundreds were driven into exile. Almost none of them returned until 2001, after the beginning of the reforms. The two Shi'ite parties developed out of the Intifada protest movement.

Although public debate about the equality of Shi'ites and Sunnis is conducted as though the two denominations were internally homogeneous, the reality of Bahraini society is that it is much more complex and fragmented. Not only do Bahraini Shi'ites follow different "sources of imitation" (*maraji'*), i.e. highest Shi'ite clerics,<sup>9</sup> they are also ethnically diverse. Some Shi'ites are Persian, while others originated on the Arabian Peninsula and only came to the archipelago as refugees from Ibn Saud. However, the majority is made up of the *baharna*, formerly agricultural Bahraini Shi'ites who regard themselves as the only indigenous population group on the island. The Sunni population is similarly heterogeneous. Some of them came from the Iranian side of the Gulf, others from the Arabian Peninsula—a division which is reflected in their adherence to different schools of law. Additionally, most of the Sunnis of the Arabian Peninsula have a tribal form of organization.

The societal cleavages are not only maintained on the social level (e.g. through marriage and settlement patterns), but are also reflected in the membership of civil and political associations.

### Islamist Agendas

The sectarian debate not only dominates the kingdom as a whole, but is also reflected within the Islamist spectrum in particular. The attitudes of the Bahraini Islamists to the political reforms, and thus to parliament, differ significantly according to denomination. The two Sunni Islamist groups participated in the last parliamentary elections in 2002, while the two Shi'ite Islamist groups boycotted the elections. Partly as a result of this

<sup>9</sup> In Bahrain most Shi'ites follow the *maraji'* Khamenei or Sistani. A minority follows the deceased ash-Shirazi. All "sources" have local representatives in Bahrain.

election boycott, the elected parliamentary chamber was dominated by Sunni Islamists. Both parties together won 31 percent of the seats. With the exception of three leftwing representatives, the other candidates who were elected were conservative independents from both denominations. These representatives have come together to form various parliamentary blocs, but do not by any means present as united a front as the Islamists who are organized into parties and who, as a result, carry a disproportionately greater weight.

### **The Sunnis: al-Minbar al-Islami and al-Asala**

**Thesis 1:** *Islamists may share the interests of the ruling elite. When this is the case, they will not advance reforms.*

The political organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Minbar al-Islami, gained 18 percent of the vote in the 2002 parliamentary elections. Its supporters are primarily Sunnis who come from the Iranian side of the Gulf; however, the Islamic Platform also succeeded in gaining the support of some members and functionaries of the tribes. More crucial for the development of al-Minbar's agenda are the social strata to which its members belong. Al-Minbar primarily represents the middle class of teachers, doctors, management employees and, above all, civil servants—many of whom work in the security sector. The economic program of the party clearly reflects this fact, as al-Minbar members in parliament frequently call for higher pensions for civil servants. Al-Minbar claims to emulate the model of European Christian democratic parties, and it is true that it does not call for the Islamization of the state. Although some members of its parliamentary group broach the subject of public morality from time to time, the issue does not lie at the core of its discourse. The economic program of al-Minbar's members is not fully consistent. On the one hand, they support the transformation of Bahrain into a liberal market economy, and on the other hand, they are in favor of preserving a powerful government sector. Given the nature of al-Minbar's supporters, it is not surprising that the party is mainly interested in preserving the status quo—which, in the context of Bahrain, means preserving the privileges of the Sunnis.

**Thesis 2:** *Ideological radicalization is not necessarily a consequence of inclusion or exclusion; it may also be a competitive strategy. Groups which pursue this strategy frequently use parliament as a stage for their own agendas rather than as an instrument of political participation.*

The Salafists of the al-Asala association, which won 13 percent of the seats in parliament, have a different social base than that of al-Minbar. Their members belong almost exclusively to tribally organized family groups which immigrated from the Arabian peninsula.<sup>10</sup> Today, most of them live in poorer inner city districts and the southern desert areas. Unlike

<sup>10</sup> The biggest wave of migration of this group happened in the late eighteenth century. The tribes came as allies of the Al Khalifa tribe that still rules today.

al-Minbar, al-Asala maintains a visible lifestyle of its own. Its members wear Salafist clothing and hair styles, while their language and demeanor too sets them apart.

Like their Sunni rivals, the Salafists too have an interest in preserving the privileged status of the Sunnis. However, as their supporters have less to lose economically than those of al-Minbar, al-Asala can occasionally afford to risk a more confrontational stance towards the government. This strategy has been successful in winning over younger, ideologically susceptible members of al-Minbar.

The reinterpretation of parliament as a stage can be clearly seen in the parliamentary appearances of Bahraini Salafists. They spoke up with standard Islamist demands immediately after the elections, but became steadily more radical with the passage of time. Whether their plans have any probability of realization is of secondary importance to the party, as its main priorities are to improve its image and publicize its ideological profile. Originally, al-Asala wanted to ban permissive events and TV productions (this was prompted by a performance by the Lebanese singer Nancy Ajram and by the launch of the Arab version of Big Brother, which was produced in Bahrain); later the party called for significant restrictions on the sale of alcohol in stores and restaurants. Another bill proposed by al-Asala would have allowed fully veiled women to drive cars and policemen and soldiers to grow beards. Later, al-Asala proposed a bill for the creation of a Saudi-inspired religious police (Committee to Promote Virtue and Prevent Vice). Another bill was to ban witchcraft and fortune-telling. Finally, al-Asala drafted a bill to introduce *hadd* corporal punishment into Bahraini criminal law.<sup>11</sup>

**Thesis 3:** *The religious fragmentation of a society is reflected in the parties that define themselves in religious terms. It is almost impossible for such parties to break free from their denominational frame of reference. Additionally, if state resources are distributed unevenly among the denominations, some of the religious parties benefit from the status quo. The Islamists in these parties are not in favor of reform.*

Both Sunni parties aim to preserve the dominant status of the Sunnis; therefore, they support the government in critical issues. For example, both parties voted in favor of curtailing the right to demonstrate (some Salafists even wanted to confine the staging of demonstrations to a remote sports stadium) and supported a restrictive law on political parties. Additionally, it was at the Salafist party's instigation that the parliamentary rules of procedure were changed in order to limit the authority of parliament to question cabinet ministers.

<sup>11</sup> These are the so-called Islamic corporal punishments for theft, unlawful sexual intercourse or false accusation thereof, consumption of alcohol, and highway robbery. Although the Islamist discourse often implies otherwise, the definition and applicability of these punishments is not always clearly laid down in the Koran.

## The Shi'ites: al-Wefaq al-Islami al-Watani and al-Amal al-Islami

**Thesis 4:** *When Islamists benefit from reforms designed to improve governance or bring about democratization, they will join in the demands for reform. Their actions, like those of other ideological groups, are dictated by their own interests. Whether or not they participate in elections is of little relevance to this reform-friendly change in attitude.*

The two Shi'ite Islamist groups of al-Wefaq and al-Amal al-Islami are conspicuous for their calls for democratization. With approximately 70,000 passive and 1,500 active members,<sup>12</sup> Al-Wefaq is by far the largest political group in the country; none of the other organizations have more than a few hundred members. As the name "Accord" suggests, the organization is a mass movement: it embraces returned exiles and former Intifada activists, lay people and clerics, and attempts to unite the followers of all the Shi'ite *maraji'*. Thanks in part to the charismatic leader of al-Wefaq, the young cleric Ali Salman, the movement did not experience major splits during the election boycott. This changed when the general assembly decided to participate in the elections set for late 2006.

In contrast, the religious clientele of al-Amal is narrowly defined, and its members follow the mullah ash-Shirazi.<sup>13</sup> The politically organized Bahraini *shirazyun* have a more militant history than other Bahraini Shi'ites, and the government blames them for an attempted coup in 1981—an event which was celebrated by the al-Amal party in 2005. Its political agenda is less transparent than that of al-Wefaq. Al-Amal pursues a strategy of political agenda-setting by means of closely interlinked NGOs (such as the Bahrain Center for Human Rights). The agendas pursued by these means have different goals than those officially promulgated by the party.<sup>14</sup>

The official agendas of both Shi'ite parties converged to a considerable degree in the last four years of the parliamentary boycott. The two forged a so-called "Fourfold Alliance" (*at-tahaluf ar-ruba'i*) with two left-leaning boycotting associations (al-Amal al-Watani ad-Dimuqrati or National Democratic Action and at-Tajamu' al-Qawmi or Nationalist Rally). In the course of their joint activism, the left-wing intellectuals succeeded in unifying the discourse of the two religious parties to such an extent that the fundamental political demands of the Islamists and the left have become almost indistinguishable from each other. Thus all four of the unequal partners were making the following demands:

<sup>12</sup> The explanation for the high proportion of passive members is that the signature on a petition for constitutional amendments also doubled as a declaration of membership. Although it can be assumed that the signatories would probably not have joined the association without the petition, they certainly support its main concern.

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad ash-Shirazi is the only dead *marja'* (died 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Although not actually party organs, the NGOs are so closely linked to al-Amal through shared personnel that they must for practical purposes be treated as such. The NGOs' agenda is denominational at home, pro-democratic abroad. For detail see Niethammer, *Voices in Parliament* (see note 6).

- ▶ A “contractual constitution” (*dustur aqdi*); this means that elections should be held for a constituent assembly which would draft a constitution that would be “agreed upon by rulers and subjects alike.” The assumption is that this would result in a constitutional monarchy with the sole legislative authority vested in elected representatives.
- ▶ An end to discrimination against Shi’ites.
- ▶ A campaign against unemployment (which is seen as the result of corruption).
- ▶ Transparency, especially in the national budget.
- ▶ Election reforms to bring about greater equality of representation.
- ▶ An institution modeled on South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission that would deal with the regime’s human rights abuses.
- ▶ Specific changes in the text of a series of laws which regulate civil liberties (including the laws regulating the news media, demonstrations, public gatherings, and political parties).

As the reform policy supports the interest of these parties in greater participation, the majority of Islamists is clamoring for democratic reform not only for tactical reasons.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, however, the Shi’ite Islamist movements have not yet fully assimilated democratic concepts and procedures. Thus some of their demands are incompatible with the talk of democratization, civil rights, and equality. A striking illustration of this state of affairs is provided by the embittered resistance of both Shi’ite parties against the codification of a family law which would improve the legal certainty for women while simultaneously narrowing the scope of the religious jurists (*ulama*) to interpret the laws. Although Bahraini Shi’ites have abandoned the Iranian model of the “guardianship of the Islamic jurist,” they have not yet succeeded in clarifying the role of the religious authorities. Thus Bahrain’s highest cleric exerts enormous influence on the decision-making processes within al-Wefaq; although he is not a member of the party, he functions as its “spiritual leader.” In this capacity, he is not subject to internal democratic decision-making processes.

### Implications for Bahrain and Beyond

The experience of Bahrain shows that neither the inclusion of Islamists in parliamentary politics nor their exclusion nor even their ideological position can be used to predict whether their agendas will develop along moderate and pragmatic lines.<sup>16</sup> Other factors seem to provide better explanations:

- ▶ The position of Islamists in relation to the ruling elite: It is frequently (and unjustly) assumed that Islamists are oppositional by definition. The

<sup>15</sup> Here too, there are differences between al-Amal and al-Wefaq. Like its Sunni counterpart al-Asala, al-Amal is the more ideological Islamist group, which attempts to use radicalism to win the competition for support. Al-Amal therefore deploys its democratization rhetoric a good deal more tactically than al-Wefaq.

<sup>16</sup> This also means that there is little sense in the recurring speculation as to whether Shi’ites are the more “democratic” Islamists.

probability of Islamists sharing many interests with the authoritarian rulers is higher in countries where society is fragmented along denominational, ethnic, and/or regional lines. Societies in the Gulf states exhibit many such lines of fragmentation which, should these states decide to pursue political reforms, could lead to developments resembling those in Bahrain.

- ▶ Improvement of the Islamists' position by means of reforms: Where Islamists benefit directly from better government practices and reforms which potentially increase participation and representation, they will support these measures. In this respect, Islamists are no different from other parties. Accordingly, they should be treated like other parties (whose credibility is frequently poorer than that of the Islamists).

## The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt: Ambiguous Reformers

Noha Antar

Within the context of an unprecedented opening of the political system in 2004 and 2005, the subsequent parliamentary elections in Egypt saw a remarkable success for the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>1</sup> The election results proved that, despite not being officially recognized as a party, the mainstream non-violent Islamist movement represents the only effective and organized opposition to the incumbent National Democratic Party (NDP), which has been in power for several decades.<sup>2</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood's success at the 2005 parliamentary elections did not come as a surprise; it rather reflected recent developments in society. Egypt has been suffering from economic stagnation and widespread corruption and is facing social crisis. People are turning in increasing numbers to popular preachers as they seek to alleviate their fears for the future. Additional factors contributing to a form of Islamic revival are general frustration and anti-Western feeling.

The success of the Muslim Brotherhood, however, must also be seen within the context of the political situation in Egypt; the Brotherhood is facing a regime that grants limited political liberalization in order to maintain the NDP's dominant position for the foreseeable future. The political reforms it has introduced have as such led only to marginal improvements in the area of political and civil rights. President Hosni Mubarak's approach to reform is closely linked to the tricky issue of succession. The most important legislative reform was an amendment to article 76 of the constitution on February 26, 2005, which stipulated the first ever presidential election to feature more than one candidate.<sup>3</sup> Although Mubarak's re-election was a foregone conclusion, the election

**1** The Muslim Brotherhood won 88 out of 444 seats in the current parliament. As the Muslim Brotherhood had only entered candidates for 150 seats, this result equated to a success rate of 65 percent. For an in-depth analysis, see Noha Antar, *The Muslim Brotherhood's Success in the Legislative Elections in Egypt 2005: Reasons and Implications*, EuroMeSCo Research Paper (Lisbon, October 2006).

**2** The mobilization capacities of the secular opposition parties have declined significantly and have proved weaker than those of the Muslim Brotherhood from a political and organizational perspective. A number of officially recognized parties have an aging membership and/or have been discredited (Al-Wafd, Tagammu, Nasserists) or face government persecution (Al-Ghad). Furthermore, there are a number of newer groups that have yet to be recognized as parties (Al-Wasat and Karama).

**3** Prior to the amendment, article 76 of the Egyptian constitution envisaged the following: "The People's Assembly shall nominate the President of the Republic. . . . The candidate who wins two thirds of the votes of the Assembly shall be referred to the people for a plebiscite." From Khairi Abaza, *Political Islam and Regime Survival in Egypt*, Policy Focus no. 51 (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 2006, 4.)

campaign strengthened freedom of speech and brought a hitherto unseen political dynamism to Egypt.

This essay focuses on the success of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 2005 parliamentary elections and its implications for the future of Egypt. The first point is an examination of the reasons for the Brotherhood's success in light of the changes in the Egyptian political landscape in recent years and the Muslim Brotherhood's response. I will then look at one of the most crucial questions with regard to the debate about political Islam: does the political integration of Islamists (here: the Muslim Brotherhood) lead to a more moderate stance among the latter and to further democratization of the system? This involves assessing to what degree the Islamist movement has changed as a result of its integration into the political system. A further objective is to clarify the impact of the limited integration of the Muslim Brotherhood on the stability of the regime. Finally, I will examine the future prospects of Egypt's political system and the role of the Muslim Brotherhood therein, and on this basis provide policy recommendations for the European Union and its member states.

### **Reasons for the Electoral Success of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2005**

The success of the Muslim Brotherhood can be explained by a range of reasons associated with recent political changes. Above all, the first presidential election in September 2005 had a direct influence on the parliamentary elections in November of that year. The opening up of political competition for the post of president showed that the regime had reached an unprecedented impasse and was eager to prove its legitimacy. By holding a presidential election, the regime sought to counter the changes in the political landscape in recent years; these include the emergence of a new generation of politicians both in the ruling party and within opposition forces and their increasingly independent splinter groups.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, civil protest movements emerged that have been even more radically opposed to the political system and have called for comprehensive reforms. The most important of these is the dynamic Kifaya protest movement (or "Egyptian Movement for Change").<sup>5</sup> In May 2005 the govern-

<sup>4</sup> An example is the liberal-secular Al-Ghad ("Tomorrow") party, which was founded by Ayman Nour and legalized in 2004 after protracted legal disputes. This struggle continued after Nour's entry in the presidential competition, in which he was seen as the sole serious rival to the incumbent Mubarak and won eight percent of the total vote. The conflict ended with Nour losing his seat in parliament in November 2005. In December 2005 he was sentenced to five years in jail for supposedly falsifying powers of attorney during the creation of Al-Ghad. The party's future is uncertain.

<sup>5</sup> The Kifaya movement is an informal alliance of left-wing, Nasserite, liberal, and Islamist dissidents. Its objectives are to prevent Gamal Mubarak from succeeding his father Hosni as president, and to fight for reforms of a more radical nature than those intended by the NDP. The slogan "Kifaya" means "Enough." The term refers specifically to the demand for an end to corruption, authoritarianism, injustice, repression, humiliation, and impoverishment.

ment also faced a declaration from what became known as the “Judges’ Club,” announcing that its members would only monitor the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections under one condition: the government was to pass a law guaranteeing judicial independence and granting judges greater authority over elections.<sup>6</sup> All of these actors helped to reactivate opposition to the regime.

The regime itself has been the source of many other reasons for the growing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood: the NDP and government officials have frequently relied on religious arguments; they have suppressed the secular and liberal opposition; they have encouraged the tendency toward religious obscurantism at Al-Azhar University and within religious groups; and they have permitted the Muslim Brotherhood to provide social services, thereby relieving the state budget. In addition, the regime allowed Islamist activists to join unions and professional associations, although the leading positions—at least in some of the organizations—were still reserved for the NDP.

A further set of reasons for the success of the Muslim Brotherhood stems from its long-term strategy of establishing a grassroots base; this strategy involves investing in social welfare services in order to create a large power base among the population that can then be mobilized to political ends. The movement has been involved in social issues for some thirty years, in which time many of its candidates won credibility and respect in their everyday dealings with people. Forty percent of the population in Egypt lives below the poverty line, while the political participation rate is 25 percent. In such a society, the provision of services in all essential sectors—education, health, and employment—has proved to be the quickest and most effective way of winning support.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, the Muslim Brotherhood’s strategy of using religion for political mobilization has proved successful. Calls for reform had been heard in sermons, charitable organizations, and religious circles before the official American rhetoric began demanding political changes in Arab countries in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Many of the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, its members and sympathizers, considered it their religious duty to vote for one of its candidates. This gave them the courage to challenge the regime’s security services and even go and vote under an

<sup>6</sup> At the start of 2006 the justice ministry decided to put two leading judges on trial. The move prompted an alliance between the “Judges’ Club,” civil protest movements, activists from the Muslim Brotherhood, and members of parliament. They protested vehemently against the trial and its outcome, obliging the government to amend the relevant law on the judicial system. The new version of the law issued in June 2006, however, again fell short of the expectations of the judges, who are now working on a new draft in order to put pressure on the government. In the spring of 2007, the question of the judiciary’s independence remains disputed; the constitutional amendments suggested by the president and ratified in April’s referendum will effectively cancel the election observer role of the judiciary.

<sup>7</sup> Tangi Salaün, “Egypte: le pari social des frères musulmans,” *Le Figaro*, July 5, 2006, [www.lefigaro.fr/international/20060705.FIG000000015\\_egypte\\_le\\_pari\\_social\\_des\\_fres\\_musulmans.html](http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/20060705.FIG000000015_egypte_le_pari_social_des_fres_musulmans.html) (accessed July 30, 2006).

authoritarian regime. Despite the widespread mistrust it has triggered, the slogan “Islam is the solution” is still used by the movement. In this, the Brotherhood’s aim was to make religion the decisive factor in the election and to win the trust of people by presenting itself as *the* movement representing Islamic identity.

The Muslim Brotherhood also took advantage of the increasing internal and external pressure on the regime by openly establishing and developing political activity using the movement’s name. The movement has likewise recognized the importance of alliances with other opposition forces as a way of exercising more pressure on the regime. Another important factor for the success of the Muslim Brotherhood must be highlighted here: its organizational abilities. The movement began preparing for the elections early on—long before other political forces—by presenting its reform initiative back in March 2004.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, it used the process of constitutional change and the presidential election campaign to present an image of being both close to the masses and to the majority of informed public opinion. It made meticulous preparations for the parliamentary elections. The political bureau of the organization compiled a nationwide study of the rivals to its candidates—especially those from the NDP—so as to estimate the number of seats in parliament that it could potentially win.<sup>9</sup> In addition, a special committee was set up to coordinate the election campaign between the candidates and the Muslim Brotherhood’s offices in the various administrative districts. The organizational network of the movement ultimately proved very efficient and useful for supporting its candidates.<sup>10</sup>

### **Has the Muslim Brotherhood Changed Its Agenda and Its Priorities?**

Even if the Muslim Brotherhood has undertaken to participate peacefully in the political process in Egypt, it remains unclear whether it genuinely represents a democratic force or will use a democratic opening to pursue an authoritarian agenda. Nevertheless, its involvement in the political

<sup>8</sup> On March 3, 2004, Mohammed Mahdi Akef (current “Supreme Guide” of the Muslim Brotherhood) publicly announced the “Reform Initiative of the Muslim Brotherhood” during a press conference held on the premises of the press association, which is considered an arm of the government. A year later, between March and May 2005, the Brotherhood organized a series of protests during the campaign for a constitutional amendment to allow a referendum. Around 128,000 people took part in these demonstrations, confirming the movement’s mobilization potential.

<sup>9</sup> Khalil Annani, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the Legislative Elections 2005*, unpublished research paper, presented at a conference of the Political Studies Centre of the Faculty of Political Science, University of Cairo, May 2006.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. in the form of legal advice for working groups and training courses on the implementation of campaigns. In addition, the Muslim Brotherhood opened an online radio station in Alexandria, which conducted opinion surveys among the population. The organization also drew on its membership in universities, associations and charitable bodies for its campaign.

system has already brought fundamental changes to the movement. During the 2005 election campaign, the concepts of “democracy” and “political participation” were incorporated into the rhetoric of the Muslim Brotherhood and became part of its political strategy of establishing grass-roots networks to garner popular support. The movement attempted to dispel uncertainties and doubts as to its political objectives and ideas. For this purpose, it drew up and distributed an election manifesto that emphasized “the Islamic reference and the democratic mechanisms of the modern civil state” and rejected the notion of a “theocratic state.”<sup>11</sup> The presentation of a political program for the parliamentary elections had forced the Muslim Brotherhood to clarify its positions on fundamental political concepts such as party pluralism. The latter had earlier been rejected by a number of Islamic currents due to its association with partisan interests (*al-tahazzub*), whereas Islam calls for unity of nation instead of its fragmentation.

Even if the principal message of the movement remains the same, its rhetoric and strategy have evolved and adapted to the social and political realities of Egypt—not least to enable it to communicate and forge alliances with secular forces. The Muslim Brotherhood can be considered part of the country’s reformist forces, but this is primarily because it agrees with other reformers about the means with which to realize reforms: the rule of law, good governance, and free elections. A review of the documents and activities of the Muslim Brotherhood during the last legislative period shows that the movement’s reform agenda prioritizes participation in parliament and other elected bodies as a means of influencing legislation, e.g. combating corruption and improving the education system.<sup>12</sup> These priorities are not new; they can be traced back through the history of the Muslim Brotherhood’s activities and strategies to its founder, Hassan al-Banna. This is the first time, however, that the movement has been able to free itself from the restrictions connected to its illegal status, to publicly express its ideas and make a significant contribution to the country’s political institutions. The Muslim Brotherhood’s parliamentary activities to date have shown its commitment to the concerns of its voters and its efforts to remain credible. Its members of parliament have been more efficient than others in terms of dealing with the needs of the population, exposing corruption and providing rapid support for those suffering from injustice.

As mentioned above, the reforms introduced so far in Egypt have yet to produce any meaningful democratic change. This is reflected in the organi-

<sup>11</sup> An English-language version of the Muslim Brotherhood’s election manifesto is available at [www.ikhwanweb.net/images/ikhwanprogram.doc](http://www.ikhwanweb.net/images/ikhwanprogram.doc).

<sup>12</sup> Al-Umma Center for Studies and Development/International Centre for Media, ed., *The Brotherhood in Parliament 2000: Analytical Study of the Muslim Brotherhood Deputies in Parliament 2000–2005* [*Al-ikhwan fi parlaman alfein. dirasa tahliliya li-adaa nuwab al-ikhwan al muslimin fi parlaman alfein-alfein wa khamsa*] (Cairo, October 2005). The reform initiative of the Muslim Brotherhood is available on its website: [www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ID=5172&SectionID=0](http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ID=5172&SectionID=0).

zation, strategy, and agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood. The “mutual fear reflex” that has characterized relations between the illegal Brotherhood and the regime has pushed the movement toward a strategy of secrecy that prevents transparency for security reasons. Deliberately assuming ambiguous positions has become a defensive mechanism for Islamist and non-Islamist opposition forces alike in Egypt.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the Muslim Brotherhood is not only a political actor but also a religious organization that promulgates a system of beliefs and practices. A fear of losing credibility among its religious or political followers has seen the movement adopt ambiguous positions on various issues. An example of this is its concept of democracy, which first and foremost remains unclear due to the lack of concrete views on what is to be understood by the “Islam reference”; although the political program stresses that Sharia law is not in contradiction of democracy, it contains no further information on its application. Nor does the program provide concrete details as regards the implications of Islamic law for the legal, parliamentary, and economic systems or which institution would be responsible for legislation. The Muslim Brotherhood seems to be very much aware of these uncertainties, however. In the summer of 2006, a leading member Abdul Monem Abul Futouh said that the Muslim Brotherhood needed a clear distinction between its missionary and political activities—with any confusion in this regard being above all a consequence of government repression.<sup>14</sup>

### The Dilemma of Regime Stability

A tense but mutually beneficial relationship has developed between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood, in which the ruling party has pursued an irregular policy of liberalization characterized by phases of tolerance and repression toward the Muslim Brotherhood. But why has the regime tolerated the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, despite the legal ban on the latter? Firstly because in the short term, the inclusion of the movement in the political set-up has had a stabilizing effect on the regime rather than precipitating a further opening of the political system, as the organization is involved only in those political institutions whose activities are controlled by the NDP. At the same time, the regime has been profiting from the charitable work performed by the Muslim Brotherhood for significant sections of the population, because this enables it to maintain the illusion of the system being in a position to solve problems. And

<sup>13</sup> Nathan Brown, Amr Hamzawy, and Marina S. Ottaway, *Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones*, Middle East Series, Carnegie Paper no. 67 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2006), 1–24 (8).

<sup>14</sup> He added the following: “There is a debate within the movement about the possibility of transformation to a political party that carries out the movement’s reform agenda. Another possibility is establishing a separate political party, with a delineation of responsibilities between party and movement.” See Abdul Monem Abul Futouh, “Reformist Islam: How Gray Are the Gray Zones?” *Arab Reform Bulletin* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 4, no. 6 (July 2006): 3–4.

last but not least, the security services are ultimately always ready to intervene and restrict the organization's activities, should the latter become too popular.

From the Muslim Brotherhood's perspective, its strong social roots, relatively strong representation in parliament (20 percent of the seats), and its financial and organizational capacities have not stopped it profiting from its status as an illegal organization. Not only has the status won it widespread sympathy among the population, while it was at the same time allowed to pursue organized activities, it has also to this day managed to prevent infiltration by the security services. This explains the Muslim Brotherhood's indirect support for the regime preserving its dominant position. In return, the regime has curtailed the activities of the security services against members of the Muslim Brotherhood, civil protest movements, and the secular opposition. The Brotherhood does not appear too eager for a change in the status quo. Under current conditions, there are in any case no signs of it being legalized.

To the contrary, since the last elections the Muslim Brotherhood's growing strength in parliament has aroused misgivings within the regime, which has taken measures to reduce the movement's influence on decision-making via legal or repressive means. Thus, in mid-February 2006 the government decided to postpone local elections by two years. In the spring of 2006, it had numerous members of the Muslim Brotherhood arrested and their financial and material resources confiscated.<sup>15</sup> The wave of repression was in response to two vehemently promoted central positions of the Muslim Brotherhood. The first involved a grassroots campaign organized by itself and the National Front for Change in March 2006 calling for an end to emergency legislation. During the crisis surrounding the two judges in April 2006 the movement also supported calls for an independent judiciary. The second move, in May 2006, was to oppose the inheritance scenario for the presidency.<sup>16</sup> The U.S. government had evidently given the regime a "green light" for its repressive reaction—not least against the background of Islamist election victories in the West Bank and Gaza and a new search for reliable allies in the Middle East to contain Iran.<sup>17</sup>

The regime crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood reached its preliminary peak in February 2007, when President Hosni Mubarak ordered a

<sup>15</sup> Street protests in April 2006 led to the arrest of several hundred Muslim Brotherhood members in Cairo. *Reuters*, April 16, 2006. On July 13, 2006, the authorities arrested nine of the movement's members during a meeting and closed down four of its companies and a hospital. "Al-Sultat al-Misrya Ta'taqel Tiss'a min al-Ikhwan wa Tughliq Khams Sharikat" [Egyptian Authorities Arrest Nine Muslim Brothers and Close Five Companies], July 14, 2006, [www.ikhwanonline.com/print.asp?ID=21936](http://www.ikhwanonline.com/print.asp?ID=21936) (accessed September 7, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Hassouna Hamad, "Khubara' wa Siyasiun: Mu'aradat al-Tawrih Sabab 'Istimrar 'i'tiqalat al-Ikhwan" [Experts and Politicians: Opposition to the Inheritance—Reason for the Continued Detainment of Muslim Brothers], May 6, 2006, [www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ID=20951&SectionID=212](http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ID=20951&SectionID=212) (accessed September 7, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Abdeslam M. Maghraoui, "American Foreign Policy and Islamic Renewal," USIP Special Report no. 164 (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, July 2006), 1–12 (4).

military trial for 16 prominent members and 24 other Brothers,<sup>18</sup> who were re-arrested by the police just moments after their acquittal by a Cairo criminal court. The wave of arrests coincided with an escalation in parliamentary confrontations between the Brotherhood and the ruling majority about constitutional amendments that were designed to halt the process of liberalization, but particularly to block the Muslim Brotherhood's political participation in the future. Thus, the amended article 179 (a counter-terrorism article that was to replace the emergency laws) facilitates the trial of civilians in military courts, arbitrary arrest and the violation of privacy; article 88 cancels the judicial supervision of elections; article 5 bans any political activity with a religious frame of reference—the vagueness of this last article effectively closing the door on a legalization of the Muslim Brotherhood or its licensing as a political party and endangering all of its activities. On top of it, the amendments foresee a revision of article 62 providing for a mixed system of party lists and individual districts in parliamentary elections, thereby minimizing the Muslim Brotherhood's chances who will not be allowed to run on party lists.<sup>19</sup> The constitutional amendments presented by the President and ratified in a popular referendum in April 2007 foreshadow a gloomy political era where the Muslim Brothers will be forced back into secrecy and, possibly, radicalism. Obviously, the repression and attempts at isolation of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, the only sizable organized opposition force in Egypt, indicates the regime's insincerity in undertaking democratic reform. It also stifles any hope of a peaceful transformation in Egypt.

### Perspectives and Policy Recommendations

If Europe intends to develop strategies for political reform in Egypt, it will have to cooperate with the existing regime. At the same time, it cannot ignore popular support for the Islamists. Within this context, three factors are particularly significant: 1. the danger of an abrupt or violent change, or one that reaffirms existing conditions under a new regime, 2. the legal framework and the rule of law, 3. the strength and the positions of the Islamists.

There are three possible scenarios for political change in Egypt:

1. A sudden, chaotic change in the situation. This kind of scenario would probably lead to widespread violent conflict, as well as attempts to settle unresolved scores between the security services and the Muslim Brother-

<sup>18</sup> In the following months, security forces arrested some 800 Brotherhood members, in general without charge. Khairat al-Shatir, Deputy Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, and 16 other prominent members had been detained in simultaneous police raids already on December 14, 2006, and their assets been frozen on the grounds that they financed a banned organization.

<sup>19</sup> Nathan Brown, Michele Dunne, Amr Hamzawy, *Egypt's Constitutional Amendments*, Web Commentary, March 23, 2007 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2007).

- hood and other opposition forces (as well as among the latter). This would mean a strength-sapping struggle for the entire opposition.
2. Assumption of power by the Muslim Brotherhood by bypassing the legal structures guaranteeing the regime's dominance. This kind of scenario would undermine genuine political change and serve only to create an authoritarian regime controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood.
  3. A persistence of the regime's rejection of significant political change. Should the regime persevere with authoritarian rule, this is in the mid-term likely to lead to massive problems: social disturbances, confessional/religious disputes, and economic decline. Defusing these problems would depend on a new president—regardless of whether the inheritance scenario is followed or a different successor is appointed—accepting and implementing at least some of the reform demands of the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition forces. This would also be conceivable in a formal alliance of the NDP and the Muslim Brotherhood.

### **The Legal System and the Rule of Law**

There is an urgent need to put pressure on the regime and to support domestic political forces in the struggle for the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Europe should link financial support within the framework of the EMP and the ENP in particular to the securing of genuine and sustainable progress in the area of human rights. In the same context, the regime should also be urged to amend laws in order to allow the creation of new parties. This goes in particular for the Brotherhood. It now possesses the political structures and expertise to function as a political party. Nevertheless, it must be legalized if it is to act legally and transparently. Legalizing the movement could also be accompanied by the separation of the religious and political wings. The latter would then be wholly accountable to its constituents as opposed to religious authorities.

### **The Challenge Represented by the Strength and Positions of Other Islamists**

While the Islamization of Egyptian society has long been dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, the situation has now been complicated by a variety of religious groups, with extremist elements growing in activity and popularity.<sup>20</sup> This makes it more important than ever for European approaches to focus on grassroots work in order to counter the stereotypes propagated

<sup>20</sup> This observation was made by the author while living in Egypt between 2000 and 2005. A further revealing factor is the massive criticism of the Egyptian regime expressed by Mohammed Mahdi Akef, "Supreme Guide" of the Muslim Brotherhood, in an interview with French weekly magazine *Le nouvel observateur*. Excerpts from this interview were published on May 16, 2006 on the official Arabic website of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt: [www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ID=20444&SectionID=101](http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ID=20444&SectionID=101) (accessed September 7, 2006).

by radical Islamists. Such work would mean disseminating concepts of rationalism, modernity, and technological knowledge. The first target of EU programs should be education. Muslims living in Europe should be integrated more systematically into projects aimed at Egyptian society, as they can be valuable and often more credible partners below the government level, as well as a source of new ideas. In principle, however, the credibility of European policy in Egyptian society is closely related to Europe's position on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

### **Dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood**

Isolating the Muslim Brotherhood is not an option. This would serve only to express ignorance vis-à-vis the most important political force capable of translating the needs and anger of the population into political action. That said, the regime rejects any direct dialogue between foreign players and Islamists and tries where it can to prevent such discussions, making direct and public cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood difficult. The room for dialogue between Europe and the Muslim Brotherhood is therefore very limited and has until now been restricted to contacts with the movement's members of parliament and members of civil protest movements, and the use of informal channels in the form of the media or cultural events. The Muslim Brotherhood is, however, interested in communicating and working with foreign players in order to force the regime to deal with corruption, human rights issues, and civil liberties.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, there is a great deal of mistrust among members of the movement toward the West, which should be addressed in dialogue forums.

### **The Civil Protest Movements—A “Third Way”?**

Civil protest movements in Egypt will not be able to continue their work without outside support. Such support should mainly come from the media and from international civil society and human rights organizations, but not from the EU or European governments, so as not to discredit the recipients as “foreign agents” in the eyes of the Egyptian population. This support is not least needed because the existence of a civil movement will prevent the Muslim Brotherhood from gaining a monopoly on the opposition. The civil movement—albeit weak for the time being—could in the long term provide a “third way” for Egyptian politics via the creation of a new elite and by preparing the ground for a political party that represents a liberal trend while at the same time respecting religion as an integral part of Egyptian identity.

<sup>21</sup> An illustration of the interest in communicating with the outside is the Muslim Brotherhood's launch of an English-language version of its website on June 27, 2006: [www.ikhwanweb.com](http://www.ikhwanweb.com) (accessed September 7, 2006).

## The Palestinian Hamas: Between Resistance, Reform, and Failure

Muriel Asseburg

In the January 2006 elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council, Hamas (*Harakat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah* or Islamic Resistance Movement) won a landslide majority standing as party under the name “Change and Reform.”<sup>1</sup> In 2004/2005 the movement had already scored notable successes in local elections, winning mayorships and council majorities in most of the cities of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Hamas thus succeeded in turning its growth in popularity during the years of the Second Intifada into votes and political power. It has been less successful, however, in implementing the ambitious program of reform on which it ran the election, proving incapable of establishing an effective government or getting the chaotic security situation in the Palestinian Territories under control. Instead, armed clashes between Palestinian groups escalated since the elections.

They have been largely contained since the Mecca Agreement between the rivaling factions in February 2007 and the formation of a national unity government in March 2007. Still, it appears doubtful whether the violent power struggle between Hamas and Fatah supporters and militias has been contained with any lasting effect. It also remains to be seen whether the coalition will be able to govern effectively or will break apart. Hamas has already failed as a reform government. It might still be forced out of the political game and be forced back into its role as a militant liberation movement.

The following analysis examines the strategic transformation of Hamas in relation to participation in the political system of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It begins by outlining the origins of Hamas and its decision to work within the PA, before illuminating the changes in Hamas’ agenda in relation to two important fields of policy: relations with Israel and the question of governance and reform. Then, the repercussions of the Hamas government’s international isolation are discussed as well as the establishment of the National Unity Government. Finally, conclusions are drawn for European policy.

<sup>1</sup> Hamas received 44 percent of the votes, Fatah—the party in government before—41 percent. Due to the mixed voting system (where half the seats are allocated through first-past-the-post constituencies, the other half by proportional representation) Hamas gained an absolute majority of parliamentary seats, with 74 out of 132, while Fatah has 45 seats and the remaining 13 are held by a number of smaller parties and independents. On the elections see Muriel Asseburg, *In the Aftermath of the Palestinian Parliamentary Elections: How to Deal with Hamas?* SWP Comments 3/2006, February 2006, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, [www.swp-berlin.org/en/common/get\\_document.php?asset\\_id=2802](http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/common/get_document.php?asset_id=2802).

## From the Social Approach of the Muslim Brotherhood to Militant Resistance Movement to Political Party

Hamas has its historical and ideological roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in 1928 in Egypt and established branches in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip during the 1940s. The Brotherhood's approach was to Islamize society to bring about a cultural renaissance thereby creating the conditions for a successful struggle against foreign rule and colonialism. In Palestine, the Brotherhood began by developing the religious sector, through a major mosque-building program. From the mid-1970s—under Israeli occupation—it began to turn its attention increasingly to social services, setting up health care and welfare institutions and becoming increasingly involved in the education sector. This way the Brotherhood was able to lay the foundations for solid and broad-based support in Palestinian society. By founding Hamas shortly after the outbreak of the first Intifada in December 1987, the Muslim Brotherhood under Sheikh Ahmed Yassin completed a strategic turn. In a situation of active confrontation with Israel, the Brotherhood did not want to be left out. Continuing the activities in the religious and social services field, Hamas also became active in political and military struggle against the Israeli occupation.<sup>2</sup>

Hamas's participation in the 2004/2005 municipal elections and the 2006 parliamentary elections was preceded by several years of debate among the membership about the question of political participation in the Palestinian Authority system. Already in the early years of the Oslo process Hamas had begun to play an active role in the PA system, albeit very tentatively at first.<sup>3</sup> Ahead of the first "national" Palestinian elections in 1996, Hamas set up the core of a party—al-Khalas or the National Islamic Salvation Party (NISIP)—and hotly debated the question of participation in elections. Although the party did not officially take part in the 1996 elections because they took place in the framework of the Oslo process that it rejected, it did not call for an election boycott either. A number of Hamas members stood as independents and one of them, Imad al-Falouji, became a minister in the PA. Hamas also participated actively and successfully in elections in non-government institutions such as chambers of commerce, students' unions, and professional associations.

<sup>2</sup> For the history of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine and the origins of Hamas, see in particular Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, Indiana Series in Arab and Islamic Studies (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994); Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, 2000); Helga Baumgarten, *Hamas: Der politische Islam in Palästina* (Kreuzlingen and Munich, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> In 1994 and 1995—i.e. after the PA had been established and Yassir Arafat and the PLO's top leadership had returned from exile to the Palestinian territories—there were repeated armed clashes between supporters of Fatah and Hamas as the latter attempted to challenge the PA's authority. Hamas accepted the PA as the political leadership in the Palestinian Territories when it signed the 'National Honor Charter' in October 1995. In further discussions in Cairo, Hamas and Fatah both agreed to refrain from violence and Hamas pledged not to disrupt the upcoming elections. Hroub, *Hamas* [see note. 2], 105f.

Five developments were largely responsible for Hamas deciding to give up its political reservations and participate in the 2006 parliamentary elections as a political party:

1. Due to the failure of the Oslo process the movement enjoyed an immense growth in popularity. Whereas opinion polls during the early years of Oslo gave it approval ratings of 10 to 15 percent, the figure rose to 25 to 30 percent during the Second Intifada and again to 30 to 35 percent at the eve of the 2006 elections.<sup>4</sup>
2. Good results in the 2004/2005 municipal elections ensured that Hamas dominated the local councils and held the post of mayor in the majority of towns and cities of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Hamas was even able to gain majorities in some traditional Fatah strongholds.<sup>5</sup> This was interpreted as proof that Hamas would be in a position to turn its popularity into votes at the national level too, and thus gain a share of power.
3. Through Israeli military operations and targeted killings between 2002 and 2004 the movement lost a large part of its historic leadership—including Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Ismail Abu Shanab, and Abdel Aziz Rantisi—and many of its militant activists. This brought forth a new generation of top leaders and strengthened the current around Ismail Haniyeh, who called for political participation.
4. In 2005, in connection with the negotiations among Palestinian groups over a cease-fire, Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas offered to share power with Hamas.<sup>6</sup> This opened the way for Hamas to take part in the elections.
5. The almost total collapse of the Oslo process made it easier for Hamas to participate in elections to PA institutions because it could now argue that taking part would no longer imply recognition of the Oslo framework.

### **From the Hamas Charter to a Two-State Settlement and an Emphasis on Reform**

The decision to participate in the political system of the PA was accompanied by a change in stance toward Israel and toward armed struggle. The

<sup>4</sup> See the polls conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center (JMCC) at [www.jmcc.org](http://www.jmcc.org) and Jamil Hilal, "Hamas's Rise as Charted in the Polls, 1994–2005," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, no. 3 (spring 2006): 6–19.

<sup>5</sup> For the results of the local elections see United Nations Development Programme, "Elections: Palestine" at [www.undp-pogar.org/countries/elections.asp?cid=14](http://www.undp-pogar.org/countries/elections.asp?cid=14); see also the overview in Aaron D. Pina, *Palestinian Elections*, CRS Report, February 9, 2006, Congressional Research Service, Washington, 21, [www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33269.pdf](http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33269.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> The concessions made by Abbas to Hamas (and other militant and armed groups) are a clear indication that the governing party, Fatah, had lost political hegemony. Hamas was to promise a period of calm (*tahdiyah*); in return Abbas agreed to sweeping reforms and local and parliamentary elections (the latter on the basis of a mixed electoral system) and promised to include all forces and factions in a reformed PLO. "Islamic Jihad Web Site Publishes Final Communique of Palestinian Cairo Talks, March 17, 2005," cited from *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines—Middle East Political*, March 19, 2005.

Hamas Charter of 1988 still stands clearly in the anticolonial and anti-Zionist tradition of the Muslim Brotherhood and contains openly anti-Semitic passages. As Hamas's main goal the Charter names armed struggle to liberate all of Palestine—defined as the territory of the British Mandate of Palestine.<sup>7</sup> Although emphasis is placed on the connection to the Society of the Muslim Brothers as an international organization, the national agenda is clearly given priority: From the outset Hamas has seen itself as an Islamist national liberation movement. Although Hamas founder Sheikh Yassin made it clear at a very early stage that he would be willing to negotiate over peaceful coexistence with Israel if Israel was willing to recognize the Palestinian right of self-determination and the refugees' right of return, his statements always implied that coexistence could only be a temporary solution and that the long-term aim was to establish a Palestinian state that would replace rather than coexist with Israel.<sup>8</sup>

In recent years Hamas's stance has changed substantially in this respect.<sup>9</sup> Participation in the 2006 elections led to the crystallization of an influential reformist current in the movement, led by Hamas representatives in the Gaza Strip (such as Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh) and the West Bank (such as Hamas spokesman Hasan Yusuf). This current called for de facto cooperation with Israel and had a decisive influence on the discussion about a two-state solution. Here, the Charter was by no means regarded as a sacrosanct text. Hamas's 2006 election manifesto as well as the program of the Hamas-led government formed in March 2006 were about realizing a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, not about liberating the whole of Palestine. Hamas also promised to act with care and responsibility with respect to treaties and agreements concluded between Israel and the PLO/PA.<sup>10</sup> This was also reflected in several initiatives launched by the Hamas government. For example, the new government offered a comprehensive long-term cease-fire in exchange for Israel withdrawing to the 1967 borders and recognizing the right of return. On the ground Hamas demonstrated that it was willing and able to enforce such a cease-fire among (almost) all its members and supporters. Furthermore, after forming his government, Prime Minister Haniyeh instructed

<sup>7</sup> For the text of the Charter, see [www.mideastweb.org/hamas.htm](http://www.mideastweb.org/hamas.htm). For the goals of the Charter see in particular Article 8 "The Slogan of the Islamic Resistance Movement" and Article 11 "Palestine is Islamic Waqf."

<sup>8</sup> For example Faisal Bodi, "My Meeting with Shaikh Yasin," *Al-Jazeera Net*, March 22, 2004, <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/C8C9C56B-1CD2-4BF4-8E44-35DA571358B6.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> International Crisis Group, *Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration*, Middle East Report no. 49 (Washington and Amman, January 18, 2006), 19–22; Khaled Hroub, "A 'New Hamas' through Its New Documents," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, no. 4 (summer 2006): 6–27. The following authors see no substantial change in Hamas' attitude: Robert Satloff, "A Primer on Hamas: Origins, Tactics, Strategy, and Response," in *Hamas Triumphant: Implications for Security, Politics, Economy, and Strategy*, ed. Robert Satloff, Policy Focus no. 53, 5–9 (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 2006; Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (Washington, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> The Arab original of the government's program can be found at [www.palestine-info.info/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/ismael\\_haneyya/27\\_3\\_06.htm](http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/ismael_haneyya/27_3_06.htm).

his ministers to cooperate with Israel in resolving everyday issues,<sup>11</sup> and Hamas accepted the ‘National Reconciliation Document’ that proclaims the goal of an independent state in the borders of 1967 and cites the corresponding UN resolutions. The document also contains other important positions: Hamas has no objections to the PLO chairman and PA president negotiating with Israel and is willing to implement the outcome of negotiations as long as they serve to further Palestinian rights and are accepted in a referendum.<sup>12</sup>

However, relations with Israel were not the main issue of Hamas’ election campaign and the program the Hamas-led government presented. Instead, top priority was given to good governance and to vigorous action against corruption, abuse of power, and nepotism in the PA. Sweeping reforms of all three branches of power were planned, to guarantee political freedoms (freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly), promote the establishment of efficient democratic institutions, and guarantee the rule of law and division of powers. It was also planned to unify the territories’ legislation, because to this day the laws of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip differ due to the distinct histories of occupation and administration of the two entities. Although Haniyeh’s program also mentioned the Sharia as a source of legislation—as does the Palestinian Basic Law—, there were no plans to reshape the political system along religious lines or to introduce a strict Saudi-style code of morals and behavior. Another priority Hamas emphasized during the election campaign was its intention to end the security chaos and restore personal safety. Law and order had more or less completely collapsed during the Second Intifada: large parts of the security apparatus (prisons, police stations, training camps) had been destroyed in Israeli military operations; gangs, militias, and militant networks had formed; and society as a whole had become increasingly militarized.

However, Hamas largely failed in implementing its program. Hamas representatives may have been better placed than their Fatah predecessors to show that they served their constituents and took their concerns seriously, and in the Legislative Council the Hamas deputies assiduously set about learning about the legislative process and exercising their parliamentary control function. But Hamas succeeded neither in establishing an effective government and ending the security chaos nor in implementing its reform agenda. This was due on the one hand to Fatah’s continuing dominance in the institutions of the executive—presidency, administration, and security apparatus—and its lack of will to give up power, while

<sup>11</sup> See also Danny Rubinstein, “Hamas PM Haniyeh: Retreat to 1967 Borders Will Bring Peace,” *Haaretz Internet Edition*, May 23, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> The National Reconciliation Document was drafted by imprisoned members of Fatah, Hamas, PFLP, DFLP, and Islamic Jihad and is therefore also known as the “prisoners’ document.” Hamas only endorsed the document after massive pressure from the president and a number of revisions. For the two versions of the document from May 11, 2006, and June 28, 2006, see the website of the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC), under [www.jmcc.org](http://www.jmcc.org).

on the other, Hamas's plans were wrecked by the isolationist policies of Israel and the West, which robbed the government of the financial basis for funding the public sector. These policies were accompanied by major Israeli military operations, especially in the Gaza Strip, and waves of arrests (which included Hamas mayors and elected deputies). This meant that in the months after the government was formed the Hamas leadership was preoccupied with staying in power and establishing its authority, expanding its militias in order to establish a security apparatus of its own (the so-called 'Executive Forces'), and looking for alternative sources of funding.

### **The Isolation of the Hamas Government and the National Unity Government**

The loss of its financial basis brought the PA to the verge of collapse. In order to cushion the impact of Western isolation policies on the Palestinian population, the EU (at the request of the Quartet) set up a "Temporary International Mechanism" (TIM) in June 2006. Bypassing the democratically elected government, it was designed to ensure that important public infrastructure and services could still be provided—especially health, electricity, and water—and that the poor and most vulnerable would not starve. The TIM certainly did make an important contribution to preventing a humanitarian disaster in the Palestinian territories, but this can hardly be regarded as a success, given that it was Western and Israeli policies that caused the dramatic deterioration of the socioeconomic situation in the first place: The EU had suspended its budget assistance and Israel stopped transfer payments to the PA, and Israel undertook extended military operations, especially in the Gaza Strip, repeatedly sealing it off almost completely for long periods, as well as tightening controls on movement in the West Bank. Instead of supporting state- and institution-building, TIM funds were used exclusively for emergency relief. This further undermined government institutions already weakened by the Intifada.

Also, Western policies ran counter to the democratization of Palestinian institutions. In 2002–04 institutional reforms had been implemented under pressure from local reform forces and the EU, which had conditioned its budget assistance accordingly. After the outbreak of the Second Intifada the goal of Western policy had been to restrict the powers of the president (then Yassir Arafat). To that end the office of prime minister was created, the PA's income was centralized in an account under the supervision of the Finance Ministry, and most of the security forces were placed under the control of the Interior Ministry. In the meantime, however, these reforms have been reversed—with explicit Western support—in order to strengthen the presidency against the office of prime minister. Today Western policy is working to strengthen the president, Mahmud Abbas through direct cooperation with as well as technical and financial support for the president's office, and by training and arming the

presidential guard and supporting to boost its manpower through the “Badr Forces,” Palestinian units of the Jordanian army. The approach of isolating Hamas has also turned out to be counterproductive in terms of the EU’s goal of peaceful conflict resolution. This policy has made it more difficult for Hamas to exercise government authority effectively and to contain the security chaos. The Western line of isolating the Hamas government while at the same time supporting the president has fostered violent clashes between Fatah and Hamas supporters in the sense that the former felt encouraged to cling to power.<sup>13</sup>

Following several failed attempts at mediation by regional parties (particularly on the part of Egypt and Syria), Saudi king Abdallah managed to secure an agreement between the two rivaling factions. In the Mecca Agreement of February 2007, the two sides reached a settlement choosing dialogue and partnership as the means of inner-Palestinian debate, rather than violence. It was also confirmed that Hamas was to become part of the PLO. On this basis, a national unity government was formed in mid-March 2007. While the greatest success of the Agreement clearly was to end the bloody factional confrontations (at least to a large extent), neither Mekka nor the coalition government’s program fulfilled the international expectations as they did not comply explicitly with the demand to recognize Israel’s right to exist, to renounce violence, and to commit the Palestinian government to all treaties and agreements signed by the PLO/PA and Israel. This should not have been expected: Hamas may well be prepared to recognize Israel’s factual existence and work towards a settlement on the basis of the 1967 borders, but it is not willing to recognize Israel’s moral legitimacy.

Nevertheless, the government program is a good starting point. Through the documents referred to in the text, the government is obliged to the Oslo framework (commitment to all agreements signed by the PLO), a two-state settlement (resolutions of the ‘Palestinian National Council,’ particularly the 1988 ‘Declaration of Independence’) and the conditional recognition of Israel (according to the Arab League’s 2002 peace initiative.) The program states that the President of the PLO/PA is responsible for negotiations with Israel and any outcomes of negotiations are to be put to a referendum or a vote in the PLO’s National Council. It also contains the offer of implementing a comprehensive bilateral ceasefire and speeding up the release of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The European approach of “isolation-cum-relief” has not proved to be an appropriate response to the Hamas election victory and the dramatic

<sup>13</sup> Muriel Asseburg, “Palestine: EU Policies Frustrate EU Policy Aims,” *Arab Reform Bulletin* 5, no. 1 (February 2007).

<sup>14</sup> For English versions of all these documents incl. the Mecca Agreement, letter of commissioning from President Abbas and the government platform see the document section on [www.jmcc.org](http://www.jmcc.org).

deterioration of the socioeconomic situation and security situation in the Palestinian territories. The Quartet should regard the new government as an opportunity for re-opening the dialogue and cooperation with the PA, and as a starting point for a new Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The EU should take the lead in the process and—as the Palestinian government’s program by and large reflects the principles of the Quartet—end the diplomatic isolation and restart its cooperation with the PA, in line with the European Council’s conclusion of December 2006. The decision on the extent of the cooperation should be made dependent on the degree of actual non-violence (rather than the rhetoric about it)—i.e., the Palestinian government’s efforts to achieve and effectively implement a full cease fire.

Cooperation and direct support are the only way to prevent a further erosion of PA institutions, and thus block the infiltration of jihadist elements, to ensure sustainable improvements in the socioeconomic situation and to reopen peace negotiations. Excluding Hamas from cooperation will not help strengthening the Palestinian president and the moderates, as the EU hopes to do. It rather endangers the fragile power-sharing arrangement which is faced with tough challenges such as integrating Hamas into the PLO and reforming the organization, reconciling the rank and file after the violent clashes and disarming the militias or integrating them into the security services. Aiming at disempowering Hamas would probably lead to a radicalization of the Hamas leadership and supporters rather than paving the way to restart the peace process. Hamas would then have little or no incentive to observe a cease-fire with Israel and still less to support negotiations. A further escalation of violence would be most probable.

Instead there are two ways of strengthening President Abbas’ legitimacy and thereby his position within the government: firstly, the improvement of governance: Europe should offer a form of support to the PA which is not oriented along short-term political considerations but aims consistently at transparency, democratic procedures and checks and balances. Such an approach would include uniting the security forces under the aegis of the Interior Ministry, disarming the militias from all parties, returning to a regular budget—with cash flows via the Finance Ministry under parliamentary supervision—and a clear division of competencies between president and prime minister. Fatah also requires an internal reform process, transforming the movement into a capable and attractive political force once again.

Secondly, it is about a re-entry into a peace process that combines confidence building measures (extension of the ceasefire, release of the Israeli hostage and of Palestinian prisoners, re-start of transfer payments under the ‘Paris Protocol,’ implementation of the ‘Agreement on Movement and Access’ of November 2005, etc.) with what has been termed a “political horizon”—i.e., a blue print of a final status in the form of a goal map rather than the return to the failed road map approach.



## **Concluding Part**



# Inclusion or Repression: The Cost–Benefit Calculations of Authoritarian Rulers

Eva Wegner

The processes of political liberalization witnessed in the Middle East and North Africa since the end of the 1980s have seen many authoritarian regimes there hold elections and allow Islamist movements to take part in them. Introducing or reviving elections and parliaments and extending participation to include new groups served to reduce the internal and external pressure on these regimes to progress with reforms—pressure that had in particular grown through the social consequences of structural adjustment programs and a new willingness on the part of Western states to criticize human rights violations. In the process, it has become apparent that the strategy of incorporating the strongest opposition in order to maintain a hold on power is not without its risks for the regimes involved.<sup>1</sup> This is especially well illustrated in the frequent interruptions in the inclusion process: In Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan the institutional integration of Islamists has been suspended at least for a time, sometimes through a repressive clampdown, sometimes through electoral boycotts by the Islamists.

Most of the literature on inclusion of Islamists concentrates on the extent to which they are “compatible” with democracy. Here, by contrast, inclusion is considered from the perspective of maintaining power. It is no coincidence that authors come to very different conclusions about whether and to what extent Islamists can be democrats. So far this has been a largely hypothetical question that excludes the specific balance of forces on which inclusion is based. In most cases Islamists are not actually integrated into democratic institutions but into authoritarian regimes. Understanding the motivation for liberalization and inclusion and the factors that influence these processes is central to the question of European policy options. To this end, I will start with a discussion of the cost/benefit considerations on which inclusion is based and then examine four factors that influence the regimes’ risk perceptions and the real costs and benefits of inclusion. Finally, I will assess the scope for European policy to influence those considerations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the following, all cases where Islamists are admitted to elections are referred to as inclusion, regardless of how restricted or permanent the process is.

<sup>2</sup> This analysis considers six cases—Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, and Bahrain—where Islamists have taken part in elections at least once. For one of many overviews see Jean-Noël Ferrié, *La parlementarisation de l’islam politique: la dynamique des modérés*, EuroMeSCo Paper 41 (Lisbon: Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission, September 2005). Also: Isabelle Werenfels, *Between Integration and Repression: Government Responses to Islamism in the Maghreb*, SWP Research Paper 39/2005, December 2005, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, [www.swp-berlin.org/en/common/get\\_document.php?asset\\_id=2800](http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/common/get_document.php?asset_id=2800); Holger Albrecht and Eva Wegner, “Autocrats and Islamists: Contenders and Containment in

## The Benefits and Costs of Inclusion for Maintaining Authoritarian Rule

When deciding whether and to what extent inclusive strategies for dealing with Islamists should replace purely repressive ones, regimes must first weigh up the hypothetical consequences of inclusion. It could lead to successful co-optation of the Islamists (who would abandon political demands in exchange for office and patronage) and bring about greater political stability. Alternatively, it could strengthen the Islamists and result in a process of destabilization that is difficult to control.

Rulers hope that admitting Islamists to elections in a process of political liberalization will increase their national and international legitimacy. The latter is especially important for states whose budgets are heavily dependent on international donors. Secondly, they hope to increase their capacity for redistribution by reducing the costs of repressing the Islamists and to control them more by institutional means. Thirdly, co-opting the Islamists could result in the latter seeing a decline in their credibility and support among the population. If Islamists become part of the elite, this would substantially relativize their claims of representing a social, cultural, and not least a political alternative to the existing elites.

On this point, however, regimes face the problem of the considerable risks that the combination of including a strong opposition force and a democratic opening incorporates. The most obvious danger is that barring manipulation of the results, Islamists might actually win, as occurred in Algeria in 1991 and more recently in the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections. If the Islamists are then excluded from the democratic process, the costs can be higher than if they had not been allowed to participate in the first place. The worst-case scenario is the threat of civil war; at least that is how the "Algerian lesson" has been interpreted in the region and in the West. A repetition of the Algerian scenario is unlikely. Regimes have learned the lessons and now take the necessary precautions, whether by intimidating voters and candidates and falsifying results or by more sophisticated methods such as changing the electoral law or gerrymandering constituency boundaries. But even then the participation of Islamists can have unwanted consequences. It is not inconceivable that Islamists will be strengthened rather than weakened; legalization, in particular, reduces the costs of mobilization for Islamist actors. And even where cautious regimes refrain from legalization, new opportunities may open up for the Islamists. They can gain access to new allies, new platforms from which to propagate their ideology, and the opportunity to mobilize previously passive supporters and sections of the population that have become disillusioned in other parties or the elites. In short, participation by Islamists can threaten the existing balance within the institutions and

Egypt and Morocco," *Journal of North African Studies* 11, no. 2 (2006): 123–41; Glenn E. Robinson, "Can Islamists be Democrats? The Case of Jordan," *Middle East Journal* 51, no. 3 (1997): 373–87; Michael Herb, "Emirs and Parliaments in the Gulf," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (2002): 41–47.

make it much more difficult for the regime to implement its political preferences.

### Structural Risks of Inclusion

The aforementioned risks apply to all authoritarian states of the region. There is, however, a series of factors that determine more precisely how risky inclusion would be for the stability of a particular regime. The possible consequences of Islamist participation depend first on the *function of parliament and elections* in the respective system. In the Arab republics authoritarian rule requires legitimization through the dominance of the governing party, so an Islamist election victory could mean the end of the regime. In the monarchies, on the other hand, the king's right to rule and govern does not depend on the success of a particular party. Implementing his political preferences is to a certain extent dependent on the existence of loyal deputies, but the "wrong" election result would not directly endanger the system.

The second factor to bear in mind is the *relative strength of a particular Islamist group* in comparison with other actors inside and outside the institutions. The weaker an Islamist organization is in relation to secular parties and other Islamist actors, the easier it is to integrate. Strong secular parties that are both unlikely to become allies for the Islamists and would also block them in parliament are rare in the region; their existence is largely limited to Morocco with its long tradition of party-political pluralism. So the question of how fragmented the Islamic movement is may carry greater weight. If we compare Egypt and Morocco, for example, we see that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is not only significantly stronger and better organized than the Moroccan Islamists; it also dominates the Islamist spectrum in its country. In Morocco, on the other hand, supporters and activists are spread among at least two Islamist organizations, of which only the weaker one has been legalized.

It is indeed apparent that repressive clampdowns have occurred where the risk associated with Islamist electoral participation is greatest, i.e. in republics where the Islamists have no serious rivals. In fact, republics have generally avoided legalizing Islamist movements and instead merely tolerated Islamists standing as "independent candidates." It is relatively easy to eject illegal groups from institutions, whereas banning a party can be expected to provoke a greater public response. In Morocco, Jordan, and Bahrain on the other hand (states where inclusion brings with it less inherent risk) Islamists stand in elections as legalized parties or party-like organizations. To date, the inclusion experiment has only been interrupted in one of these cases: Jordan.<sup>3</sup>

These two factors are structurally conditioned and thus relatively stable in the medium to long term. A president does not become a king over-

<sup>3</sup> However, the Islamists in Morocco have to pay for their legality with the "voluntary" self-restriction of standing only in certain constituencies.

night, and although secular forces can be fostered, they cannot be strengthened to the necessary extent in the short term. Two other factors that determine the costs and benefits of inclusion strategies are, however, subject to stronger fluctuation. They may change as a result of the Islamists' participation or be directly influenced by regimes and external actors.

### Variable Costs of Inclusion

The most important variable cost of inclusion is one that could be defined as the *Islamists' willingness to enter into confrontation*. Here it is not a question of how vehemently Islamists espouse religiously inspired policies. That in itself poses no challenge to power, and most of the so-called "secular" regimes have been using religion for the purposes of legitimization since the 1980s if not earlier.<sup>4</sup> Instead, what makes inclusion more or less of a challenge is the question of how loyal or confrontational Islamists are toward the regime in their words and deeds. In authoritarian states, a renouncement of violent domestic political strategies and a declaration of loyalty to the regime are generally preconditions for participation in elections. It is not possible here to generalize as to whether such declarations stem from conviction or are merely tactical. However, governments tend to integrate those Islamists they consider "moderate", i.e. those where the government can assume that they will not "abuse" their new position for propaganda against the system.

The behavior of integrated Islamists can develop in either direction, but the predominant tendency is toward avoiding confrontation with the regime. That can mean becoming more moderate as a consequence of (from the regime's perspective) "successful" inclusion. In any case, pure circumspection will be one of the reasons. Those actors in the Arab states who have suffered most from human rights violations in recent decades (arbitrary detention, torture, exile) will not be quick to risk their new status. This caution will be all the greater where the Islamists' interests are more closely tied to the preservation of legality, for example through investment in a party organization. This point cannot be generalized, of course. There is certainly a threshold, defined on the one hand by how much the Islamists actually stand to gain from participation and on the other by issues that are central to the Islamists' support base. The latter need not necessarily relate to religious questions. In Jordan, for example, it was King Hussein's decision to conclude a peace treaty with Israel that led to bitter acrimony between the regime and the Islamists.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> The Islamic Action Front and the Muslim Brotherhood, which are increasingly dependent on the support of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, campaigned against the peace treaty. Because the treaty had to be ratified by parliament, King Hussein enacted a new election law by decree shortly before the 1993 parliamentary elections. It caused the Islamists' representation in parliament to fall from 26 to 18 seats even though their share of the vote increased, and led ultimately to the election boycott of 1997.

The last factor—and the only one where external actors actually play an important role—is the *cost of repression* of included and excluded Islamists. The greater the cost, the greater the incentive for inclusion. Apart from the purely material costs of repression—surveillance, infiltration, breaking up organizations—the question of the legitimacy of repression also has a decisive influence on a regime’s perception of whether inclusion would be worthwhile in principle and how simple it is to reverse it. The costs a regime has to take into consideration arise from the attitudes of its own elites and population and those of the international community. Regimes are certainly aware that the more violent the actions of Islamist groups, the more legitimate state repression against them appears in the eyes of national and international actors. For this reason they have in the past attempted to reduce the costs of repression. Commonly used methods were antiterrorism laws and “rhetorically” equating included Islamists with terrorists. In this respect, both 9/11 and other Islamist attacks in the Arab states themselves have turned out to be a “resource.” In Egypt, for example, an antiterrorism act was passed at the beginning of the 1990s following attacks by Islamist radicals. In speeches directly thereafter, President Mubarak repeatedly referred to the Muslim Brotherhood as a subversive and terrorist organization. Then, in the run-up to the 1995 parliamentary elections, most of the Brotherhood’s candidates and leaders were arrested and brought before military tribunals that convicted them of running an illegal subversive organization and supporting terrorists.<sup>6</sup> The Casablanca (2003) and Amman (2005) bombings were likewise used to justify similar laws, which were subsequently applied not only against “terrorists” but also for the purpose of curtailing political and civil rights in general.

The attitude of the international community toward political liberalization in general and repression of Islamists in particular varies from country to country depending on the strategic relevance of the state in question. Overall, its stance has been ambivalent. The international community’s toleration of the Algerian military coup at the beginning of the 1990s (see the contribution by Isabelle Werenfels in this volume, pp. 39ff) signaled to Arab regimes that it preferred reliable autocrats to democratically elected Islamists—a signal that has to this day yet to be relativized by any change of policy.

### **Conclusions for European Policy: Increase the Costs of Repression**

Most of the factors discussed above that promote or impede the participation of Islamists—the type of regime, the strength of the Islamists, and their behavior toward the regime—are largely outside the influence of

<sup>6</sup> Here it must be assumed that rather than being convinced that the Muslim Brotherhood was actually involved in the attacks, the repressive measures should be interpreted as the government’s response to electoral successes of the Brotherhood (parliament, professional associations) and of the Algerian Islamists (parliament, 1991). See in particular Carry R. Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam. Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 214–21.

European policymakers. For instance, the consistent and so far stable inclusion in Morocco whose regime is now praised for its democratic and transparent elections, is largely the outcome of structural factors and the very cooperative behavior of the Islamists. So far, at least, inclusion has had the desired consequences from the regime's point of view. The international community is enthusiastic the Islamists are toothless.

European policy does, however, have an influence on the ease with which regimes can respond to Islamist electoral successes with repression or generally block political participation by Islamists. The generally negative role played by the West in the past here is certainly a sorry reflection of policies that purport to at least support respect for human rights and the strengthening of political freedoms, if not actually going as far as promoting democratization itself.

European policymakers must face up to the question of the underlying priorities in their approach toward the Arab states. Do they prefer to cooperate with long-standing and therefore predictable partners in the region, or to promote values such as pluralism, freedom of opinion, political participation, and representation? In the first case it would be advisable to tone down the talk of democratization. The populations of the Arab states were already well aware of this contradiction, even before it was underlined once again by the European response to Hamas' election triumph.

If, however, European policymakers choose the second priority they should tangibly increase the costs of repression and exclusion. They should be less willing to accept the authoritarian elites' arguments of "us or chaos" or "us or Islamic dictatorship," and instead first take a closer look at the situation. European policy should refrain from making sweeping judgments about the Islamists' political agendas. Islamist parties often pursue goals that are absolutely compatible with the European agenda, such as the fight against corruption. And even if Islamists generally espouse conservative positions on issues such as the role of women in society, in some countries they still actually supply more female deputies and have more women in leading positions than the secular forces that profit through funding from political foundations and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. At the very least, their positions should be compared with the standards of their own region rather than those of Europe. If this comparison turns out in the Islamists' favor, cooperation with Islamist organizations should also be taken into consideration. Cooperating or even just communicating with them would make it much more difficult for others to equate moderate Islamists with terrorists. This would be the most direct way of increasing the legitimacy costs of repression. Even if European policymakers are not (yet) willing to go down that road, they should at least speak up equally for the rights of Islamist and secular activists when clampdowns occur and in such cases make use of the possibilities of political conditionality that are open to them. Moreover, they should criticize legal tricks that are designed to keep a regime in power or

serve the interests of ruling or pro-regime parties, such as excessive gerrymandering and manipulation of electoral laws.

As things stand, these proposals do not appear to have much chance of finding their way onto the European agenda in the near future. But if the current policy is continued—with such a gulf between democratic rhetoric and actual policy on the ground—the outcome in the region would be the complete loss of credibility for European policies.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

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As the case studies reveal, the programs and priorities of many moderate Islamist movements in the region are undergoing transformation. Many of them want first and foremost not to create a theocratic state, but to compete peacefully for a share of power and to work within existing institutions to bring about a gradual political opening. It is conspicuous that these actors often call for democracy, human rights, and political participation rather than rejecting them as Western values. Many of the groups pursue a reform agenda that largely coincides with the political opening that the “West” regards as necessary. These Islamist actors strive for good governance, fight against corruption and for transparency, and attempt to implement the rule of law and a division of powers. They want parliament and the courts to function as independent control mechanisms—rather than subjecting them to a higher religious authority. When they work in these institutions, they can often show a better record than their non-Islamist colleagues with respect to earnestness, the use of legal and parliamentary control instruments, and efforts to gain expertise.

Commentators often claim that Islamist calls for democratization are of a purely tactical nature and that if they came to power they would set about establishing authoritarian Islamist regimes. The risk of political opening is indeed that power could pass to forces where we do not know today whether they will play by democratic rules. What we do know, though, is that, especially in the Arab world, the ruling elites certainly do not stand for political participation, successful resolution of social conflict, good governance, and respect for human rights. We also know that they have rarely used the region’s resources to promote flourishing economies and societies. It is also obvious that political opening does not go far if it excludes those forces that possess the greatest mobilization potential and often form the only organized alternative to authoritarian regimes.

The priorities of Islamist groups outlined above do not, however, mean that they automatically espouse democratic values that correspond to the Western understanding. In fact, it often remains unclear what an Islamist political order would actually look like. What position should Islamic law (Sharia) have among other legal sources? Who should have the authority to define the Sharia? To what extent would political and social pluralism be restricted by an Islamic frame of reference? For example, would political rights and freedoms be granted even in cases where they contradicted the

predominant interpretation of Islam? Would women and religious minorities (including minorities within Islam) be treated equally?<sup>1</sup>

Often this lack of clarity stems from the fact that the discussion within the parties and movements is still ongoing. In many cases it is still too early to tell how positions and agendas will eventually turn out. It would be wrong to assume an automatic trend toward liberal attitudes, and it would run counter to experience to assume that political inclusion alone would lead to more liberal positions. The inclusion of Islamists in the parliaments of Bahrain, Iraq and Egypt paints a different picture, as does the case of Iran. The case studies clearly show that the question of whether and to what extent Islamist actors position themselves as active reformist forces cannot be answered monocausally. The theory that inclusion automatically leads to liberal positions and rejection of violence is untenable, as is the correlate that exclusion necessarily brings with it radicalization and support for violence.<sup>2</sup>

### Framework Conditions, Forms of Participation, and Organization

The way the Islamist program develops and how Islamists set their priorities depends on a combination of factors that a) make up the political and social setting, b) relate to the Islamists' form of organization, and c) are shaped by the extent of their participation in the political process. The case studies have identified the following as the most important factors:

#### a) The political and social setting

1. The political system, the degree of openness for political participation and the *extent of political competition*: In many states in the region there is very little organized political competition apart from regime elites and Islamists. The cases studied here show that political inclusion, legalization of Islamist parties, and political competition encourage discussion about models for society, agendas and concrete policies. Illegality and repression—or, conversely, a dominant position in the system—tend to work against a programmatic debate and lessen the premium on pragmatism and willingness to compromise.
2. The *stability or fragility of the state*: In Iraq and Palestine, the actual authority of the Islamists that have been elected to power is so small that they are largely unable to implement their (reform) agenda at the national level. This is due to a lack of institutional consolidation and the ongoing violent clashes in a situation of de facto or de jure military occupation. In both cases the Islamists—interestingly with Western sup-

<sup>1</sup> For detail on the “gray zones,” the areas where Islamist positions remain ambivalent, see Nathan Brown, Amr Hamzawy, and Marina S. Ottaway, *Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World. Exploring the Gray Zones*, Carnegie Papers, Middle East Series, no. 67 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2006).

<sup>2</sup> See also Katerina Dalacoura, “Islamist Terrorism and the Middle East Democratic Deficit: Political Exclusion, Repression and the Causes of Extremism,” *Democratization* 13, no. 3 (June 2006): 508–25.

port in Iraq, but completely isolated by the West in Palestine—have their work completely cut out simply to establish themselves as an effective government or part of a coalition government and to prevent the state or entity from failing or disintegrating completely.

3. The *fragmentation of society* and the degree of dominance of sectarian or ethno-nationalist politics: In strongly fragmented societies the inclusion of Islamists—like political opening in general—does not automatically lead to competition of political ideas, and does not necessarily promote the search for consensus and compromise. On the contrary, it often reinforces sectarian, ethnic, and tribal divides. This development can be observed especially clearly in Bahrain and Iraq.

b) The Islamists' form of organization

4. In particular, the *separation or unity of political party, socio-religious movement, and armed wing*: As the example of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood shows, ambiguity in policy positions is greatest where there is no separation between the political and socio-religious organizations, because this makes a pragmatic, flexible stance almost impossible in moral questions that are not suited for democratic processes of negotiation and compromise.

c) The extent of participation in the political process

5. The *actual participation of Islamists in the political process* (as legal or illegal opposition movement, as parliamentary opposition, in government alone, or in coalition): As the examples of Algeria and Iran—and to a certain extent in the Palestinian territories—show, participation in government leads to a “double disenchantment.” Firstly, the Islamists discover that in many cases Islam gives no guidance for the daily business of politics. Secondly, not even Islamists (who often claim the moral high ground) are immune to corruption and nepotism when in power. The inclusion of Islamists in the parliamentary opposition, and even more so in government, changes their agendas and priorities. Those who then profit from the system (see Algeria, Bahrain, and to some extent Egypt,) tend—at least partially and for a time—to give up their reform-seeking orientation in favor of a political line that shores up the existing regime.

*To sum up:* The more consolidated and open the political system, and thus the greater the political competition, the greater also the pressure on and opportunity for Islamist parties to act and argue pragmatically and to establish themselves as reform actors, and the greater the chances that they will adopt relatively liberal positions. Such a reform orientation can be further encouraged by reinforcing it through external incentives (see the case of the Turkish AKP). For this reason, an analysis of the political framework in which Islamists operate is much more helpful for understanding their strategic and policy decisions than merely examining their ideological basis. The same applies if we wish to answer the question of

whether Islamists stand for democratization or for a new Islamic authoritarianism. The region's political and legal frameworks are overwhelmingly characterized by huge restrictions on political competition and are thus largely unsuited for promoting moderation and pragmatism.

### Challenges for the European Union

The EU and its member states have so far largely accepted the interpretation of the region's authoritarian rulers, namely that they are the only reliable partners for the West. The fear of a new authoritarianism following a democratic assumption of power by Islamists—often reduced to the pithy slogan “one man, one vote, one time”—and also of a destabilization of the region and the endangering of European interests has been heightened still further by the spectacular Islamist election successes of recent years in Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine. For those reasons, and also due to differing values and not least language barriers, the European side has been hesitant to establish contacts to Islamist actors.

The international community's efforts to promote democratization have so far been largely unsuccessful in many countries in the region. The Euro-American Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA) initiated in 2004 has done little to change that. The long-term exclusion of Islamist movements, organizations, and parties from dialogue and cooperation activities—especially by the European Union and its member states, less by the United States—is only one of the reasons for the poor progress. Nonetheless, it must be reiterated that democratization in Middle Eastern and other Muslim societies will not be possible if the movements that enjoy the greatest support in the population remain excluded. If, therefore, Europeans have a genuine interest in political opening and greater participation in the region, they should support the political inclusion of moderate Islamists and establish or expand corresponding contacts. However, the starting point for democratization—as the case studies clearly show—is not to place all one's hopes in the Islamists as a force for reform or to enter into a discussion of fundamental values with them.<sup>3</sup> Instead, it is a matter of influencing the broader conditions under which Islamists—and other political actors too—take part in the political process. In other words, to enlarge the scope for democratic political competition.

Even if the European Union and its member states no longer regard the promotion of democracy as a priority in view of the increasing strength of Islamist forces, researchers and politicians will still have to direct their attention to the social and political trends in the region in order to understand them better and to find opportunities for influence. Any dialogue with forces in the region that excludes Islamist groupings will be of

<sup>3</sup> Brumberg explains that an approach that aims to promote democratization by supporting reformist Islamic thinking and new Islamist parties would run the risk of assigning too important a role to Islam as a liberalizing force, in dealing with social conflicts, and in questions of identity. Daniel Brumberg, “Islam Is Not the Solution (or the Problem),” *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (winter 2005–06): 97–116.

declining significance. Dialogue and exchange with Islamists may sometimes be more difficult than with the partners favored in the past, who were socialized (and often funded) by the West. But in return it promises ultimately to lead to a broader influence in the societies of the region, rather than remaining confined to the rarefied circles of the civil society elites.

### **Making Distinctions in Dealings with Islamists**

When dealing with moderate Islamists, it may be useful for European decision-makers to distinguish between Islamists in power (Iran, Iraq, Turkey), Islamists on the European list of terrorist organizations (Hamas), and moderate Islamists in opposition or in coalition governments (e.g. Egypt, Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco).

Dealings with *Islamists in power* are unproblematic to the extent that these are, at least as a rule, normal relations between states where the focus is on material questions rather than the Islamism of the rulers. Whether relations and cooperation can be deepened depends on whether both sides are able to define shared interests and whether they wish to work together. German-Saudi relations are an example of such a form of pragmatic cooperation.

In dealings with *moderate Islamists on the list of terrorist organizations* a clear distinction should be made between dialogue and cooperation. On the one hand and without any doubt, Europe should engage in dialogue unconditionally: firstly, to create incentives; secondly to explain and underline its own position; and thirdly to influence the decision-making process in the respective movement, in this case Hamas. The listing as a terrorist organization does in no way prevent such contacts. Cooperation and financial support, on the other hand, can only be granted when the respective group or its political wing can be struck off the list of terrorist organizations. That decision should be made largely contingent on the group's actual behavior rather than on its rhetoric.

### **Democracy Promotion and Moderate Islamists**

The European efforts to pursue a “partnership approach” to promoting democracy (of the kind developed, for example, in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) should be intensified—even though they have so far produced little in the way of success and modesty is at order when it comes to the possibilities for exerting influence.<sup>4</sup> The first time the EU implied that it also wished to include Islamists in these efforts was in its ‘Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East,’ which was adopted

<sup>4</sup> Muriel Asseburg, “Demokratieförderung in der arabischen Welt: Hat der partnerschaftliche Ansatz der Europäer versagt?” *Orient* 46, no. 2 (2005): 272–90. For an overview and a critique of theoretical explanations see Raymond Hinnebusch, “Authoritarian Persistence, Democratization Theory and the Middle East: An Overview and Critique,” *Democratization* 13, no. 3 (June 2006): 373–95.

in 2004. The first objective should now be to create a consensus within the EU that it is in the interests of promoting democracy to exercise pressure on the corresponding governments to abandon their repressive stance toward moderate Islamists that violates the principles of rule of law and human rights, and to grant them the same access to the political arena as other opposition forces.<sup>5</sup>

Europeans should seek primarily to influence the legal and political framework for social and political participation in the region. Here, it will be necessary to establish procedures, laws, and institutions that guarantee that all important societal groups are included in democratically elected multi-party systems and power-sharing arrangements. Action Plans negotiated under the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) offer the opportunity to provide for benchmarking not only in economic matters but with regards to political opening too. Such benchmarking should be oriented on the following central points: guaranteeing human rights, lifting the states of emergency that continue to restrict political rights in many countries, passing liberal party and association laws, appointing independent electoral commissions, and granting freedom of opinion and assembly.

### Islamists and Elections

Europe should not urge the earliest possible elections, but should rather call for legislation and a political practice that would allow the emergence of a functioning civil society and the formation of political parties in the first place. However, where parliamentary elections are held and an Islamist victory cannot be excluded, as for example in Morocco in the fall of 2007, Europe should signal in advance a clear interest in free and fair elections. The EU should also take up calls from Islamists for international election observers. Such gestures possess great symbolic value. They increase the otherwise poor credibility of the European discourse on democratization, demonstrate that the EU has no anti-Islamic or anti-Islamist tendencies, and create a basis for pragmatic relations with future Islamist governments.

In this connection Germany should revive its proposal to establish—under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership—a system of reciprocal election monitoring on the OSCE model. Even more important, the EU should accept the outcome of elections (especially those whose holding it urged itself) and refrain from undermining elected governments. Contradictory behavior strips Europe of the last shred of credibility when it comes to promoting democracy and, as has become clear in the case of Hamas, does nothing to meet the real challenges. The idea of weakening or destroying the attractiveness of the “Islamist model” by causing Islamist groups like Hamas to fail through isolation and pressure is not only unrealistic; interventions following that strategy also contain the risk of massive destabili-

<sup>5</sup> Amr Hamzawy, *The Key to Arab Reform: Moderate Islamists*, Policy Brief no. 40 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 2005).

zation. They promote popular radicalization and open the field for jihadist actors who are tied to no national agenda and are not open to negotiation or compromise.

### **Dialogue with Islamists**

The “Islam dialogue,” which has been conducted by the German Foreign Ministry since 2002, represents an instrument with which Europeans can engage in a meaningful discussion with Islamists (and other actors). Other European countries have come up with similar approaches. However, their limits became apparent in the Danish cartoon controversy. There was a lack of institutionalized structures that would have allowed the crisis to be contained. It was not possible to formulate and publicize a joint position countering the “clash of civilizations” discourse of the European media and the media in Islamic countries. Thus it is not enough and even dangerous to conduct a cultural and religious dialogue where political differences are shifted onto the plane of values and culture and turned into identity politics. Instead, political interests and prejudices too must be openly addressed and channels of dialogue institutionalized. Here Europeans should build on the experience, encourage the networking of officials responsible for relations with Muslim communities and cooperate with other dialogue forums. Specifically, there is a need to reduce negative stereotypes through dialogue. But this can only work if significantly more people become involved in exchange activities and are able to share experiences on an equal footing.

The EU and its member states should also send positive signals at the level of civil society and include Islamist groups in dialogue, training, and exchange programs focusing, for example, on effective parliamentary work, promoting women, and human rights. It goes without saying that cooperation with secular actors should continue at the same time in order to promote the widest possible pluralist spectrum and support dialogue between Islamists and secular actors. In this respect, Germany is in an advantageous position: The German party-political foundations can offer forums for dialogue where different social forces come together, for example to debate the priorities and goals for reform. Such forums, however, require at least implicit official support.

## Appendix

**Overview: Islamist Participation in Arab States, Iran, and Turkey (as of April 2007)**

Country	Political system ( <i>de facto</i> )	Islamist parties and groups, legal/illegal	Islamist partici- pation in elections	Islamists' seats in parliament, participation in government	Paramilitary wing	Last and/or next elections
Algeria	Authoritarian presidential republic	Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix (MSP): legal party	Yes	38 of 389 seats in parliament, participation in government	No	5/2007 parliamentary elections
		Mouvement de la Réforme Nationale (MRN): legal party	Yes	43 of 389 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	
		Ennahda: legal party	Yes	1 of 389 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	
		Front Islamique du Salut (FIS): illegal party	No	No	No	
		Wafa: illegal party	No	No	No	
Bahrain	Authoritarian monarchy	Al-Asala (Purity): legal group	Yes	5 of 40 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	11-12/2006 parlia- mentary elections
		Al-Minbar al-Islami (Islamic Platform): legal group	Yes	7 of 40 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	
		Al-Wifaq al-Islami (Islamic Accord): legal group	Yes	17 of 40 seats in parliament	No	
		Al-Amal al-Islami (Islamic Action): legal group	Yes	No	No	

Egypt	Authoritarian presidential republic	<i>Muslim Brotherhood</i> : illegal party	Yes, as independent candidates	88 of 454 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	9/2005 presidential elections; 10-11/2005 parliamentary elections
Iran	Authoritarian theocratic presidential republic	<b>Conservative bloc:</b>  <i>Abadgaran</i> (Development Coalition of Islamic Iran)  <i>Isargaran</i> (Society of Devotees of the Islamic Revolution)  <i>Motalefeh</i> (Islamic Coalition Party)  <i>Majma'e Jame'e-ye ruhaniyat-e mobarez</i> (Militant Clergy Association)  <b>Reformist bloc:</b>  <i>Mosharekat</i> (Islamic Iran Participation Front)  IRMO (Islamic Revolution Mujahedin Organization)  <i>Majma'e ruhaniyune mobarez</i> (Association of Militant Clerics)	Yes  Yes  Yes  Yes	The conservative bloc currently has the majority in parliament, 156 of 290 seats  The president of parliament is from Abadgaran	No  No  No  No	2/2007 local and mayoral elections; 2/2008 parliamentary elections

Country	Political system ( <i>de facto</i> )	Islamist parties and groups, legal/illegal	Islamist partici- pation in elections	Islamists' seats in parliament, participation in government	Paramilitary wing	Last and/or next elections
Iraq	Parliamentary republic, strong American influence	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI): legal party	Yes	United Iraqi Alliance (alliance of SCIRI, Dawa Party, Sadr movement, and Fadila Party): 140 of 275 seats in parliament, participation in government	Badr Orga- nization (SCIRI)	12/2005 parliamen- tary elections
		Dawa Party: legal party	Yes	No		
		Sadr movement: legal party	Yes	Mahdi Army		
		Fadila Party: legal party	Yes	15 of 275 seats in parliament; until 5/2006 participation in government, until 3/2007 part of the United Iraqi Alliance	Control of militia-like security forces in Basra	
		Iraqi Islamic Party: legal party	Yes	Iraqi Consensus Front (elec- toral alliance of Sunni organi- zations, with Islamist ten- dencies): 44 of 275 seats in parliament, participation in government	No	
		Kurdistan Islamic Union: legal party	Yes	5 of 275 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	

Jordan	Authoritarian monarchy	Islamic Action Front: legal party	Yes	17 of 110 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	parliamentary elections scheduled for 2007
Katar	Authoritarian emirate	Parties are illegal	-	No parliament yet	No	4/2007 local elections; 5/2007 parliamentary elections
Kuwait	Authoritarian emirate	Parties are illegal				6/2006 parliamentary elections
		Muslim Brotherhood: legal group	Yes	6 of 50 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	
		Islamic Salafist Alliance: legal group	Yes	2 of 50 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	
		National Islamic Alliance: legal group	Yes	2 of 50 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	
		Salafist Movement	Yes	2 of 50 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	
Lebanon	Parliamentary concordance democracy	Hizbullah: legal party	Yes	14 of 128 seats in parliament, participation in government with 2 ministers (until November 2006)	Hizbullah militias	5-6/2005 parliamentary elections
		Association for Islamic Charity Projects: legal party	Yes	No representation in parliament, no participation in government	No	
Libya	Authoritarian people's republic ( <i>Jamahiriyya</i> )	Parties are illegal	-	-	-	No elections

Country	Political system ( <i>de facto</i> )	Islamist parties and groups, legal/illegal	Islamist partici- pation in elections	Islamists' seats in parliament, participation in government	Paramilitary wing	Last and/or next elections
Mauretania	since 3/2007 presiden- tial republic; 2005- 2007 military tran- sitional government;	Islamist parties are illegal	Islamists from the "Réforma- teurs Centristes" stand as in- dependents or as candidates of recognized political parties	5 of 95 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	11-12/2006 parlia- mentary and local elections; 1/2007 senate elec- tions; 3/2007 presidential elections
Morocco	Authoritarian monarchy	<i>Parti de la Justice et du Développement</i> (PJD): legal party  <i>Al-Badil Al-Hadari</i> (Cultural Alternative): legal party  <i>At-Tawhid Wal-Islah</i> (Mouvement Unité et Réforme, MUR): not legalized, but tolerated  <i>Al-Adl Wal-Ihsan</i> (Justice and Charity): not legalized, but tolerated	Yes  Not yet, only founded in 2005  No  No  No	42 of 325 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	9/2007 parliamentary elections
Oman	9/2007 parliamentary elections	Parties are illegal	No information	No information	No infor- mation	10/2007 elections to lower chamber ( <i>Majlis al-shura</i> )

Palestinian Authority	Restricted self-administration, semi-presidential system	Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement): legal group	Yes	76 of 132 seats in parliament, governing party, since 3/2007 Hamas-led coalition government ("National Unity Government")	Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades; Executive Forces	1/2005 presidential elections; 1/2006 parliamentary elections
Saudi Arabia	Authoritarian monarchy	Parties are illegal	-	-	-	2-4/2005 local elections
Sudan	Authoritarian presidential republic	National Congress Party ( <i>Hizb al-Mu'tamar al-Watani</i> ): legal party	Yes	Governing party with 335 of 360 seats in parliament (86 percent in the presidential election)	No information	12/2000 presidential and parliamentary elections
Syria	Authoritarian presidential republic	Muslim Brotherhood: illegal group	No	No	No	4/2007 parliamentary elections; 7/2007 presidential elections (referendum)
Tunisia	Authoritarian presidential republic	<i>An-Nahda</i> (Renaissance): illegal party	No	No representation in parliament or government	No	10/2004 parliamentary elections
Turkey	Parliamentary republic with military veto actor	Justice and Development Party ( <i>Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi, AKP</i> ): legal party	Yes	354 of 550 seats in parliament, party of government	No	5/2007 presidential elections; 11/2007 (at the latest) parliamentary elections
United Arab Emirates	Federation of authoritarian emirates	Felicity Party ( <i>Saadet Partisi, SP</i> ): legal party	Yes	Failed to enter parliament with 2.5 percent (10 percent threshold)	No	12/2006 elections to consultative Federal National Council via electoral college
Yemen	Authoritarian presidential republic	Reform Party ( <i>al-Islah</i> ): legal party	Yes	46 of 301 seats in parliament, no participation in government	No	9/2006 presidential, 2/2007 local elections

## Abbreviations

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party, Turkey)
BMENA	Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DGM	Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri (state security courts, Turkey)
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EMP	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EU	European Union
EUI	European University Institute
EuroMeSCo	Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission
FIS	Front Islamique du Salut (Algeria)
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale (Algeria)
FP	Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party, Turkey)
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Algeria)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INAMO	Informationsprojekt Naher und Mittlerer Osten e.V.
ISIM	International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World
JMCC	Jerusalem Media and Communications Center
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party (Iraq)
MERIA	Middle East Review of International Affairs
MGK	Milli Güvenlik Kurulu (National Security Council, Turkey)
MRN	Mouvement de la Réforme Nationale (Algeria)
MSP	Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix (Algeria)
NDP	National Democratic Party (Egypt)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NISP	National Islamic Salvation Party (Palestinian territories)
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PA	Palestinian Authority
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (Iraq)
RP	Refah Partisi (Welfare Party, Turkey)
SCIRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
SP	Saadet Partisi (Felicity Party, Turkey)
UN	United Nations
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WOCMES	World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies

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