

Mona El-Ghobashy

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE EGYPTIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS

Jihane al-Halafawi's small apartment above a barbershop in Alexandria is exceedingly orderly, a cool oasis on a sweltering summer afternoon. Plant leaves brush up against curtains undulating with the breeze from the nearby Mediterranean. As she walks into the living room with a tray full of cakes and tea, al-Halafawi is the picture of a kindly Egyptian mother, a genuine smile gracing her youthful face. But when this fifty-year-old mother of six and grandmother announced her candidacy for Egypt's parliamentary elections in fall 2000, the state geared up a massive security force outside polling stations; leftists shrugged her off as a "front" for her husband; and state feminists dedicated to the electoral empowerment of women were silent. When Halafawi outperformed her ruling-party rival in the first round, despite rigging, the Interior Ministry promptly stepped in and canceled the results on the pretext of respecting an earlier court ruling postponing the elections.

Alexandria's al-Raml district went without parliamentary representation for two years as al-Halafawi and her legal team battled the state in the courts. Finally, in June 2002, a Supreme Administrative Court ruling compelled the Interior Ministry to hold the by-elections. On election day, security forces blockaded roads leading to polling stations, arrested al-Halafawi's legal team and 101 of her supporters, roughed up journalists, and stepped aside as public-sector workers bused in from outside the district voted for her rival. Unusually, the six o'clock news was interrupted that evening to announce the sweeping victory of the two ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) candidates in the Raml by-elections.¹

Al-Halafawi's experience is one dramatic piece of a larger story, the story of the group of which she is a part: the Society of Muslim Brothers (Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun).² Over the past quarter-century, the Society of Muslim Brothers (Ikhwan) has morphed from a highly secretive, hierarchical, antidemocratic organization led by anointed elders into a modern, multivocal political association steered by educated, savvy professionals not unlike activists of the same age in rival Egyptian political parties. Seventy-seven years ago, the Muslim Brothers were founded in the provincial city of Ismailiyya by the charismatic disciplinarian and shrewd organizer Hasan al-Banna (1906–49). With a vision of an Islamic renaissance and a chalkboard under his arm, al-Banna recruited members door-to-door and built a welfare society–cum–athletic

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league-cum-anticolonial movement held together by meticulous organization and strict master-disciple relations. Today, the social-welfare activities of the Ikhwan are as strong as ever, but the enforced top-down unanimity of the group is a thing of the past.

The Ikhwan have come to experience organizational and ideological transformations endemic to any party or social movement: splits along generational lines, intense internal debates about strategy, and a shift in their ideological plank from politics as a sacred mission to politics as the public contest between rival interests. I argue that the Ikhwan's energetic capitalization on Egypt's sliver of electoral competition for seats in Parliament, the professional unions, and municipal councils has had an especially profound effect on their political thought and organization. The institutional rules of authoritarian electoral politics have led to both organizational and ideological change within the group.

Organizational change is most conspicuous in the rise of middle-aged Ikhwan professionals who came of political age on college campuses in the 1960s and 1970s, fundamentally different creatures from the Ikhwan elders who cut their political teeth in the tumultuous, ideologically polarized Egypt of the 1940s. While the group's highest executive post is still the turf of the older "prison generation," middle-aged members formulate policy, act as spokesmen, and represent the group in Parliament and professional unions. Indeed, generational dynamics are behind organizational rumblings in all Egyptian political institutions, including the NDP, as disenchanting younger activists turn their backs on ossified "historical leaders" and craft new political projects based on their independent assessment of existing institutional constraints.

Ideologically, one of the most visible byproducts of the Ikhwan's political engagement has been a decisive move away from the uncompromising notions of Sayyid Qutb (1906–66) as outlined in his tract *Ma'alim fi al-tariq* (*Signposts*) and toward a cautious reinterpretation of the ideas of founder al-Banna. A related innovation is the Ikhwan's appropriation of moderate Islamist thinkers' works authenticating democracy with Islamic concepts. Democracy here is defined as (1) broad, equal citizenship with (2) binding consultation of citizens with respect to governmental personnel and policies, and (3) protection of citizens from arbitrary state action.³ Several position papers issued by the Muslim Brothers in the 1990s document the group's prodemocratic turn and its revamped views on women's rights, parties and political pluralism, the role of Egyptian Copts, and the morality and utility of political violence.

The transformation of the Muslim Brothers from a religious mass movement to what looks very much like a modern political party has its roots in electoral politicking that began in the 1980s. Yet this change has been eclipsed by both Ikhwan critics and boosters, the former denying any change or belittling it as mere posturing by the Muslim Brothers to gain power, the latter folding any innovation into the prearranged plan of the all-wise founder al-Banna. Both are inaccurate. The Ikhwan are in no way invulnerable to the political changes that have engulfed Egyptian society over the past twenty-five years, both good and ill. The Muslim Brothers are consummate political actors, neither extraordinarily gifted at mobilization nor historically adept at deception. The fevered attention accorded Islamist groups by Western policymakers, Arab state elites, and some academics exaggerates their perceived threat (to democracy, Western interests, stability, or "national unity") and organizational capabilities and occludes clear thinking on how they are shaped by their institutional political environment.

My argument implies the following. First, different questions need to be asked about Islamists' participation in politics. Conjectural, aimless "are they or aren't they?" debates about Islamists' commitment to democracy should take an analytical back seat to how Islamists actually behave in semidemocratic political theaters. Second, if Islamists are treated as political actors jockeying for advantage, relevance, and support, their ideological pronouncements can be analyzed as effects and not predictors of their political experience. This is not a call for a purely instrumentalist understanding of ideology nor an intervention into the perennial debate on which has causal primacy, ideology or action. It is to argue for a critical rethinking of the assumption of exceptionalism with which Islamist movements are approached. Finally, since Islamist parties are subject to the same institutional rules of the political game, then it is reasonable to assume that they will show some, if not all, of the stresses experienced by their non-Islamist competitors. The influence of common institutional variables on the organization and ideology of both secular and religious political parties merits further study.

WHY AND HOW POLITICAL PARTIES CHANGE

In 1914, the radical German Social Democratic Party (SPD), a major antiwar platform, rushed to support the world war as soon as it was declared. As Seymour Martin Lipset reports, Lenin "was convinced that the issue of the party newspaper *Vorwärts* calling for support of the war effort was a forgery."⁴ Neither a cynical bid to curry favor with the authorities nor a clumsy grab at popularity, the SPD's decision was beholden to a deeper force: the "instinct for self-preservation," as Roberto Michels famously argued. In his classic 1911 study of the SPD, much of which presaged the party's prowar stance, Michels postulated an "iron law of oligarchy" where the imperative of organization necessitates rule of a minority over a hapless majority even in the most avowedly democratic organizations. The one party one would expect to resist fads and stay true to its principles was compelled to follow a more bewitching siren.

Michel's heirs shifted their focus from the logic of organization to the exigencies of electoral participation. Otto Kirchheimer argued that following World War II, traditional class mass and denominational parties were giving way to streamlined "catch-all" parties that are "non-utopian, non-oppressive, and ever so flexible." The imperative of vote-maximization led parties to shed ideological baggage, move to the center, and woo the elusive "median voter."⁵

Party analysts revisited the case of European socialists in the 19th century, tracing how socialist parties that set out to bring about a socialist revolution through the ballot box were instead irrevocably transformed themselves.⁶ Since then, socialist parties' goals were endlessly modified and entire planks abandoned to signal credibility and ensure inclusion in the democratic game. After World War II, spurred by a new generation of socialists, the German SPD publicly disavowed its central ideological tenets and purged radicals from its ranks at the Extraordinary Congress at Bad Godesberg in 1959.⁷ The Ikhwan's public repudiation of Sayyid Qutb in 1969 and adoption of democracy in 1995 are but echoes of the "Godesberg effect."

What about parties in authoritarian-democratic hybrids where the contest for votes is stunted by state repression? The growing literature on electoral authoritarian regimes

suggests that an electoral logic is also palpable in such environments, but scholars have had to modify the standard typology of parties as vote-seeking, office-seeking, or policy-seeking organizations. As Scott Mainwaring sensibly states, “Rational party leaders will not make vote maximizing their first priority if votes are not the primary currency of politics.”⁸ Mainwaring argues that parties in authoritarian regimes play “dual games”: an electoral game with the objective of winning votes and seats, and a regime game. The regime game can either be steady participation with the hope of effecting a transition to democracy or a delegitimation game where parties work to undermine the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime. Parties in authoritarian regimes play electoral and regime games simultaneously, with emphasis on the regime game.⁹

Many of the internal factional struggles in parties operating in authoritarian contexts revolve around which games to prioritize and how to balance the regime and electoral games. Seen in this light, parties are by definition dynamic organizations in perpetual transformation, and religious parties are no exception. The trajectories of Christian Democratic parties in Europe and Latin America show that they are as much products of political entrepreneurship as “ordinary” parties and are just as malleable, neither uniquely refractory nor beholden to nonnegotiable ideological codes.

1928–81: THE RISE AND ECLIPSE OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERS

At its founding in 1928, the Society of Muslim Brothers was one prominent part of a handful of ideological mass-based parties led by political mavericks seeking to challenge the dominant style of politics of notables. A decade into its existence, the society had built its identity as an internally disciplined, financially resourceful, pro-Palestine anticolonial movement appealing to educated lower-middle- and middle-class effendis who were alienated by the exclusionary political and economic system of interwar Egypt.¹⁰ Hasan al-Banna’s vision of moral uplift based on faith-based action and self-improvement was also an explicit response to influential, state-sponsored secular projects, exemplified by Taha Husein’s Europhile tract *Mustaqbal al-thaqafa fi misr* (*The Future of Culture in Egypt*).

Instead of slavishly aping Western ideas, al-Banna argued, a return to the precocious wisdom of Islam was the solution:

The Muslim Brothers believe that when Allah most High revealed the Qur’an and ordered this worshippers to follow Muhammad, He placed in this true religion all the necessary foundations for the renaissance and happiness of nations . . . globalism, nationalism, socialism, capitalism, Bolshevism, war, the distribution of wealth, the relationship between producer and consumer and everything near and far to these concerns that preoccupy the politicians of nations and philosophers of society. We believe Islam has gone to the heart of all these issues.¹¹

Working for a Muslim state was not a priority; calling for Islamizing society and applying shari‘a were.¹²

The details of its founding and early history reveal that the Society was poised to be a highly adaptive political creature, weathering the permutations of ordinary parties and experiencing their usual crises. Internal schisms and challenges to al-Banna’s leadership surfaced in 1932 and 1939, the latter when a splinter group calling itself Muhammad’s Youth seceded or was expelled for protesting al-Banna’s political pragmatism.¹³

Al-Banna enthusiastically embraced elections and ran and lost in parliamentary contests in 1942 and 1945.¹⁴ The Muslim Brothers promulgated their political and economic platform in 1952 when relations with the new military regime were still warm, but the experiment was soon aborted.¹⁵ The subsequent dissolution of the Society in 1954 and years-long imprisonment of its leaders and followers by the Nasser regime promised to completely extinguish its presence in political life. It was only after its cadres emerged from prison during Sadat's de-Nasserization that the society began to engineer its reentry into an altered Egyptian political landscape. The Ikhwan's activism since the 1970s is thus the first sustained engagement with state institutions and competing political groups that can be analyzed to gauge their political transformation.

First, a look at the structure of the Society of Muslim Brothers. There are three pillars of the group's organization. The 100-member Shura Council (*Majlis al-Shura*), is the group's legislative body, responsible for issuing binding resolutions and reviewing the annual report and budget. The Shura Council convenes periodically every six months; members serve four-year terms and must be at least thirty years old. The council elects the thirteen-member Guidance Bureau (*Maktab al-Irshad*), the Brothers' politburo where all policy decisions passed by the Shura Council are executed. Members of the Bureau serve renewable four-year terms and must also be at least thirty years of age. The highest executive office is that of the General Guide (*al-murshid al-ʿāmm*), who is the chief executive officer and official spokesman of the group. The General Guide must be at least forty and is elected by an absolute majority of the Shura Council from candidates nominated by the Guidance Bureau.¹⁶

This organizational structure remained essentially intact until 1992, when a provision was added for the reelection of the general guide and terms of office were set at five years, although no term limits were specified.¹⁷ Yet because of the Society's illegal status and attendant security clampdowns, it has been difficult to convene the required institutions in accordance with the bylaws. In 1977, the second General Guide, Hasan al-Hudaiby, died, and ʿUmar al-Tilmissany was selected as his successor. ʿUmar al-Tilmissany reports in his reflections that, since the group could not activate regular internal election procedures, his selection as the third general guide was based on his status as the seniormost member of the Guidance Bureau.¹⁸

The selection procedures of the subsequent general guides Muhammad Hamed Abu al-Nasr (1986–96), Mustafa Mashour (1996–2002), and Ma'mun al-Hudaybi (2002–2004), son of the second general guide, were secretive affairs that followed no clear logic of seniority or election. Instead they were shaped by the force of circumstance and internal maneuvering for power. A significant change followed the death of al-Hudaybi at age eighty-three in January 2004 with the announcement that the next guide would be selected by a majority vote of the Guidance Bureau. The reasons for this change are explored later.

THE 1980S: ELECTORALISM AND THE POLITICS OF ADAPTATION

The thaw in state-Ikhwan relations begun under Sadat continued under the regime of Husni Mubarak, but there was no question of legalizing the Muslim Brothers, only de facto toleration. Not content to assert their presence merely through their newsletter *al-Daʿwa* (*The Call*) or financing social welfare activities, the Ikhwan began to develop

the sedulous electioneering strategy that would become a centerpiece of their self-preservation. Al-Tilmissany, the society's third general guide, recalled the decision to contest the 1984 elections:

When we were released from the 1981 detention, we were in a state of near-recession. We set to looking for a lawful means to carry out our activities without troubling security or challenging the laws. Allah saw fit to find us a lawful way in the views of officials. The parliamentary session had just ended and thinking began on the new parliamentary elections. It was the opportunity of a lifetime, had the Ikhwan let it slip from their hands they would surely have counted among the ranks of the neglectful.¹⁹

Not one to pass up a political opportunity, al-Tilmissany negotiated an alliance with the Wafd, one he insisted on calling a "cooperation" and not a tactical or strategic move. Perhaps to authenticate the partnership, he explained that in the 1930s he had been an old Wafdist "with all my being" while a devoted member of the Ikhwan at the same time.²⁰ In February 1984, at the home of the Wafd's chairman, Fu'ad Siraj al-Din, a bargain was struck. The eminently reasonable logic was that the Wafd provided a legal channel while the Ikhwan offered a popular base, both seeking to reclaim their place on the national stage after long years of state-enforced absence.

There was an even more compelling institutional cause of the Wafd-Ikhwan alliance, however. The controversial Electoral Law 114/1983 passed by the outgoing Parliament was a consummate instance of electoral engineering. The government acceded to the opposition's demands for a more equitable proportional representation system in contrast to the plurality systems of the past, but with a twist. For the first time in Egyptian electoral history, party lists under a proportional representation system replaced single-member constituencies, which ruled out anyone running as an independent. The law specifically prohibited candidates of different parties from running on the same lists, in effect deterring parties from pooling their efforts.²¹ An added novelty was that the electoral law then set a relatively high threshold of 8 percent of the national vote for a party to qualify for parliamentary representation. Votes to opposition parties that fell short of 8 percent were automatically transferred to the NDP. The restrictions of Parties Law 40/1977 and Election Law 114—throttling party formation, eliminating independents, and setting new barriers to parliamentary access—impelled the Wafd and Ikhwan to collude or perish.

The law had its intended effect: only the Wafd-Ikhwan alliance overcame the threshold, securing 15.1 percent of the national vote, while the Labor party got 7.7 percent. Out of 448 seats, the Wafd slate gained fifty-eight, eight of which went to Ikhwan candidates and an additional two to independent Islamists. The NDP garnered 389 seats, or 87.3 percent. Postelection evidence suggests that the Ikhwan paid particular attention to their oversight role: while they constituted only 1.8 percent of parliamentary membership, they were responsible for 18.5 percent of interpellations delivered during the three-year parliamentary term from 1984 to 1987.²²

The Wafd-Ikhwan cooperation inside Parliament nearly evaporated after the elections due to the restrictive nature of parliamentary rules, which are explicitly designed to thwart collaboration between opposition parties.²³ The 1984 elections, however, established the Ikhwan as a leading political contestant, striking electoral alliances in both Parliament and the professional unions and joining the opposition in extraparliamentary coalitions

for reform. The Ikhwan were poised for the next round of electoral sparring with the government. In 1986, when the president dissolved Parliament in expectation of a ruling of unconstitutionality by the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) of Law 114/1983 for discriminating against independents, the government quickly passed Electoral Law 188/1986. The new law maintained the 8 percent threshold and the party-list system but canceled the automatic transferring of all votes below 8 percent to the majority party and reserved forty-eight of Parliament's 448 seats for candidates running as independents.

The opposition immediately began to devise ways to overcome the hurdles of Electoral Law 188. Ibrahim Shukri, chairman of the Labor Party, approached the Ikhwan's new general guide, Muhammad Hamed Abu al-Nasr, and proposed an alliance. A deal was struck, and the minuscule al-Ahrar party also signed on, having failed to get more than .7 percent of the national vote in 1984. It was agreed that the slate would be apportioned with 40 percent for the Ikhwan, 40 percent for Labor, and 20 percent for Ahrar. The motives of the Labor Party were clear: stung by its 1984 failure to meet the required threshold, it sought to guarantee its chances in 1987 by courting a movement with a tangible street presence and electoral track record.

As for the Ikhwan, their 1984 alliance with the Wafd had shown them the limits of augmenting their participation from the perch of an established and ideologically coherent party such as the Wafd. By 1987, the Ikhwan had clearly outgrown their junior-partner status in the Wafd alliance and wagered on the weaker and more ideologically flexible Labor Party as a base of operations for the next stage of their development.

What was soon billed as the "Islamist alliance" (*al-taḥāluḥ al-islami*) was the biggest news of the 1987 elections, paving the way for the progressive Islamization of the Labor Party and its mouthpiece, *al-Sha'b*. Both as a response to critics of the Muslim Brothers' indeterminate election slogan "Islam Is the Solution" (*al-islam huwa al-ḥall*) and the exigencies of vote seeking, the Muslim Brothers-dominated alliance distributed a booklet detailing its seven-point electoral program. The booklet stated that Copts are full citizens and that applying and codifying (*taṭbīq wa-taqnīn*) shari'a is a long-range process not confined to Islamizing penal provisions but extending to the entire legal infrastructure. It called for closing down government liquor manufactories and the banning of nightclubs and casinos, as well as comprehensive government regulation and strategic planning of the economy.²⁴ Unsurprisingly, the anti-systemic Jama'at al-Islamiyya's statement against the elections echoed the protestations of radical socialists in the 19th century. It lamented the naivete of the Ikhwan for participating in a farce and accused it of burnishing the image of the regime and, tellingly, "helping to build the institutions of the secular regime."²⁵

In what would become a familiar election ritual, hundreds of Muslim Brothers' supporters and poll watchers were arrested and detained a few days before the elections. On election day on 6 April, observers reported a far less free atmosphere than the 1984 poll, with rampant government meddling, ballot stuffing on behalf of the NDP, and outright turning away of voters for opposition candidates. The government's legal engineering before the elections, coupled with physical interference during and after the vote and questionable allotment of losing party votes, conspired to give the NDP a parliamentary majority of just under 80 percent. The alliance garnered 17 percent of the national vote, which translated into fifty-six seats. Thirty-six went to Muslim Brothers. The Wafd secured thirty-five seats. Immediately after the elections, prominent old-guard Muslim

Brothers members and future General Guide Mustafa Mashour articulated the emerging electoral creed of the Ikhwan:

We must benefit from the experience of elections for our future, for elections are an art with its own rules, expertise, and requirements, and we must push those who have given up on reforming this nation, push them to get rid of their pessimism and register to vote as soon as possible.²⁶

The Ikhwan's relatively large presence in the 1987 Parliament as leaders of the opposition for the first time in Egyptian history raised the specter of divisive identity politics, especially regarding the application of shari'a.²⁷ But gloom-and-doom forecasts did not pan out. The Ikhwan deputies' behavior under the rotunda veered between dramatic performances in plenary sessions, in intricate coordination with Parliamentary Speaker Rif'at al-Mahgoub, and routine committee work away from the limelight. Parliamentary leaders from the NDP and Ikhwan MPs incessantly negotiated and renegotiated their terms of interaction, alternately escalating and containing criticisms in response to each other's cues and events transpiring outside Parliament.²⁸ Counterintuitively, shari'a was not the pivotal issue for Ikhwan deputies. One study shows that their priorities were political freedom and state repression; cultural and educational issues, including shari'a; and economic concerns.²⁹ Applying the shari'a took a back seat to heated sparring with pugnacious Interior Minister Zaki Badr over torture in prisons and police stations, security forces' storming of mosques, and police violation of Ikhwan MPs constitutional immunity, including an unprovoked assault on Ikhwan MP Essam al-Eryan by a policeman.

An astute election observer argued that the Ikhwan's success in the 1987 elections was attributable to a conspicuous cooperation between old and young Muslim Brothers.³⁰ Almost all of the young MPs had distinguished themselves in a previous electoral arena during the 1980s: the influential professional unions, historically powerful interest groups that organized middle- and lower-middle-class public opinion. The Muslim Brothers' visibility in the unions began in the 1984 elections to the board of the medical association and grew incrementally thereafter through shrewd alliance building and horse trading with major political groups. Significantly, the Ikhwan never fielded candidates for the chairmanship of the unions, part of a tacit understanding between the government and all opposition groups that the post be reserved for a ruling-party member to facilitate bargaining with authorities.³¹ In the 1990s, the slates of Islamist candidates and their allies swept elections in all the major professional unions.³²

Much has been written on the Muslim Brothers' "takeover" and "back-door infiltration" of the syndicates.³³ Yet informed scholarly accounts tell a different story. Amani Qandil, Egypt's leading sociologist of professional associations, observes that the Muslim Brothers' successful performance in the associations is due to their superior organizational and get-out-the-vote skills and transparent management of the syndicates' finances. Not infiltration but tireless, open campaigning in free and fair elections and the provision of a generous network of post-election services is responsible for the Muslim Brothers' success.³⁴

The new generation of Muslim Brothers activists who transformed the professional unions are a major causal force behind the society's adaptation into a flexible political party, particularly its ideological amendments. While still in their thirties, they were among the masterminds of the Muslim Brothers' parliamentary alliance with the Wafd

in 1984 and the Labor Party in 1987. Muhammad Abd al-Quddus, currently a member of the press syndicate board and a leading Muslim Brothers figure, participated in the 1984 meeting that produced the Wafd–Ikhwan alliance. Abd al-Moneim Abu al-Futuh, now a member of the Society’s Guidance Bureau, was a member of the meeting that clinched the Muslim Brothers–Labor alliance in 1987. The physician Essam al-Eryan and the lawyer Mokhtar Nouh were two of the most active Ikhwan MPs in the 1987 Parliament. Abu al-Ela Madi was a driving force in the politics of the engineering syndicate in the early 1990s before his defection from the Ikhwan in 1996.

1990–95: POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND THE POLITICS
OF IDEOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION

Just as there is a widespread yet unfounded assertion that the Muslim Brothers “took over” professional associations, there are equally ubiquitous allegations that they are driven by immutable sacred texts that make them untrustworthy political contestants,³⁵ “sham democrats,”³⁶ and avid theocrats intent on overturning the secular state.³⁷ None of these claims is corroborated by any credible evidence. When it comes to democracy, as Najib Ghadbian quips, “so far Islamists have been subjected to higher moral standards than the other players in the arena, as if they were the only authoritarians among an assembly of tried and true democrats.”³⁸

Commitment to democracy is a serious issue but cannot be gauged by hurling groundless accusations. This section probes in more detail the ideological changes wrought from the Muslim Brothers’ electoral participation as a more substantive indicator of their commitment to democracy. It also traces how that participation raised the government’s hackles and subjected the Muslim Brothers to a series of grave although not crippling crises. Ideological revisions and organizational turmoil were the fruit of the Ikhwan’s electoral engagement.

By 1990, the Ikhwan were exceptionally attuned to the rules of the authoritarian political game. Along with the Wafd, they led a boycott of the 1990 elections after Law 188/1986 was declared unconstitutional and the 1987 Parliament was dissolved. From the perspective of the dual games employed by opposition parties, the boycott was the parties’ prioritization of the delegitimation game to protest the government’s incessant electoral engineering even as this strategy robbed them of a much-prized forum in Parliament. In 1990, the Ikhwan emphasized coordination with the opposition over their hallowed electoral creed while continuing their assiduous electioneering for seats on municipal councils and professional associations’ boards in 1992.

The year 1992 was a turning point in the government’s approach to the Muslim Brothers, shifting from tenuous toleration to further legal and then physical repression. That year, Ikhwan candidates swept elections to the medical and bar associations and outshone the government’s bumbling and languorous response to the devastating Cairo earthquake in October. In response to the Muslim Brothers’ efficient pooling of contributions to earthquake victims, the prime minister issued Military Decree 4/1992, requiring government approval for the collection of donations.

In February 1993, the government railroaded through Parliament during a midnight session Law 100/1993. Government spokesmen in Parliament defended the law as an effort to combat the “dictatorship of the minority,” a clear reference to the Ikhwan’s

effective electioneering. The Orwellian-titled “Law for the Guarantees of Democracy in Professional Associations” required a 50 percent quorum for union elections, constituting the most visible interference in internal union affairs since Sadat issued a decree law in 1981 dissolving the bar association’s board for its opposition to the Camp David Accords. Professional unions immediately mobilized against the law, and the majority of members, regardless of their politics, opposed it on principle.³⁹ Mobilization against the law dovetailed with rising demands for political and constitutional reform.

This was the moment that the new generation of Muslim Brothers came into their own as skilled organizers and alliance builders with other middle-aged activists of varying political commitments. A two-day Conference on Freedoms and Civil Society was held in October 1994 at the medical association and organized by Muslim Brothers Essam al-Eryan and Abu al-Ela Madi, bringing together hundreds of prominent activists and intellectuals, including government figures, to hammer out a consensus on basic rights. A delegation from the conference that included the two co-organizers visited the Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz in the hospital to express high-profile support and condemnation of his stabbing by militant Islamists. At the same time, the Ikhwan were issuing communiqués condemning every attack by militant Islamists on government figures and tourists, and even brokered a cease-fire deal between the radical Islamists and the government during the United Nations’ Cairo Population Conference.⁴⁰

The first glimmers of the Ikhwan’s ideological revisions emerged in 1994 and grew out of the younger generation’s networking and response to their interlocutors’ demands to clarify their positions on foundational issues. In March 1994, the Muslim Brothers issued definitive statements on women’s rights and party pluralism. The former statement articulated their belief in the rights of women both as candidates for public office (save for the highest executive office in the land) and as voters. The position paper followed on the heels of actual practice. In a little reported incident preceding Jihane al-Halafawi’s high-profile candidacy in 2000, the female doctor, Wafa’ Ramadan, ran for elections to the medical-association board on the Ikhwan’s slate in 1992.⁴¹

Mindful of their departure from both their founder’s and the old guard’s conservative views on women, the Ikhwan have devoted much space in their arguments on women’s citizenship rights to refuting obstinate views and reinterpreting Qur’anic injunctions that specify men’s tutelage over women, especially Qur’an 4:34. Their statement argues that the verse applies to household relations only and does not extend to the workplace or public affairs. The Ikhwan’s doctrinal reinterpretations are laced with the Society’s utilitarian electoral credo. As a Muslim Brothers apologist argues, “Limiting the Muslim woman’s right to participate in elections weakens the winning chances of Islamist candidates.”⁴² Contrast this pragmatism to the finality with which former General Guide Umar al-Tilmissany pronounced his views on women:

I do not like to talk about women. Modern people may find this shameful, or cowardly, but I want nothing to do with modern theories and the equality of men and women. I still believe that a man is a man and a woman is a woman and that’s why God created her. . . . A woman who believes that she is equal to a man is a woman who has lost her femininity, virtue and dignity.⁴³

The revamped ideology animated further political action. The Ikhwan’s position paper on women was invoked by Jihane al-Halafawi as an impetus for her contestation

of the 2000 parliamentary elections. Seasoned Ikhwan watchers were not surprised by Halafawi's candidacy, belonging as she does to the generation of middle-aged activists changing the face of the organization. Married to one of the Muslim Brothers' leading architects of electoral strategy, the Alexandria physician, Ibrahim al-Za'farani, Halafawi reflects the younger generation's signature amalgam of flexible ideology and vote seeking. She took pains to point out the critical role of women voters. In her words:

The Muslim Brothers' views about women in public life are clear, as evidenced by the March 1994 statement. This is what encouraged me to contest the elections. My decision to run was also to make use of the opportunity presented by the state's desire to integrate women into the political process, and to clarify that Islam *does not* compromise women's rights. . . . There was tremendous support for me within the group. Women are very active in the [Muslim Brothers], though perhaps not visible. Remember that women voters are responsible for the success of the seventeen Ikhwan members of Parliament.⁴⁴

The language of the Ikhwan's statement "Shura and Party Pluralism in Muslim Society" is a similar synthesis of Islamic values and contemporary experience.⁴⁵ It argues that the Qur'an stipulates a rule of public consultation in governance, sura, "and this means that the *umma* is the source of all powers." The statement bows to the stock demand for shari'a but affirms the need for a written constitution specifying a "balance of powers"; emphasizes public freedoms for both Muslims and non-Muslims; and calls for a legislature with oversight functions and binding decisions. Depending on one's perspective, the explicit call for a written constitution is either an evasion or realization of the Ikhwan's enduring slogan "The Qur'an is our constitution."

The statement concludes with a newfangled Qur'anic justification of political parties as a necessary institutionalization of God-given differences. As Essam al-Eryan later elaborated, "God created humans with differences, so plurality is the normal state of things. The problem is how to organize these differences without turning them into chaos, and that's why you need several parties."⁴⁶ The endorsement of multiple political parties is in blatant contradiction to Hasan al-Banna's famously hostile attitude toward parties; he derided *hizbiyya* (partisanship) and viewed parties as nothing more than vanity projects of warring politicians that diverted the country's energies from resisting the British.⁴⁷ To explain the discrepancy, the Ikhwan historicize al-Banna's aversion to parties. In a much quoted rationalization, the prominent scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a member of the Ikhwan in the 1950s and a longtime sympathizer based in Qatar who was offered but declined the Ikhwan's highest post of general guide in 2002 after Mashour's passing, writes:

I am aware that the martyred Imam Hasan al-Banna deplored partisan life and the establishment of parties in Islam due to what he witnessed in his time of parties that divided the *umma* in confronting the enemy. They were parties that revolved around individuals instead of clear goals and platforms. It is all right if our interpretation differs from that of our Imam, may God have compassion on him, for he did not disallow those who came after him to have their own interpretations, especially if circumstances change and positions and ideas evolve. Perhaps if he lived till today he would see what we see. Fatwas change with changing times, places, and conditions, especially in

ever-changing political affairs. Those who know Hasan al-Banna know that he was not rigid but developed his ideas and policies according to the evidence available to him.⁴⁸

Ideological amendments continued despite a traumatic series of events for the Muslim Brothers beginning in 1995, when their heretofore opaque organizational dynamics were laid open for all to see and the group ceased to speak with one disciplined voice in public. In retrospect, it is clear that a confluence of events immediately before and during 1995 proved decisive and catastrophic for the Ikhwan. In the early 1990s, American officials made contacts with Ikhwan members, prompting President Mubarak to comment angrily to the American journalist Mary Anne Weaver in November 1994:

Your government is in contact with these *terrorists* from the Muslim Brotherhood. This has all been done very secretly, without our knowledge at first. You think you can correct the mistakes that you made in Iran, where you had no contact with the Ayatollah Khomeini and *his* fanatic groups before they seized power. But I can assure you, these groups will *never* take over this country.⁴⁹

In January 1995, at the very beginning of the parliamentary election year, eighty-two of the Ikhwan's leading middle-aged activists convening the Muslim Brothers' Shura Council were rounded up and detained in the first round of a sweeping crackdown unseen since the 1950s. They were charged with plotting to overthrow the regime and referred to a military tribunal, a forum heretofore reserved for Islamist radicals.

On 26 June, a failed assassination attempt on Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, further inflamed the already tense relations between the Ikhwan and the regime and pushed the regime to dispense with any distinctions between radical Islamists and the Muslim Brothers. Though the Ikhwan scrambled to condemn the assassination attempt, rumors swirled that they had known about the plot, and the state's stance soon took on the character of a vendetta. On 23 November, a week before the start of elections, the military tribunal sentenced fifty-four Muslim Brothers to three to five years in prison, including many of the Ikhwan's election whiz kids who had planned to run in the elections, chiefly Essam al-Eryan, Abd al-Moneim Abu al-Futouh, Muhammad al-Sayed Habib, Muhammad Khayrat al-Shater, and Ibrahim al-Za'farani. Yet as hundreds of Muslim Brothers poll watchers were preemptively detained by the Interior Ministry days before elections, the Ikhwan still did not resort to the delegitimation game. Instead, they fielded approximately 150 candidates. Following the most violent vote in Egyptian electoral history, resulting in 61 dead, 1,313 injured, and 2,400 detained, the Muslim Brothers secured only one parliamentary seat.⁵⁰

At the height of the crackdown, the Ikhwan continued to produce incrementally more detailed statements of their positions. By far the most significant document was what the Muslim Brothers dubbed the "Statement on Democracy," a document whose purpose was to affirm the society's commitment to playing the democratic transition game despite state repression. The paper outlined the Society's stance on four pivotal issues: non-Muslims, the relationship between religion and politics, violence and politics, and human rights. It was the closest the group had come to a public announcement of its revamped ideology and as such deserves some attention.⁵¹

On the issue of non-Muslims, the statement asserts:

We the Muslim Brothers always say that we are advocates and not judges, and thus we do not ever consider compelling anybody to change his belief, in accordance with God's words: "No compulsion in religion." Our position regarding our Christian brothers in Egypt and the Arab world is explicit, established and known: they have the same rights and duties as we do. . . . Whoever believes or acts otherwise is forsaken by us. [This and all subsequent extracts from the Ikhwan's democracy statement can be found in *Rowaq Arabi*, n. 51.]

As attacks by radical Islamist groups on the life and property of Coptic Christians mounted in the mid-1990s, the Muslim Brothers were pushed to enunciate a clear position on the status of Copts in their ideal Muslim state. Their affirmations of Copts' equal status ranged from hagiographic narratives of Hasan al-Banna's warm relations with Copts to more substantive ideological constructions such as the one quoted above.⁵² The Ikhwan's emphasis on Copts' full citizenship rights relies heavily on the pan-confessional concept of citizenship developed by the moderate Islamist thinker and former judge, Tariq al-Bishri.⁵³

On religion and politics, the Muslim Brothers' statement asserts that there is no ineluctable contradiction between *vox populi* and *vox dei*—that is, popular sovereignty and a shari'a-based system. "The legitimacy of government in a Muslim society should be derived from the consent and choice of the people . . . people have the right to invent different systems, formulas, and techniques that suit their conditions, which definitely would vary according to time, place, and living conditions." They restate the constitutionalist justification for an organized opposition made in the 1994 pluralism statement and devote considerable space to refuting the charge that they countenance violence.

On human rights, the statement rather bombastically claims that "Islam has been and still is the only intellectual and political model that honors man and humanity, disregarding differences in language, color, and race." Perhaps as a nod to criticisms, the statement is also addressed to Muslim Brothers, calling on each one "to open his mind and heart to all people; he should not treat anybody haughtily or insolently," in effect admitting and vowing to spurn the Muslim Brothers' self-image as a political movement a cut above the rest.

1995–2000: CRISIS AND THE POLITICS OF ORGANIZATIONAL TURMOIL

The state's targeting of the group's middle-aged cadres in 1995 took a serious toll, and the Society of Muslim Brothers began to show the organizational stresses familiar to other Egyptian political parties and from which the group had long considered itself exempt. The period from 1995 to 2000, when the Muslim Brothers' best minds were imprisoned, witnessed the selection of a new, intransigent general guide; factional disputes and devastating public splits; worrying ideological reversals rather than renewals; and a seeming end to the fruitful collaboration between older Muslim Brothers and the younger generation that had made the society such a resilient and energetic organization. The first indication of reversals came in August 1995, when all opposition parties were on the cusp of signing a document of "national concord" (*al-wifāq al-waṭani*) outlining their united stance on a basic minimum set of democratic rights ahead of the fall parliamentary elections. The initiative fell apart when Ma'mun al-Hudaybi refused to sign the document

and proffered his own alternative plan filled with clauses on shari‘a.⁵⁴ Left in the hands of the old guard, the common ideological front with other political parties painstakingly built by the Muslim Brothers’ younger cadres was unmistakably eroding.

Much as the Ikhwan claimed that, unlike other Egyptian groups, they were an organization based on rules and not persons, the selection of Mustafa Mashour as general guide in 1996 had a profound influence on the group’s trajectory. The death of ailing fourth General Guide Muhammad Hamed Abu al-Nasr in 1996 led to a quiet leadership handover to Mustafa Mashour, the now infamous “cemetery pledge of allegiance” (*bay‘at al-maqabir*) that evaded the Ikhwan’s bylaws. Immediately after the burial of Abu al-Nasr, a tight-knit circle led by Guidance Bureau members Ma‘mun al-Hudaybi and Mashour himself essentially anointed Mashour to the highest executive post without election or consultation with Shura Council members, citing as justification the security clampdown on the last Shura Council meeting in 1995.

Mashour had been a member of the Muslim Brothers’ controversial paramilitary wing, the Special Apparatus (*al-Nizam al-Khas*), formed in 1940; its establishment irrevocably altered the organization and bred a cadre of hard-line militants steeped in the conspiratorial political mind set of the 1940s. Mashour was imprisoned in 1954 and emerged in the 1970s as a key decision-maker during the tenures of General Guides al-Tilmissany and Abu al-Nasr. One Ikhwan analyst claims that these two guides were deliberately chosen as mild-mannered fronts for the real power residing in Mashour and a handful of ironfisted former members of the Special Apparatus.⁵⁵

Tangible power dynamics rather than adherence to the group’s bylaws also governed the role of Mashour’s confidant Ma‘mun al-Hudaybi. The latter carved out a high-profile position for himself as “official spokesman,” though this post is nonexistent in the Ikhwan’s bylaws. Members rationalize that this was made necessary by General Guide Abu al-Nasr’s failing health and Mustafa Mashour’s “personal reasons”—namely, that “he was not very patient,” in the words of Guidance Bureau member Abd al-Moneim Abu al-Futuh.⁵⁶ That might have been a politic reference to a disastrous interview given by Mashour in 1997 in the midst of local council elections that Muslim Brothers members were contesting. In a taped interview, Mashour maintained that in an Islamic state, Coptic citizens should be barred from top posts in the army to ensure complete loyalty in confronting hostile Christian states, and a special tax (*jizya*) would be collected from them in exchange for protection by the state.⁵⁷ The remarks did nothing to help Muslim Brothers election candidates and cast serious doubts on the Ikhwan’s ideological revisions. Al-Hudaybi wrote letters of “clarification,” but attempts at damage control only reinforced suspicions of a bigoted group masquerading as a tolerant movement.⁵⁸

Under Mashour and al-Hudaybi’s tenure, rumblings of organizational discontent rose to the surface in an unprecedentedly public manner. The most serious rift to beset the Ikhwan since the 1950s came in 1996 when the engineer Abu al-Ela Madi and several associates petitioned the government’s Political Parties Committee to form the Center Party (*Hizb al-Wasat*). The initiative was initially thought to be a Muslim Brothers project fronted by its youthful members, but it soon became all too clear that the Wasat was a group of Muslim Brothers breakaways who felt muzzled by the Ikhwan’s rigid, top-down structure. As the voluble Wasat member Essam Sultan asserted, there was pervasive “organizational unemployment” within the Muslim Brothers, and plenty of young cadres found themselves with no say in the running of the organization.⁵⁹ Mashour

and al-Hudaybi reacted furiously to Madi and his associates' project, threatening Muslim Brothers who supported the Wasat with disciplinary action and dismissal and going so far as to aid the government's case against the fledgling group. The government swiftly referred the Wasat founders to a military tribunal, the first time in Egyptian history that citizens were tried for petitioning to form a legal party, and the tribunal sentenced some of the founders to prison terms.⁶⁰ The irony of old-guard members in both the state and Ikhwan colluding to stifle the Wasat did not go unnoticed.

The Ikhwan–Wasat split received an enormous amount of local and international press coverage and generated a veritable cottage industry of Ikhwanology, endless media speculations over the supposedly cut-throat politics and factionalism of the famously tight-lipped organization. The row had all the makings of a choice political scandal: the prominent Anglican scion Rafiq Habib is a founding member of the Wasat; the dissident Essam Sultan's wife is Ma'mun al-Hudaybi's niece; famous figures from across the political spectrum threw their weight behind the Wasat, from the Doha-based Islamic scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi to the leftist doyen Muhammad Sid Ahmed. Madi and his associates became darlings of the secular intelligentsia and used the media to their advantage, accusing their former leaders of dictatorial management and stale thinking, while al-Hudaybi and other Ikhwan shrugged off the Wasat as a bunch of media-hungry self-promoters bent on tarnishing the Muslim Brothers.

Less well noted is that the split coincided with a spate of similar tribulations in virtually all Egyptian opposition parties, where paralyzing disputes erupted between hoary party elders and restless middle-aged activists with a fundamentally different vision of how to play the electoral and regime games. Young activists had almost completely abandoned the leftist Tagammu', so the dictatorial mien and pro-government fawning of its secretary-general (now chairman) Rif'at al-Said came in for open criticism from seasoned party activists of his own generation. Forty-something Nasserists broke off from their party to form their own groups—notably, Hamdeen Sabahy's Karama (Dignity) movement. And soon, the new Wafd Party chairman, No'man Gom'a was expelling and alienating members and MPs for daring to disagree with him.⁶¹ The Wasat episode heralded the normalization of the Ikhwan into a typical Egyptian opposition party, experiencing the same organizational ills other parties had been less adept at concealing.

A NEW MILLENNIUM AND A NEW SOCIETY OF MUSLIM BROTHERS?

As parliamentary elections approached in the fall of 2000, the government struck again with a roundup of twenty would-be candidates who were then tried and sentenced by a military tribunal in November 2000. Steering a median course between participating and lying low, the Ikhwan fielded only seventy-five candidates, including Jihane al-Halafawi. The group secured seventeen seats under the individual candidacy system, more than all the opposition parties combined. Several months later, the Muslim Brothers emerged victorious in another electoral arena. In February 2001, in the first elections at the bar association since Law 100/1993, a “national slate” put together by the Ikhwan comprising eight Muslim Brothers, four NDP members, a Nasserist, a Wafdist, and a

Copt won elections to the board.⁶² The parliamentary and bar elections hinted at a revival of the Ikhwan and its matchless electoral deal-making skills.

The unknown second-tier Muslim Brothers members turned parliamentary deputies soon made a national name for themselves, adopting the simultaneously confrontational and low-key style of their predecessors in the 1987 Parliament. Not surprisingly, culture and identity issues were among Ikhwan deputies' main but certainly not sole concerns. Muslim Brothers parliamentary deputy Gamal Heshmat caused a stir when he filed a routine parliamentary inquiry regarding what he claimed were state-funded racy novels.⁶³ His Muslim Brothers colleagues under the rotunda decried the frivolity of the Miss Egypt beauty pageant at a time that Palestinians were being brutalized by Israelis, they said, and filed inquiries about such matters as the distribution of feminine sanitary napkins in junior and high schools. Asked to explain the rationale for the latter move, Muhammad Mursi, the spokesman for the unofficial Muslim Brothers bloc, first said, "In our culture, these matters are dealt with between a mother and her daughter in the privacy of the home." When asked for further clarification on why the issue was worthy of being raised in Parliament, Mursi said, "We object to the use of schools as advertising space for certain brands of sanitary napkins. They were distributing only the American Always brand; schools shouldn't be used to market specific products to students."⁶⁴ Also similar to the 1987 Parliament, Ikhwan deputies focused on cases of abuse by security forces and devoted considerable time to their constituents' bread-and-butter issues, unemployment topping the list.⁶⁵

Authorities made clear their displeasure with at least one Ikhwan parliamentarian, engaging in the novel mechanism of electoral engineering *after* the 2000 vote to unseat the irksome Gamal Heshmat. For the first time since 1991, the parliamentary leadership decided to implement a court report on election irregularities, even though it had rejected or ignored hundreds of such reports challenging NDP deputies' election. Heshmat was stripped of his parliamentary membership, and in January 2003 the government orchestrated a rerun of the election in his Damanhour district, installing 500 trucks filled with riot police to prevent Heshmat's supporters from voting. The elections were a replay of the tampered with Alexandria byelections in June 2002 orchestrating al-Halafawi's defeat, although this time Heshmat's seat went to a Wafd member.⁶⁶

A former Nasserist and a physician by training, Heshmat blamed "the media" for exaggerating his parliamentary activities to bring about a crisis with the government. After his ouster, he went back to college to obtain a postgraduate diploma in parliamentary studies and was subsequently detained for several months and then released in 2004. Before his detention, Heshmat insisted that he had been ousted from Parliament because of his active parliamentary oversight activities:

The government couldn't stand to have a representative who actually listened to his constituents. When they saw that I as a Muslim Brothers deputy didn't speak in an offensive, preachy way but used modern language, they feared this even more. In the two years I was an MP, my thoroughly documented parliamentary questions and requests for clarification led to the dismissal of six officials, including a deputy minister of education in Beheira Province and a supervisor of the Mubarak job-training program for college graduates. This was the reason for my ouster.⁶⁷

As the seventeen turned-sixteen deputies were maintaining a visible Ikhwan presence in Parliament, the cadres interned in 1995 emerged from prison in 2000 and seamlessly

assumed their leadership roles in the Muslim Brothers organization, patching up the Wasat split and reestablishing both ceremonial and substantive ties with other political groups. The annual tradition of the Ikhwan's Ramadan *iftar* at a five-star hotel was spruced up with noticeable women and secular guests; in 2001, the American University in Cairo sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim, himself now a prison graduate, was prominently seated at the head table next to Ma'mun al-Hudaybi. Conspicuously, the Muslim Brothers never missed a chance to cooperate with state authorities, even as a military tribunal sentenced sixteen more of their members to prison in July 2002. In the wake of the American-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the Muslim Brothers coordinated with the government and organized a thousands-strong antiwar rally, invoking their stock argument of preserving national unity in the face of foreign occupation. Starting in April 2003, however, security forces resumed detaining leading Muslim Brothers figures in various provinces who had been active in managing antiwar activities.⁶⁸

Incremental ideological articulation picked up where it had left off in 1995. The released Muslim Brothers redoubled their efforts to standardize and fine-tune the group's ideological pronouncements, restating their positions on democracy, women's rights, and, especially, Coptic rights, diligently working to erase Mashour's 1997 comments from national memory. The physicians Essam al-Eryan and Abd al-Moneim Abu al-Futuh, members of the Shura Council and Guidance Bureau, respectively, emerged as the most visible spokesmen and ideologues of the Ikhwan, granting interviews and penning articles in a variety of non-Ikhwan media. In the pair's pronouncements, ambiguous issues became more concrete: the Ikhwan would respect a democratically elected communist government; democracy is not simply compatible with shura but "part of a common human heritage"; the Muslim Brothers would unconditionally accept a Coptic president of Egypt elected in fair elections; the issue of an Islamic state was already resolved since "the constitution already says that Egypt is an Islamic state and that Islamic shari'a is the basis of legislation;" the Muslim Brothers consider the constitution and the ballot box to be the ultimate judges; women's "*hijab* is merely a question of identity and belonging, just as saris are for Indians"; the Muslim Brothers "engaged in military activities when the country was under occupation. This is a historical fact, but there is no room for its repetition in a country governed by its own citizens, regardless of how divergent they may be in opinions and attitudes."⁶⁹

The passing of Mashour in 2002 and of al-Hudaybi in 2004, as the last of the influential old guard, is the most significant opening for the further transformation of the Society of Muslim Brothers. Indeed, as the customary speculation raged over who would steer the group, Guidance Bureau members for the first time announced to the public a specific procedure for electing the coming general guide,⁷⁰ and the circumstantial position of "official spokesman" carved out by al-Hudaybi was scrapped. Also, the posts of two deputy General Guides stipulated by the Ikhwan's bylaws were filled with "younger" generation Brothers, geologist Muhammad Habib and computer engineer Khayrat al-Shater. As soon as he was elected in January 2004, Muhammad Mahdi Akef reiterated the group's desire to operate as a legal political party, and in a dramatic gesture he convened a press conference on 3 March 2004 to announce the Muslim Brothers' vision of a republican, civil government bound by law. Aside from the usual demand for applying shari'a, Akef's program did not depart in any meaningful sense from every demand of the Egyptian opposition over the past thirty years. Immediately, Interior

Minister Habib al-Adli stated that as an illegal organization the Muslim Brothers had no business floating programs and rebuked the press syndicate for offering Akef a venue.⁷¹

For the first time, ideas developed by the comparatively young members of the Muslim Brothers were officially and publicly adopted by their general guide. Akef's message was intended for several audiences: the Egyptian government; opposition parties and independent intellectuals; and all-important foreign parties demanding Arab reform, principally the Bush administration and its "Greater Middle East Initiative." To American and European policymakers, Akef's announcement was a riposte to government claims that Islamists constitute the most potent danger to the future of the Arab world. It also signaled an end to the entrenched tradition jealously guarded by Arab governments of claiming all-knowing tutelage over their citizens and their exclusive representation abroad. To other Egyptian interlocutors, it was a message that the Muslim Brothers and they are in one camp, speak the same constitutionalist language, agree on the foundational issue of the division and rotation of political powers, and can be counted on in any future common initiatives.

Above all, Akef's announcement was self-preservation through self-clarification, an attempt to heal the rift between old and new generations and reestablish a coherent, revamped ideological line for the group's adherents and potential members. Muslim Brothers leaders' increasingly transparent and forthcoming imparting of information on decision-making procedures is directed in the main to potential members, a reassurance that decisions are made relying not on the seniority principle or a prison stint but the modern electoral mechanism of one man, one vote. "Of course, we're a part of Egyptian society which is naturally very paternalistic, but the truth is that the Murshid has only one vote, no more."⁷²

CONCLUSION

Setting out to win Egyptian hearts and minds for an austere Islamic state and society, Hasan al-Banna's Society of Muslim Brothers was instead irrevocably transformed into a flexible political party that is highly responsive to the unforgiving calculus of electoral politics. The Muslim Brothers have left no political opportunity untapped, plunging with gusto into the vote-seeking game, pushing other political forces and the state to take seriously what began as a farcical margin of electoral competition in the 1970s. The case of the Ikhwan confirms that it is the institutional rules of participation rather than the commandments of ideology that motivate political parties. Even the most ideologically committed and organizationally stalwart parties are transformed in the process of interacting with competitors, citizens, and the state. Ideology and organization bow to the terms of participation.

The ghost of Roberto Michels looms large over the Ikhwan's trajectory, and his moralized critique is echoed by many of their critics: "Party life involves strange moral and intellectual sacrifices."⁷³ Ayman al-Zawahiri, a leading member of the Egyptian Jihad group, right-hand man to Osama bin Laden, and fierce critic of the Ikhwan, rues:

The Ikhwan participate in elections in Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, Kuwait, Algeria, Syria, and other Muslim lands governed by infidel governments. What is truly regrettable is the Ikhwan's rallying of thousands of duped Muslim youth in voter queues before ballot boxes instead of lining them up to

fight in the cause of Allah. They have substituted Allah's bidding with the conditions and regimes of the infidels.⁷⁴

Yet as this article has argued, regardless of moral valuations, the rules of political engagement hold powerful sway over the behavior and make-up of political actors. There is no clearer evidence of this than the recent desire of radical Islamist groups in Egypt to morph into legal political parties partaking of the electoral game, stunted and distorted as that game is in authoritarian Egypt.⁷⁵

Yet it behooves us to note that the Ikhwan are not losing ideological uniqueness and becoming a "catch-all" party. As their behavior in the 2000 Parliament indicates, they still grant culture and identity issues pride of place in their platform, with the caveat that as the culture wars rage on in Egypt, particularly over Americanized globalization, the Ikhwan's gripes over the moral turpitude of Egyptian culture are sounding less and less distinctive.⁷⁶ Unlike other Egyptian organizations—notably, opposition parties and advocacy nongovernmental organizations—the Ikhwan seem to have successfully managed and formalized, if not resolved, different currents of opinion within their group, so that the high-profile expulsions and dissension from the party leader's line still routine in other Egyptian parties are now less visible among the Ikhwan, despite the sensationalism with which the press continues to speculate over struggles for power within the group's ranks.

The Ikhwan's evolution holds an important lesson for theories of party transformation developed out of cases in advanced industrialized democracies. Electoral authoritarian regimes such as Egypt's show that party adaptation is still possible and even considerable, but not due solely to damaging losses at the ballot box. Instead, parties in electoral authoritarian regimes adapt to fend off state repression and maintain their organizational existence. It is not Downsian vote seeking but, rather, Michels's self-preservation that is the objective of a party in an authoritarian regime, self-preservation defined broadly to include jockeying for influence and relevance with the public and influential international actors. If the Ikhwan have responded with such flexibility to the threats and opportunities of their authoritarian environment, one can speculate how much more they would acclimate themselves to the rigors of free and open electoral politics undistorted by repression.

The trajectory of the Egyptian Ikhwan urges a return to empirical studies of Islamist groups and their interaction with their political contexts, informed by the accumulated knowledge on party behavior in 19th- and 20th-century advanced industrialized democracies. It is by no means a law that parties adapt or moderate their platforms in response to electoral participation, and there are well-known cases of reversals or adoption of more extreme ideological and policy positions.⁷⁷ But it is striking how a majority of party organisms, regardless of ideology, modulate their organizational and ideological features to align with changing environmental cues and incentives. Islamist parties are no exception.⁷⁸

NOTES

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¹For a description of the byelections, see Abdalla Hasan, "Democracy Died Today," *Cairo Times*, 4–10 July 2002.

²I use the terms “Society of Muslim Brothers,” “Muslim Brothers,” and “Ikhwan” interchangeably in this article. The ubiquitous “Muslim Brotherhood” is a glaring but persistent mistranslation, reinforcing mystification of the Ikhwan’s genesis and development. Issues of translation are more than semantic. The sociologist Bryan Turner proclaims, “Indeed, the word *brotherhood* itself indicates the presence, in Weber’s terms, of closed/communal ties within the open/associational world of state arrangements”: Bryan Turner, “Islam, Civil Society, and Citizenship: Reflections on the Sociology of Citizenship and Islamic Studies,” in *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications*, ed. Nils Butenshon (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 28–48. Arabic-speaking scholars are not immune from mistranslation. The highest post of the Muslim Brothers, the general guide (*al-murshid al-‘amm*), is rendered ominously the “Grand Master” in Larbi Sadiki, *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 358.

³This definition is a median between purely procedural and substantive components of democracy. See Charles Tilly, *Stories, Identities, and Political Change* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 94.

⁴Seymour Martin Lipset “Introduction,” in Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1962), 19.

⁵Otto Kirchheimer, “The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems,” in *Political Parties and Political Development*, ed. Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), 177–200. Kirchheimer was influenced by Anthony Downs’s theory of parties as vote-maximizing machines: Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

⁶Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

⁷Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Commitment Problems in Religious Democracies: The Case of Religious Parties,” *Comparative Politics* 32, 4 (2000): 379–98.

⁸Scott Mainwaring, “Party Objectives in Authoritarian Regimes with Elections or Fragile Democracies: A Dual Game,” in *Christian Democracy in Latin America: Electoral Competition and Regime Conflicts*, ed. Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 18.

⁹*Ibid.*, 3–29.

¹⁰Brynjur Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1928–1942* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998).

¹¹*Majmu‘at al-rasa’il al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna* (The Collected Epistles of the Martyred Imam Hasan al-Banna) (Beirut: Dar al-Hadara al-Islamiyya, 1981), 46–47.

¹²Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 236, 245.

¹³Lia, *Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 249.

¹⁴Mitchell, *Muslim Brothers*, 307–13.

¹⁵The program is reprinted in Mahmud Abd al-Halim, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun: ru‘ya min al-dakhil* (The Muslim Brothers: An Inside View) (Alexandria: Dar al-Da‘wa, 1985), 118–25.

¹⁶See the Ikhwan’s bylaws, reprinted in Abdalla al-Nafisi, ed., *al-Haraka al-islamiyya: ru‘ya mustaqbaliyya* (The Islamist Movement: A Future-Oriented View) (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 1989), 401–16.

¹⁷Abd al-Moneim Abu al-Futuh, member of the Guidance Bureau, interview with the author, Cairo, 24 June 2003. Al-Futuh expressed regret that no term limits were set and indicated that this would be the first order of business in upcoming amendments to the statute.

¹⁸Umar al-Tilmissany, *Dhikrayat la mudhakkirat* (Memories Not Memoirs) (al-Qahira: Dar al-Tiba‘a wa al-Nashr al-Islamiyya, 1985), 212.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 197.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 22.

²¹For a fine-grained analysis of the numerous additional restrictions of the law, including gerrymandering, see Hasanayn Tawfiq Ibrahim and Hoda Raghieb Awad, *al-Dawr al-siyasi li-Jama‘at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi dhil al-ta‘addudiyya al-siyasiyya al-muqayyada fi misr* (The Political Role of the Society of Muslim Brothers in the Context of Restricted Political Pluralism in Egypt) (Cairo: Markaz al-Mahrusa, 1996), 44–60.

²²*Ibid.*, 196.

²³For more detail, see *ibid.*, 191–217.

²⁴The program is reprinted in Ahmad Abdalla, ed., *al-Intikhabat al-barlamaniyya fi misr: dars intikhabat 1987* (Parliamentary Elections in Egypt: The Lesson of the 1987 Elections) (Cairo: Markaz al-Buhuth al-Arabiyya, 1990), 305–17.

²⁵Al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya statement, reprinted in *ibid.*, 318–20.

²⁶Cited in Tawfiq Yusuf al-Wa'i, *al-Fikr al-siyasi al-mu'asir 'inda al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (The Muslim Brothers' Contemporary Political Thought) (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Manar al-Islamiyya, 2001), 165.

²⁷See Salaheddin Hafez, "Our Constitution . . . Put to the Test!" *al-Ahram*, 6 April 1987, 13.

²⁸For the minutes of parliamentary plenary sessions featuring the Ikhwan, see Mohsen Rady, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin taht qubbat al-barlaman* (The Muslim Brothers under the Parliamentary Rotunda), 2 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Tawzi wa al-Nashr al-Islamiyya, 1990). For an analysis of Ikhwan MPs' parliamentary conduct, see Ibrahim and Awad, *al-Dawr al-siyasi*, 361–406.

²⁹Ammar Ali Hasan, "Ada' al-tahaluf al-islami fi majlis al-sha'b khilal al-fasl al-tashri'i al-khamis: dirasa fi al-riqaba al-barlamaniya" (The Performance of the Islamist Alliance in the Fifth Legislative Session of Parliament: A Study in Parliamentary Oversight), in *al-Tatawwur al-siyasi fi misr 1982–1992* (Political Development in Egypt 1982–1992), ed. Muhammad Kharbush (Cairo: Markaz al-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya, 1994), 133–60.

³⁰Bertus Hendriks, "Egypt's New Political Map," *Middle East Report* (July–August 1987): 23–30.

³¹Lawyers and journalists upended that tradition in their transformative elections of 2001 and 2003, voting in the Nasserist activists Sameh Ashour as chairman of the bar and Galal Aref as chairman of the journalists' union. In a bid at cooptation, both were appointed to the government's National Human Rights Council in January 2004.

³²For specifics, see Amani Qandil, *al-Mujtama' al-madani fi misr fi matla' alfiyya jadida* (Civil Society in Egypt at the Dawn of a New Millennium) (Cairo: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya wa-l-Istratijiyya bi-l-Ahram, 2000), 31.

³³For the "takeover" view, see Turner, "Islam, Civil Society, and Citizenship," 47; Sheri Berman, "Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, 2 (2003): 257–72; Ahmad Husein Hasan, *al-Su'ud al-siyasi al-islami dakhil al-niqabat al-mihaniyya* (The Islamist Political Rise in the Professional Associations) (Cairo: al-Dar al-Thaqafiyya li-l-Nashr, 2000).

³⁴Amani Qandil, "al-Tayar al-islami dakhil jam'at al-masalih fi misr" (The Islamist Trend in Egyptian Interest Groups), *Qadaya fikriyya* (October 1989): 162–68. See also Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), chap. 8.

³⁵John Waterbury, "Democracy without Democrats? The Potential for Political Liberalization in the Middle East," in *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, ed. Ghassan Salame (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994), 45.

³⁶As Fareed Zakaria opines in "How to Save the Arab World," *Newsweek*, 24 December 2001, 24.

³⁷Hala Mustafa, member of the NDP Policies Secretariat, is a consistent exponent of this view: see Hala Mustafa, "Building Arab Democracy," *Washington Post*, 18 November 2003.

³⁸Najib Ghadbian, *Democratization and the Islamist Challenge in the Arab World* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 76.

³⁹For a detailed discussion of the law and its 1995 amendments, see Abdalla Khalil, *Azmat Niqabat al-Muhamin* (The Crisis of the Bar Association) (Cairo: Markaz al-Qahira li-Dirasat Huquq al-Insan, 1999), 108–21.

⁴⁰See three such press releases in Muhammad Muru, *al-Haraka al-Islamiyya fi misr min 1928 ila 1993* (The Islamist Movement in Egypt from 1928 to 1993) (Cairo: al-Dar al-Misriyya li-l-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 1994), 199–201. The Ikhwan's brokerage is reported in Robert Fisk, "Deal Silences the Cairo Hard Men," *The Independent*, 11 September 1994.

⁴¹Ramadan was not successful. Amani Qandil, *al-Dawr al-siyasi li-jama'at al-masalih fi misr* (The Political Role of Interest Groups in Egypt) (Cairo: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya wa-l-Istratijiyya bi-l-Ahram, 1996), 72.

⁴²Al-Wa'i, *al-Fikr al-siyasi al-mu'asir*, 253.

⁴³Al-Tilmissany, *Dhikrayat*, 21.

⁴⁴Jihane al-Halafawi, interview with the author, Alexandria, 11 June 2003.

⁴⁵The statement is reproduced in al-Wa'i, *al-Fikr al-siyasi al-mu'asir*, 127–32.

⁴⁶Quoted in "The Doctor Is Out," *Cairo Times*, 9–22 March 2000, 14–16. The statement on pluralism is reprinted in al-Wa'i, *al-Fikr al-siyasi al-mu'asir*, 127–32.

⁴⁷*Majmu'at al-rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid*, 326.

⁴⁸Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Min fiqh al-dawla fi al-Islam: makanatiha, tabi'atiha, mawifiha min al-dimuqratiyya wa-l-ta'addudiyya wa-l-mar'awa ghayr al-muslimin* (On the Theory of the State in Islam: Its Role, Characteristics, Nature and Positions on Democracy, Pluralism, Women, and Non-Muslims) (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1997), 157.

⁴⁹Mary Anne Weaver, *A Portrait of Egypt: A Journey through the World of Militant Islam* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 165; emphasis in original. For a recent interview with Mubarak in which he expressed similar sentiments, see "Democracy: Be Careful What You Wish For," *Washington Post*, 23 March 2003.

⁵⁰See the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR), *Democracy Jeopardized: Nobody Passed the Elections: The EOHR's Account of the 1995 Egyptian Parliamentary Elections* (Cairo: EOHR, 1996).

⁵¹The complete 1995 statement is reprinted in *Rowaq Arabi*, January 1997, 139–43.

⁵²The Islamist writer and Muslim Brothers sympathizer Fahmi Huwaydi waxes poetic about al-Banna's close ties to Coptic figures such as MP Louis Vanos and prominent Coptic scion Makram Ebeid: Fahmi Huwaydi, *al-Islam wa-l-dimuqratiyya* (Islam and Democracy) (Cairo: al-Ahram li-l-Tawzi' wa-l-Nashr, 1993), 278–79.

⁵³See his seminal *al-Muslimun wa-l-aqbat fi itar al-jama'a al-wataniyya* (Muslims and Copts in the National Community), 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1988). For analysis of Bishri's concept of citizenship, see Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 243–92.

⁵⁴Nabil Abd al-Fattah, ed., *Taqrir al-hala al-diniyya fi misr* (Egypt State of Religion Report), 5th ed. (Cairo: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya wa-l-Istratijiyya bi-l-Ahram, 1997), 171.

⁵⁵Abdalla al-Nafisi, "al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi misr: al-tajriba wa-l-khata'" (The Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Experience and the Mistake)," in *al-Haraka al-islamiyya: ru'ya mustaqbaliyya*, 234–39.

⁵⁶Abu al-Futuh, interview.

⁵⁷The journalist Khaled Dawoud then handed the tape to the government weekly tabloid *Ruz al-Yusuf*, a leading anti-Muslim Brothers mouthpiece, which published the interview as "The Latest Invention of the Muslim Brothers: Kick Them Out of the Army!" *Ruz al-Yusuf*, 14 April 1997, 22–23.

⁵⁸Ahmad Hamroush, "A General Guide in Need of Guidance!" *Ruz al-Yusuf*, 28 April 1997.

⁵⁹Sultan interviewed by Mahmoud Sadeq, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun: al-azma wa-l-tashattat* (The Muslim Brothers: Crisis and Division) (Cairo: Akhbar al-Yawm, 2002), 181–92.

⁶⁰Anthony Shadid, *Legacy of the Prophet: Depots, Democrats, and the New Politics of Islam* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002), 253–71. See also Tal'at Rumeih, *al-Wasat wa-l-Ikhwan* (The Wasat and the Brothers) (Cairo: Markaz Yafa li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 1997).

⁶¹Paul Schemm and Simon Apiku, "The Battle of the Generations in Egypt's Opposition," *Middle East Times*, 23 August 1998. Muhammad Hamdi, "Egyptian Parties Aflame with Splits," *al-Ahram al-arabi*, 20 November 1999. In June 2002, The Tagammu' politburo member Abd al-Ghaffar Shukr wrote a position paper titled, "Toward a Serious and Sincere Discussion of the Future of Tagammu'," calling for a thorough overhaul of the party's personalized leadership style and collusion with the government: Abd al-Ghaffar Shukr, interview with the author, Cairo, 9 July 2003.

⁶²Voter turnout was 49.7 percent: "Springtime of the Syndicate," *Cairo Times*, 1–14 March 2001.

⁶³"We're Innocent, Your Honor," *Cairo Times*, 18–24 January 2001.

⁶⁴Muhammad Mursi, interview with the author, Cairo, 26 June 2002.

⁶⁵For a roundup of Parliament's first season, including the Muslim Brothers deputies' performance, see "Arisen," *Cairo Times*, 19–25 July 2001.

⁶⁶See "Hard Times for Heshmat," *al-Ahram Weekly*, 19–25 December 2002; and "Brotherhood Barred at the Poll," *al-Ahram Weekly*, 16–22 January 2003.

⁶⁷Gamal Heshmat, interview with the author, Cairo, 24 June 2003.

⁶⁸"Jilted Brothers," *Cairo Times*, 24–30 April 2003.

⁶⁹The statements of Eryan and al-Futuh are culled from the following sources: "Victory in defeat," *Cairo Times*, 10–16 February 2000; interviews with Eryan and al-Futuh in *Cairo Times*, 9–22 March 2000 and 18–24 January 2001, respectively; a two-part interview with al-Futuh in *al-Arabi*, 28 September 2003 and 5 October 2003; Eryan, "The Reform That Needs to be Realized," *al-Dimuqratiyya* 4, 13 (2004): 111–14; al-Futuh, "The Islamic Path to Reform," *al-Ahram Weekly*, 5–11 February 2004.

⁷⁰Abdul Raheem Ali, "Secret Vote to Elect Muslim Brotherhood Leader," *Islam Online*, 12 January 2004. Available at: www.islamonline.net/English/News/2004-01/12/article07.shtml.

⁷¹For a lucid analysis, see Amr Elchoubaki, "Brotherly Gesture?" *al-Ahram Weekly*, 11–17 March 2004.

⁷²Abd al-Moneim Abu al-Futuh, interview with the author, Cairo, January 2004.

⁷³Michels, *Political Parties*, 362.

⁷⁴Ayman al-Zawahiri, *al-Hasad al-murr: al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi sittin 'amman* (Bitter Harvest: The Muslim Brothers in Sixty Years) (n.p.: Dar al-Bayareq, 1999), 25.

⁷⁵Diaa Rashwan, "Islamists Crash the Party," *al-Ahram Weekly*, 16–22 September 1999.

⁷⁶For an outraged critique of the moral depravity of Egyptian television, see the column by the secular economist Gouda Abd al-Khaleq in the leftist *al-Ahali*, 18 November 2003.

⁷⁷Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski, "Why Parties Fail to Learn: Electoral Defeat, Selective Perception and British Party Politics," *Party Politics* 10 (2004): 85–104. Katrina Burgess and Steven Levitsky, "Explaining Populist Party Adaptation in Latin America," *Comparative Political Studies* 36 (2003): 881–911.

⁷⁸For a comparison of the effects of electoral participation on the "political learning" of Islamists in Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, Qatar, and Turkey, see 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).