

# CARNEGIE PAPERS

## **The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood:**

Islamist Participation  
in a Closing Political  
Environment

Amr Hamzawy

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*The Muslim  
Brotherhood has  
encountered a  
paradox: the more  
it presents itself as  
a credible force for  
political reform, the  
less reform is likely.*

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## Summary

The Muslim Brotherhood, the dynamic Islamist movement that has navigated Egypt's semi-authoritarian system for over six decades, is confronting the realities of a shrinking political space. For most of the past decade, the Brotherhood has expanded its political role, increasing from seventeen to 88 members of Egypt's 620-member People's Assembly. Over the past few years, its success has brought about increasing repression from the regime. A range of government measures have limited the Brotherhood's effectiveness in the People's Assembly, preventing it from forming a political party. The repressive environment has encouraged the movement to prioritize internal solidarity over parliamentary activities and refocus its efforts on its traditional educational, religious, and social agenda. While the Brotherhood is unlikely to renounce the political sphere altogether, the movement's center of gravity is shifting toward those who regard politics as distracting, divisive, and even self-defeating.

This paper examines the Brotherhood's experience as a political force in Egypt: its relationship with the regime; attempts to maneuver the shifting "red lines" of the country's closed political system; the changing relationship between the Brotherhood and other opposition actors; the Brotherhood's evolving political positions; and the activities and legislative performance of Brotherhood members in a parliament crippled by the powerful, government-run National Democratic Party. These challenges have sparked debate within the movement on the extent to which it should focus its energies on political participation under the present circumstances. It is this debate—rather than the oft-cited one between hard-liners and soft-liners—that dominates the Brotherhood's internal deliberations. In the eyes of a growing number of its members and leaders, the Brotherhood has little to show for its efforts to prompt political reform in Egypt. Instead it has incurred the wrath of the regime and diminished its effectiveness as a grassroots movement. Thus, even if the Brotherhood does not withdraw completely from politics, its ongoing debilitation has bleak implications for the future of Egyptian political reform.

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In January 2010, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood selected Muhammad Badi' as its eighth general guide. While Egypt's leading Islamist movement has sometimes hotly debated the selection of leaders in the past, this time the choice took place under an unprecedented domestic and international spotlight. Muhammad Badi' was virtually unknown outside the group. And that itself may be a signal about the Brotherhood's future course: there will likely be

far more focus on internal organization and less on political work; the movement is poised to focus more on quiet social and educational projects than on noisy political struggles. The new direction is not simply a product of internal preferences; the political environment in Egypt has become far less inviting in general. And the Brotherhood is a particular target of growing restrictions on political activity. With these developments, the prospect of a more competitive and pluralistic political system in Egypt is rapidly fading.

Badi' himself tried to emphasize continuity with the Brotherhood's political vision and participation in Egyptian politics. He also sent soothing signals in almost all directions: his initial statements upon his selection contained references to the Brotherhood's commitment to peaceful change and its continued dedication to political activity in line with the movement's slogan that it sought "participation, not domination." But if Badi's initial words suggested little change, his actions bespoke a very different style and set of priorities: he declined to take questions; appeared far more reserved than Mahdi 'Akif, his ebullient predecessor; and worked quickly to ensure that the increasingly cacophonous movement recovers its ability to speak with a unified voice. The Brotherhood is not disappearing, but Egyptians should expect it to become a more reticent movement, seeking to avoid headlines and work gradually, shoring up its own ranks and pursuing less flashy social and organizational work.

The Brotherhood will therefore likely preserve its organizational existence in this difficult political environment. And to be fair, it is not totally abandoning the political sphere. However, we should expect the contest between the Brotherhood and the regime to enter a more muted phase.

The change will be gradual but significant. Critics have long charged that the Muslim Brotherhood has a vague program, stronger on slogans than substance, and that its political vision cannot answer Egypt's many pressing needs. But that charge has held less water of late, as the Brotherhood has used a variety of venues to spell out its vision for a better governed, public-spirited, prosperous, more just, and increasingly moral and Islamic Egyptian society. Those details have emerged as the Brotherhood has become increasingly political. Over the past decade, the Brotherhood has plunged farther into politics, stepping up its electoral participation and developing a more comprehensive and detailed agenda in the process. That effort is now waning. The means through which the Brotherhood has developed its specific set of proposals, such as drafting its political platform and maneuvering in the parliament with the sizable bloc it won in 2005, now seem less promising. While we hardly endorse the Brotherhood's agenda, we argue that the movement's partial withdrawal as a political force may return Egypt to the state of political stagnation that had afflicted it for so long.

In this paper, we will examine the Brotherhood's engagement in politics—how it came about, what form it took, and the agenda that the movement attempted to develop. Specifically, we will probe:

- The Brotherhood's evolving approaches to politics;
- The environment of shifting red lines and semiauthoritarianism in which the movement has operated;
- The Brotherhood's evolving political positions, especially the mixed results of its experiences exploring the possibilities of forming a political party and writing a platform;
- The movement's experience in forming cross-ideological coalitions to press for further reform;
- The Brotherhood's attempt to sketch out a comprehensive political, social, and economic agenda through parliamentary activity;
- The evolution and costs of that parliamentary effort; and
- The implications of a partial withdrawal from politics.

## The Brotherhood and Politics

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, a group that has lacked formal legal existence for six decades, remains one of the most successful social and political movements in modern Arab history. It has sustained its structure and vision through some very difficult periods, adroitly seizing the opportunities that have arisen and squeezing itself into any opening that has emerged in Egypt's generally closed political order.

Many Egyptian and international observers have scrutinized the Brotherhood's words and deeds, sharply debating its commitment to democracy, stance on liberal values, and attitude toward violence.<sup>1</sup> Such debates have occurred within the movement itself, but these issues are not currently—and have only occasionally been in the past—the focal point of internal discussions. Instead, internal debates have centered on a broader, though related, concern with the role of politics: how can and should political efforts advance the Brotherhood's broad agenda in Egypt's shifting political and social environment?

Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood was founded to pursue a broad reform agenda, which over time has taken on personal, religious, social, and political aspects. The critical debate within the movement in recent decades centers on how much (and in what ways) to stress political participation. Calls for a total withdrawal from politics are heard only on the margins of the movement, and among its critics. But if there is a broad internal consensus that the Brotherhood should remain partially engaged in politics, leaders have nevertheless sharply debated how extensive participation should be, what forms it should take, and how to connect political activity to the Brotherhood's long-term reform goals. And it is very much long-term goals that are at issue. Brotherhood leaders insist—and behave as though—their focus is less on the short-term, even daily

tussle of politics and much more on the movement's broad vision of a society in accordance with Islamic principles.

Our concern in this paper, however, is primarily with Egyptian politics. How has a broadly-based, religiously-inspired movement been shaped by the Egyptian political system? How has the Brotherhood's political activity affected Egyptian politics, and how is it likely to affect politics in the future? More specifically, what has been the impact of the Brotherhood's growing presence in the Egyptian parliament and what will be the effect of its likely exclusion (partial though it may be) from that body after the elections slated for late 2010?

In the wake of the 2005 parliamentary elections, in which Brotherhood candidates won 88 of 444 elected seats, we described a spectrum of scenarios for Egyptian politics, ranging from accommodation to confrontation between movement and regime. Since that time, it has become clear that the regime has adapted a strategy we described then as a "modified Algerian" scenario.<sup>2</sup> Like the Algerian regime in 1991, Egypt's current leadership has decided to place sharper limits on democratic processes and combat the growing influence of the Brotherhood with a combination of arrests, security measures, legal and constitutional restraints, ideological campaigns, and harassment. The Egyptian regime is more gradual and far gentler than the Algerian one of the 1990s, but it still rejects any attempt to incorporate the Brotherhood as a normal political actor.

Nevertheless, the Brotherhood's leaders have not reacted as though their movement is in crisis. Instead, they have responded slowly, cautiously, almost ploddingly, complaining about the crackdown without actively resisting it. The movement's focus on its long-term vision and its patience and forbearance explains its restraint. However, the effect of its withdrawal is to diminish the movement's interest in the political sphere and the likelihood of integrating the Arab world's oldest and most influential Islamist movement into the Egyptian political scene as a formal party.

### **Political Environment: Ever Shifting Red Lines**

Egypt's current political environment can be characterized as "semiauthoritarian" in that it bars any meaningful contestation over political authority, but still leaves some room for opposition to be expressed and, to a lesser extent, organized.

The basic semiauthoritarian nature of the current Egyptian political order is well-entrenched. Though Egypt was never a constitutional democracy, a real and rising pluralism earlier in the twentieth century gave way to concentration of power with the creation of the current regime in 1952. Since that time, the system has generally displayed three features: it has been highly centralized (with authority concentrated in the presidency); political contestation has been sharply limited; and any attempt by the opposition to recast prevailing political

arrangements has generally been regarded by leaders as a security threat rather than a political challenge. Indeed, in the 1950s and 1960s, there was little “semi” about the regime’s authoritarianism.

In the early 1970s, however, the authoritarian face of the regime began to soften—unevenly and inconsistently to be sure, but in some significant ways. The three features—centralization, limitation on contestation, and security mentality—remained firmly in place, but were sometimes implemented in less draconian ways. Most notable was the opening of political expression. Beginning in the late 1970s, an opposition press emerged. In the current decade, a host of independent newspapers have proved even more significant in widening the political sphere. State institutions—ranging from the judiciary to the official religious and educational complex known as al-Azhar—have often wrested a greater degree of autonomy from the presidency.

Political pluralism of a limited sort also returned to Egypt when the regime abandoned its practice of designating a single umbrella political party. In the 1970s, some pre-1952 forces (including the Brotherhood) were allowed to reemerge. However, the party environment is hardly free. The governing National Democratic Party dominates the political scene, sometimes merging with the state bureaucracy and parts of the business community and utilizing instruments of the state to maintain its monopoly on power. Opposition parties can be established only under specific conditions, and they have been unable to forge strong links with potential constituents. The Brotherhood itself has never been granted any legal status. It has been discouraged—and in 2007, even constitutionally barred—from forming a political party.

Egyptians often speak of their political system as one that allows dissent within “red lines.” Such a description, while accurate, can mislead in one important respect: the “red lines” in question are neither accepted nor consistent. They are not simply unclear, but constantly shifting, pushed and probed by a variety of opposition actors. The “lines” remain far harsher for Islamist political actors than for others, but even for Islamists, they move from month to month.

The constant shifts in the rules of the political game can be seen most clearly in the electoral arena.<sup>3</sup> Egyptian elections are, in a sense, foregone conclusions—there is currently no prospect of political power changing hands based on electoral results. However, all other elements of elections besides results are up for contestation and sometimes violent conflict, with polling routinely accompanied by arrests and clashes among rival groups. The rules governing Egyptian elections have also changed constantly, shaped by a varying combination of regime machinations, court decisions, constitutional provisions, opposition threats, international pressure, and popular apathy.

From the perspective of the Brotherhood, legislative elections afford the opportunity to pursue many different goals—though electoral victory is simply not one of them, at least in the short term. Since its reemergence in the 1970s, the Brotherhood has found ways to field candidates even without legal

status by running its nominees under other party labels or as independents. The Brotherhood has responded to each shift in the rules with its own shifts in tactics: it has chosen variously to boycott elections and run ambitious slates of candidates, to forge alliances and to forswear them, and modified its program for electoral purposes while making clear that other principles are unalterable.

But running in elections also carries costs and risks. The Brotherhood's 2005 success in the parliamentary elections, for instance, is said by some within the movement not simply to have vindicated its popular role, but also to have incurred the wrath of an oppressive regime.

How have the shifting rules of Egyptian semiauthoritarianism affected the Brotherhood's positions?

## The Evolution of the Brotherhood's Political Stance

The Muslim Brotherhood's broad involvement in Egyptian politics has led to an evolution in its political positions. Participation has led it to stress political reform, develop a conception of a "civil state with an Islamic frame of reference," and craft specific policy proposals (while still leaving significant areas of ambiguity and debate). Before tracing the evolution of its positions, it is helpful to examine the Brotherhood's general attitude toward politics, an equally important but often overlooked evolution.

### Nearing the Rubicon of a Political Party

The Brotherhood has never rejected participation in parliamentary elections in principle. Its founder, Hassan al-Banna, attempted to run for parliament. But if the Brotherhood did not disavow parliament, it also did not show great interest in electoral politics. In fact, the movement expressed an explicit disdain for party politics, maintaining that the interests of the entire community took precedence over divisive partisanship. Beginning in the 1950s, ideological offshoots from the Brotherhood developed in more radical directions, rejecting any non-Shari'a based order as fundamentally illegitimate.<sup>4</sup> The issue of electoral participation was moot, in any case: Egyptian politics took a sharply authoritarian turn in the 1950s, and the Brotherhood became one of the main targets of the regime's repression.

In the 1970s, however, the Egyptian political system began to shift gradually from a fully authoritarian order to the semiauthoritarian one described above, offering the Brotherhood more freedom to maneuver. Older leaders who had been imprisoned or fled the country were reanimating the movement just as Egyptian students were forming a loosely coordinated movement based on greater religious interest and activism.<sup>5</sup> Though the student movement took many forms, some students began to gravitate toward the Brotherhood, which greeted them warmly. The effect was not simply to rejuvenate the movement,

but also to infuse it with a variety of new organizational ideas and a greater inclination toward political activism, first through student associations and then, when the new leaders graduated, through professional associations. The Brotherhood harnessed this newfound energy by entering the parliamentary electoral process. In most elections, the Brotherhood participated in an intentionally non-threatening manner by contesting a limited number of seats. At the previous peak of its electoral success, the Brotherhood participated in a short-lived alliance with the liberal Wafd party that won 58 seats in 1984. Two rounds later, in 1990, the Brotherhood participated in an opposition electoral boycott of parliamentary balloting, demanding a more neutral process for administering elections and a more faithful observance of constitutional guarantees of the integrity of the electoral process. But in most elections, the Brotherhood ran a modest number of candidates, winning a modest number of seats.<sup>6</sup>

In 2005, the Brotherhood leadership decided to step up its involvement in elections by slating 161 candidates. However, the movement still took steps to assure the country's rulers that it was not audacious enough to seek a majority: namely, the number of its candidates was such that even if all had won, the Brotherhood would still have controlled only one-third of the parliament. Further, the group avoided running candidates against the most prominent NDP figures. Brotherhood leaders not only avoided winning a majority in the elections, but they also acknowledged the need to limit their minority work to a level that did not threaten the NDP. Had they won more than one-third of the seats, they would have had a bloc sufficient to obstruct some NDP actions. That would have implied not simply limited participation in parliament, but a direct voice in governance—something the Brotherhood was not yet ready for.

Despite these self-imposed limits, extensive participation brought remarkable achievements. The Brotherhood won eighty-eight seats outright and might have won a score more if there had been no official manipulation and intimidation. In head-to-head contests between Brotherhood-sponsored candidates and National Democratic Party candidates, the Brotherhood won two-thirds of the races. This stunning performance brought the movement face-to-face with the question of forming an electorally-oriented political party, a step that carries considerable ideological and organizational significance.

As we have mentioned, the Brotherhood eschewed any move in the direction of forming a party for a long time. Under Hassan al-Banna, its founder, the movement disavowed partisan politics, and even when it did participate, it avoided forming its own party or formally aligning with others. After al-Banna's death in 1949 and until the 1970s, the regime suppressed the movement. When the government allowed it to re-emerge, some younger activists showed interest in forming a party, but the restrictive legal environment and the movement's old guard blocked the move. In 1995, a group of younger activists finally bolted from the movement and attempted to form a new "Center

Party.” The fact that these activists are no longer young but to this day have not succeeded in clearing those legal hurdles has discouraged other members from following in their footsteps.

On an ideological level, formation of an electorally-oriented party would force the Brotherhood to leave behind its longstanding if deteriorating distrust of party politics. Indeed, if the Brotherhood can be accused of having harbored antidemocratic inclinations, these lie not so much in a distrust of democracy in theory as in a distaste for the tussle of daily politics, in which different actors and interest groups struggle to have their preferences translated into policy. On this level, the Brotherhood seems to have changed its objection to forming a party from the realm of principle to that of practice. When asked about their intentions on the question of forming a party, leaders refer only to the political and legal roadblocks, not their ideological hesitations. But the legal obstacles are insurmountable at present and have prevented leaders from grappling with the implications of accepting a pluralist political environment.

At an organizational level, the formation of a political party would have a significant impact in three ways. First, it would create an arm of the movement with a different sense of time. Brotherhood leaders routinely insist—and behave as if—they measure time in decades rather than days. An electoral party, if given full autonomy, is necessarily wedded to an electoral cycle, constantly positioning itself in anticipation of its next performance at the ballot box. In such a context, tactical considerations often begin to trump strategic ones.

This revised time horizon is connected to the second organizational implication of the formation of an electoral party: the inevitable emergence of a new leadership group within the movement, with its own distinct interests and priorities. The establishment of separate electoral arms by similar movements has forced them to grapple with difficult questions: how much autonomy should the party be granted? How much should it be able to draw on the credibility and resources of the broader movement? Does the formation of a party entangle and even sully the broader movement’s activities in political struggles?

Third, an electoral party would be far more preoccupied than the Brotherhood has typically been by the necessity of dealing with other political forces, deciding how and when to form coalitions, bargain with other parties, emphasize programmatic distinctiveness, and co-opt supporters from other parties.

In the end, the Egyptian regime has spared the Muslim Brotherhood needing to answer any of these questions. Indeed, it was less the movement’s dithering and far more the harsh regime response that blocked the Brotherhood’s path toward forming a political party. The movement’s leaders explain that Egypt’s semiauthoritarian regime has tried to present them—implicitly or even explicitly—with a choice: it can pursue its non-political activities more freely or cling to its political role and face repression. Brotherhood leaders have refused to make that choice, giving up neither politics nor social work. But in refusing to abandon the political field, they have been confronted with a concerted

regime effort to force them out. In the future, they will not be allowed to form a party, or even to compete on a non-party basis, as they did in 2005, without facing harsh repression.

### **Defining Positions: Moving Toward the Draft Party Platform and Then Withdrawing From It**

While the Brotherhood's path to becoming a political party may be blocked for the foreseeable future, the movement's enhanced political activity has led it to spell out its positions in more substantive terms.

Since it resumed its political activities in the 1970s and 1980s, the Brotherhood has consistently pushed for some measure of political liberalization. The movement's respect for political liberties has not always translated into support for freedom in the social and cultural realms, but its stress on political liberalization has become more marked over the years. By 2004, the Brotherhood was sufficiently advanced in its thinking to produce a comprehensive vision for political reform. The content of that program was remarkable not only for its detail, but also for the way in which it mirrored the demands of opposition groups across the political spectrum. It came at a time when a surge in reform thinking and activism offered a promising sign that Egypt's political stasis might be broken. For a time, the regime seemed not to know how to respond to the onset of an unprecedented degree of internal and external pressure for reform.

In the end, however, the Egyptian regime regained its balance and managed to deflect the challenges fairly easily. As that happened, the Brotherhood came under criticism from its fellow opposition movements on two grounds. First, leaders in some other opposition groups (such as some in the broad coalition known as Kifaya) claimed that the Brotherhood's contribution to the opposition movement was cheap talk but little action. Brotherhood members occasionally participated in demonstrations and joint efforts but seemed far too cautious for opposition activists who were determined to break down the "red lines" that had constrained them for so long. When other opposition figures organized street demonstrations or used rhetoric the Brotherhood considered too strong (and even "rude"), Brotherhood leaders held back. And indeed, the movement's long time horizon and legendary caution suggest that the criticisms levied by other opposition figures were apt: Brotherhood leaders were convinced that this was not an appropriate time to risk everything in a confrontation with the regime.

Critics also charged that the Brotherhood, for all its willingness to embrace aspects of political reform, still saw it as a means of forming an Islamic state. The slogan of "a civil state with an Islamic frame of reference" was too vague to offer much reassurance to the contrary. Accordingly, the Brotherhood set to work spelling out its positions in an extremely lengthy document—eventually reaching 128 pages—that, however provisional, was still explicitly written with

a political party in mind. The Brotherhood's purpose in drafting the document was to compel its leaders to settle for themselves—and communicate to those outside the movement—the details of their political vision for Egypt. The document was circulated for comment (originally among a small group, but the document was soon leaked and published) in 2007 but never completed. With the wave of renewed repression that followed the movement's strong electoral performance, Brotherhood leaders kept postponing a final draft, and ultimately made clear that the project is shelved for the time being. But the draft platform still provides a remarkable view of what the Brotherhood's political project looks like on some controversial matters.<sup>7</sup>

### Shari`a

Much of the platform carries forward the Brotherhood's evolving strategy of reassurance regarding the compatibility between its religious agenda and the existing legal environment. The platform shows respect for the country's constitutional institutions, seeking to diminish the presidency but showing genuine comfort with the idea that the people's elected representatives in parliament are generally the ultimate arbiter of which Islamic teachings must be treated as authoritative.

But in a brief passage, the platform seems to take a potentially far-reaching step in a very different direction: it calls for the creation of a council of religious scholars, a body to be elected by the full complement of religious scholars in the country and to advise the legislative and executive branches in matters of religious law. The passage on the council also suggests that the new body might have the authority to comment on a wide variety of legislative and executive acts, and that its word would be binding—not merely advisory—on matters in which it felt the Shari`a rule at stake was definitive and not subject to divergent interpretations.

The provision for the council seemed to catch some Brotherhood leaders by surprise. On the one hand, the proposed council answered apparent pressure from the movement's more ideologically committed foot soldiers that it not abandon Shari`a behind anodyne formulas, as well as the insistence of some senior leaders to make Shari`a-based rules a viable restriction on rulers. And the requirement that the religious council be elected rather than appointed offered to diminish the role of those official actors (like the mufti and the shaykh of al-Azhar) who are seen as co-opted in favor of the entire body of religious scholars, many of whom are sympathetic to the Brotherhood and its program.

On the other hand, by inserting these sentences, the Brotherhood alienated many others both inside and outside the movement and opened itself to the charge of favoring rule by religious scholars. Some members of the Brotherhood criticized the language on both substantive and procedural grounds, claiming that the proposed body of religious scholars was based on an illegitimate privileging of some interpretations of Shari`a over others, not on any established

Brotherhood position. They claimed that the language had not been fully debated within the movement but had been inserted in a set of ill-considered last-minute modifications. Yet the heat of the debate within the movement was exceeded by the firestorm of external criticism. Even intellectuals who had called for acceptance of the Brotherhood as a normal political actor lambasted what they viewed as the movement's lurch in the direction of theocracy.

Not only did the platform force the Brotherhood to pay internal and external costs for its foray into specificity, but it also made a retreat back into generalities more difficult. Brotherhood leaders suggested that if they ever do produce a final draft, it will omit this provision. But while it may be possible to drop the passage from the program or rob it of much of its content, there is no obscuring the fact that some within the leadership have a conception of Shari'a that strikes many Egyptians as undemocratic. However much the Brotherhood seeks to paper over the differences opened with the platform's language on this topic, it will be dealing with the repercussions of the controversy for some time.

### **Copts and Women**

The Muslim Brotherhood's draft political platform forced the movement to pay the price of specificity on one other notable issue: its clear position that women and non-Muslims should be excluded from senior positions in any state governed according to Islamic principles. The argument for this ban was based on a traditional current in Islamic legal and political thought that focused on determining the requirements for a ruler (or, in the terms of the Brotherhood's religion-based discourse, the major positions of governing). Because a ruler in an Islamic society assumes some religious functions, most pre-modern Muslim legal and political authorities held that the ruler himself must be a Muslim. Owing to the public nature of the role, it was also common to insist on the requirement that the ruler be male.

For some within the Brotherhood, this was precisely the sort of clearly established Shari'a-based rule that should not be transgressed. But others did not feel so bound: they rejected what they saw as outmoded and unnecessary legal reasoning. And they saw the entire issue as a politically damaging distraction. Opponents of excluding Copts and women argued that standard Islamic legal writings had conceptualized a state based on a patrimonial ruler, not the complex set of institutions that currently exists (or should). They argued that the very different kind of state authority that exists today prevents mechanical application of older understandings. The religion and gender of a ruler matter far less if he (or she) is merely temporarily staffing a high state office in accordance with clear procedures and legal limitations. Further, they argued, there was little benefit to be gained by constitutionally barring non-Muslims from office: in a deeply religious society with an overwhelming majority of Muslims, it was unlikely a non-Muslim would be elected in the first place. (Some went so far as to say that they were fully comfortable with the implications of their

more liberal position by stating that they would prefer a qualified and righteous Christian or woman over many members of Egypt's current corrupt and autocratic governing elite.)

The internal debate was only ambiguously resolved. On the one hand, the movement's leaders insisted that their position barring women and Copts was definitive for internal purposes, and that their binding stance would not be withdrawn. However, they also suggested that this was merely a position of the Brotherhood and therefore implied that the exclusion need not be translated into law. Indeed, they even hinted that while they would not change the Brotherhood's position, they could accept a defeat on the matter as long as it came through legitimate democratic procedures.

### **Economics**

The two short passages on the council of religious scholars and the gender of the head of state drew the greatest attention in the public debate. But the platform focused almost entirely on other issues. Most notable here was a feature that attracted little notice at the time: the great attention to economic matters. Given Egyptians' low standard of living and the Brotherhood's determination to position itself as a serious movement with a political vision, its leaders recognized that they would have to make some attempt to grapple with the country's economic problems to combat the criticism that the movement is focused on marginal issues.

Anxious as they were to show an ability to develop comprehensive and detailed proposals, Brotherhood leaders found that addressing economic issues was more easily said than done. The attempt exposed the Brotherhood to four (often conflicting) pressures. First, its proposals had to be seen as serious and practical. Second, the movement was tremendously suspicious of the Nasserist political experiment, which carried over into a general distaste for socialism and a strong state. Third, the Brotherhood was strongly committed to the vision of a just society governed in accordance with Islamic principles, including protections for the poor and the weak. Private welfare, in the Brotherhood's view, was very much a public concern. Finally, the Brotherhood's commitments to Islamic laws and conservative social values affected its views of a whole host of matters, ranging from banking and finance to tourism.

In the platform, the Brotherhood revealed a preference for a strongly interventionist state that would mitigate the effects of free trade. By contrast, the platform's provisions regarding political and democratic reform focus on a more limited role for the state and a greater role for civil society and non-governmental organizations. Calling for a state that systematically intervenes in social and economic spheres while simultaneously advocating limits to its political role seems contradictory. Yet the Brotherhood escaped criticism and calls to define the boundaries between a liberal and an interventionist state, owing largely to the distraction of the other controversies.

The draft party platform is an important document testifying to the movement's thinking and its inclinations on many critical areas of Egyptian social and political life. But there are two limitations to relying completely on it to discern the movement's positions. First, the document was explicitly a draft and indeed was never finalized (nor is there any prospect of it being issued any time soon). Second, the platform allowed the movement to address only those issues that concerned it and avoid those that it preferred not to engage.

## Relations With Other Opposition Actors

Has the Brotherhood's growing interest in politics—and its evolving vision of reform—allowed it to forge alliances with others working toward some of the same ends? The results of bridge-building among opposition actors in Egypt is mixed at best.

The Muslim Brotherhood's relations with legal opposition parties and protest movements have been largely determined by two political realities. First, in an attempt to capitalize on the limited opening of the Egyptian regime between 2002 and 2005, the Brotherhood made efforts to join forces with other opposition actors to develop a national platform for democratic reform and exert meaningful pressure on the government to accept a greater degree of political competition and pluralism. However, boldness was always tempered by caution. Fearing repression, the Brotherhood was conscious to avoid signaling a determination to challenge the regime's grip on power or to represent itself as an alternative, and thus remained reluctant to commit to formal and electoral alliances with other opposition actors. One of the clearest signs of this understanding was the Brotherhood's self-limited participation in 2005 parliamentary elections, when it fielded candidates in fewer than one-third of the electoral districts, thus sending the message that it did not seek to challenge the NDP's two-thirds majority in the People's Assembly.<sup>8</sup>

The long-standing mutual mistrust between the Brotherhood and other opposition movements has limited their attempts to harmonize political positions and coordinate activities. Some of these suspicions stem from precisely those areas where the Brotherhood found its draft platform provoking debate. Liberal and leftist parties as well as protest movements have remained deeply concerned by the Brotherhood's ambiguous positions on equal citizenship rights for Muslims and Copts and women's rights and empowerment in society.

The Brotherhood's possible partners further fretted about the negative impacts of Shari'a provisions on freedom of expression and pluralism and ultimately the contradictions between the group's Islamic frame of reference and the constitutional pillars of Egyptian politics.<sup>9</sup> The platform discussed above was partially intended to answer suspicions regarding these issues but only deepened them. Some opposition actors also doubt the Brotherhood's willingness to cooperate with them, accusing it of "arrogant behavior" and an

“inability to reach compromises” with others.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in several incidents the Brotherhood has projected the image of a movement too certain of the appeal of its rhetoric, the popularity of its platform, strength of its organization, and the size of its constituencies; it has acted as though it were virtually self-sufficient, needing no cooperation with weaker opposition actors.<sup>11</sup>

The Brotherhood has also had legitimate reason to mistrust the attitudes of other opposition actors. Some legal parties, such as the leftist Unionist Party, al-Tajammu‘, continue to oppose Islamist participation in politics and thus allied themselves with the regime to limit the Brotherhood’s political space. In several incidents, al-Tajammu‘ leaders even endorsed repressive government measures against the Brotherhood and justified them on the grounds that they were targeting an undemocratic organization. Other parties that fear the Brotherhood’s popularity, such as the liberal Wafd, have done very little to protest the manipulation of 2005 parliamentary elections against the movement’s candidates or even their de-facto exclusion from local elections in 2008.<sup>12</sup> And although protest movements such as the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kifaya) have in recent years demonstrated a clear commitment to defending the right of the Brotherhood to participate in politics, they have systematically distanced themselves from the group whenever the regime has pursued repression against its leadership.

Even if such suspicions between the Brotherhood and other opposition actors could be overcome, there exists a deep structural difference: while most other opposition parties are focused primarily on politics, the Brotherhood leaders concern themselves with a broad and diverse social movement with many different wings and activities. This tends to make the Islamists cautious, anxious to avoid provoking official repression. When pressed on why they participate only half-heartedly (if at all) in opposition demonstrations, for instance, Brotherhood leaders retort that when Kifaya demonstrators get roughed up, their supporters are hauled in for indefinite periods.

The outcome in recent years of these two political realities—the Brotherhood’s determination to participate without evoking the regime’s wrath, as well as the mutual mistrust between Islamist and non-Islamist actors—has been the movement’s mixed experience of partial cooperation and continued tension in the opposition spectrum. Alliances have been formed on occasion—most notably the 1984 electoral alliance with the Wafd party—but they have generally dissolved after short periods or been limited to short-term tactical coordination.

But even if alliance achievements have been limited, they have left real marks on the Brotherhood’s positions. Since 2002, the Brotherhood’s partial search for common ground with other opposition actors has resulted in the strengthening of its platform on social, economic, and political reform. In different official pronouncements and programmatic statements, for example the 2004 Reform Initiative and the 2005 electoral program, the Brotherhood’s platform has

echoed that of liberal and leftist parties calling for constitutional amendments, democratic reforms, government accountability, and freedom safeguards.

The Brotherhood's efforts at coordinating political activities, especially during election campaigns, have also been apparent. Prior to the 2005 parliamentary elections, the group joined the majority of legal opposition parties—including the traditional anti-Brotherhood al-Tajammu' and protest movements in forming the United National Front for Change. In spite of the coalition's grand promises, it failed to coordinate opposition activities and harmonize positions toward a national platform for democratic reform. In fairness to the Brotherhood, the only meaningful coordination of action came from its side. The Brotherhood announced at that time that it would refrain from competing against other opposition candidates, revitalizing the slogan "participation without domination," and it honored this commitment during the elections.<sup>13</sup>

In March 2007, the Brotherhood once again joined other opposition actors to form a coalition against the undemocratic constitutional amendments proposed and imposed by the NDP. The coalition threatened to boycott parliamentary debates on the amendments as well as the popular referendum that would endorse them. However, the coalition's members did not see its threats as binding, and several parties such as the leftist al-Tajammu' and the liberal al-Wafd defected.<sup>14</sup>

Such cross-ideological fronts and coalitions among Egypt's opposition actors have proved short-lived for several reasons. In most cases, they were not supported by strategic and tactical cooperation on the ground, but on informal agreements between Brotherhood leaders and other opposition actors with limited rapprochement at the grassroots and constituency levels. The Brotherhood's credibility has been greatly undermined by its inability to harmonize political positions or pressure the regime for common reform policies. Ultimately, the experience of cross-ideological cooperation in recent years has confirmed the limiting impact that mutual mistrust and varying political objectives have on opposition actors.<sup>15</sup>

## **The Brotherhood in Parliament: Sketching a Comprehensive Agenda<sup>16</sup>**

If the Brotherhood can form no party, its platform is withdrawn, and cross-ideological alliances have had extremely limited effects, how can we know what the movement's political agenda is?

A far more specific set of indicators of the Brotherhood's positions is available and quite public: the activities of its deputies in parliament. These records fill in many of the gaps left by the platform and various public statements. While the Brotherhood has never had—and indeed, never sought—a parliamentary majority, its presence in parliament has allowed it the opportunity to sketch out a set of priorities and policy positions on a wide range of questions.

This was generally the case before 2005, when the Brotherhood had a small number of deputies who used their parliamentary status and prerogatives to speak forcefully for its agenda. And it was especially and dramatically the case in the wake of the 2005 parliamentary elections, when the Brotherhood assembled an impressive parliamentary bloc, devoted resources to developing an agenda, drafted its own proposals, strategized about priorities, and played the (generally unofficial) role of leading the parliamentary opposition.

The Brotherhood's continued commitment to participate in legislative elections has secured for it a sustained presence in the People's Assembly—the lower chamber of the Egyptian parliament—since the late 1970s.<sup>17</sup> The Brotherhood's presence in parliament has varied greatly in terms of numbers, ranging from a one-seat presence in the 1995–2000 assembly to eighty-eight MPs in the current 2005–2010 assembly. Throughout the last three decades the nature of the movement's parliamentary platform has also shifted: calls for the application of Shari'a and the promotion of religious and moral values that the bloc prioritized until the 1990s have given way to issues of legal and political reform, socioeconomic policies, and human rights violations in the 2000–2005 and current assemblies. Although religious and Shari'a-based priorities remain key elements in the Brotherhood's parliamentary activities, their significance in shaping the movement's platform has diminished gradually. Other elements have remained unchanged, such as the preoccupation with government accountability, anti-corruption measures, and the group's vague stance on women's rights and equality between Muslims and Copts.

It is important not to overstate what the Brotherhood's parliamentary deputies can achieve. Though the group's nearly continuous presence in parliament since the late 1970s has enabled its MPs to acquire extensive oversight tools as well as a collective ability to challenge the government, its impact on the legislative process has been minimal. Brotherhood deputies can certainly annoy the government, pepper its ministers with questions, and bring issues to the public sphere for discussion, but they do not have the votes necessary to write laws. In the People's Assembly of 2000–2005, the seventeen Brotherhood MPs made use of parliamentary oversight tools—such as inquiries, interpellations, questions, discussion requests, and the formation of investigative committees—over 6,000 times, far more than any other parliamentary bloc.<sup>18</sup> In the current assembly, with the Brotherhood's 88 MPs, movement deputies resorted to oversight tools over 20,000 times.<sup>19</sup> But in spite of the Brotherhood's increasing parliamentary activity, its platform remains largely unimplemented.

The Muslim Brotherhood bloc's failure to pass platform legislation is ultimately linked to the ruling National Democratic Party's firm grip on parliament, where it has persistently secured a comfortable two-thirds majority in every assembly since 1976. Even in the current assembly, in spite of the Muslim Brotherhood's significant growth in representation to almost one-fifth of the entire body, the NDP holds three-quarters of the seats and is virtually

unchallenged in passing its draft legislation and forming the cabinet.

Over time, the Brotherhood has gradually learned to deploy its extensive experience in providing services and charity—both of which have been key elements of its constituency-building activities—to augment its oversight activities. Charity networks and service provision centers have facilitated constant exchange between the Brotherhood’s MPs and considerable segments of the Egyptian population, especially in impoverished areas. This, in return, has made it possible for the MPs to detect direct incidents of corruption, to take note of the concrete impacts of social and economic policies, and to shape a narrative that builds political support for their parliamentary activities.

In this context of strong oversight performance and weak legislative impact, the Brotherhood’s parliamentary activities in recent years have centered on five pillars: constitutional and legal amendments, political reform, social and economic legislation, religious and moral legislation, and women’s rights. The following section examines the Brotherhood MPs’ parliamentary platform in relation to these five pillars, in both the 2000–2005 and the current 2005–2010 assemblies.

### **Constitutional Amendments**

In general, the Brotherhood’s parliamentary bloc has developed its own set of proposals for reforming Egypt’s constitutional order, while also advancing a critique of the constitutional amendments proposed by the regime. Indeed, the issue of constitutional amendments has occupied a prominent position in the debates and platforms of various political actors in Egypt since 2002. The Muslim Brotherhood’s particular position took shape in 2004, when it released its “Initiative for Reform,” and it was further developed in its 2005 electoral platform. Although these documents made no explicit references to amending the national constitution, they implied that intention by proposing reforms to empower legislative and judicial authorities vis-à-vis the executive branch of government, refashion the roles of several state institutions in the political and cultural spheres, and nullify various laws enshrined in the constitution that limit political rights and freedoms.<sup>20</sup>

In the run-up to the 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections, President Hosni Mubarak proposed an amendment to Article 76 of the constitution allowing multi-candidate presidential elections. In so doing, he appeared to yield to opposition demands to abandon the decades-old system of popular referenda designed merely to confirm the regime’s candidate for the presidency. The Brotherhood, however, rejected the proposed amendment as insufficient. In May 2005, it called for a boycott of the referendum to confirm the amendment, although it did not boycott the presidential elections in September of that year.<sup>21</sup> The Brotherhood objected to the president’s proposal because it restricted the ability of independents and opposition parties to field presidential candidates. Specifically, the proposal required political parties who wished

to put forth a presidential candidate to have at least five percent of the assembly's seats. Independents in particular were required to have the support of 250 elected members of the People's Assembly, Shura Council (the upper house of the Egyptian parliament), and local councils.

According to the Brotherhood, these stipulations clearly favored the NDP, which has always held a majority of the 620 seats in People's Assembly and the Shura Council. At the time Mubarak proposed the amendment, the seats of the opposition and the independents combined formed only 6.4 percent, still less than the quorum specified by the amended Article 76. The NDP used its majority to pass the president's original proposal despite the opposition of the Brotherhood, independents, and others. And the regime simply ignored calls to amend Article 77 of the constitution in order to specify a term limit for the presidency.<sup>22</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood opposed another set of presidential election laws proposed by the NDP and designed to benefit the regime later in 2005. This time the Brotherhood proposed alternative legislation on the issue, including a provision to hold the presidential elections in several stages, because there are not enough judges to supervise national polling when it is held on a single day—and the lack of judicial oversight provides ample opportunity for vote rigging. In addition, the Brotherhood bloc called for complete judicial supervision over the elections and rejected the proposed inclusion of non-judicial figures in the oversight committee.<sup>23</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood persisted in its opposition to the constitutional amendments proposed by the president and the NDP throughout the 2005–2010 People's Assembly. The largest battle took place over a large set of presidentially-proposed amendments in 2006 and 2007: on December 26, 2006, President Mubarak called for the amendment of 34 constitutional articles to prohibit the establishment of religious parties and introduce more changes to presidential and legislative election laws, without setting a term limit for the presidency. After an initial attempt to take part in the ensuing discussions, the Brotherhood's deputies pulled out of the March 18, 2007 parliamentary session on these amendments, claiming that the NDP had failed to take their views into account.<sup>24</sup> Soon after, the Brotherhood called for a boycott of the referendum on the constitutional amendments.<sup>25</sup>

Opposition actors and independent observers criticized the package of amendments as offering the appearance of political reform while actually moving in the opposite direction.<sup>26</sup> Of the 34 amendments introduced and eventually approved, the Brotherhood bloc focused its critique on the following elements, which it interpreted as limiting political freedoms and impeding its political activism:

- Amendments banning religiously-based political parties and activities, which clearly obstruct the Muslim Brotherhood's transformation into a

legal party and limit its participation in politics. The Brotherhood views the ban as completely inconsistent with Article 2 of the constitution, which stipulates Islam as the religion of the state in Egypt and Shari'a as its major source of legislation.

- Further amendments to Article 76 regarding presidential elections that upheld the requirement of independent candidates to gain the support of 250 elected members in the NDP-dominated People's Assembly, Shura Council, and local councils. (Though the amendments did reduce the number of seats in parliament required for a legal political party to field a presidential candidate from five percent to three percent.)<sup>27</sup>
- An amendment laying the groundwork for a proportional system of legislative elections, which suggested that Egyptians would no longer vote for individuals but instead for party lists. In the Brotherhood's view, this amendment cemented its exclusion from regular electoral politics, since it is not allowed to form a political party.
- An amendment to Article 88 that reduced judicial oversight of elections by forming special oversight committees composed of both judges and former government officials. The Brotherhood charged that the new system would increase opportunities for election rigging and manipulation.<sup>28</sup>
- Amendments to Article 179, which would allow the enactment of a terrorism law. The constitutional amendments asserted the right of the Ministry of Interior to curb political and civic rights by restricting the press, subjecting journalists to potential imprisonment, and allowing governmental bodies to observe and control the activities of political parties.<sup>29</sup> The Brotherhood joined other opposition critics to charge that the effect would be to allow the regime to replace the longstanding state of emergency with a new set of permanent legal tools designed to restrict political life.
- The Brotherhood MPs criticized the fact that, yet again, the proposed amendments did not include Article 77, thus leaving the number of presidential terms unlimited.<sup>30</sup>

### **Political Freedoms, Public Freedoms, Rule of Law, and Human Rights**

The Muslim Brotherhood's stances on constitutional amendments were specific expressions of its more general pursuit of greater political freedoms. Much of its ordinary parliamentary activity in both the 2000–2005 and 2005–2010 People's Assemblies followed this line. Brotherhood MPs opposed NDP-sponsored amendments designed to stifle the political freedom of religiously-based parties and consolidate the regime's executive power. The Brotherhood bloc also took legislative initiative by actively participating in discussions pertaining to these issues (political freedoms, public freedoms, checks and balances

between branches of government, and elections) and proposed a few meaningful amendments and draft laws to open Egypt's political sphere and protect it from abuses of power. However, the NDP promptly dismissed this legislation.

In 2000, the Brotherhood bloc explicitly called for an end to the state of emergency, which has been in continuous effect since 1981. Indeed, with a few short respites, Egyptian governments have invoked a state of emergency for the last seven decades, providing legal justification to compromise the rights of Egyptian citizens.<sup>31</sup> But the Brotherhood's efforts came to naught; the NDP used its crushing majority to extend the state of emergency for three years in 2003, two years in 2006, and then again in 2008 until May 2010.<sup>32</sup> Since 2003 the Brotherhood bloc has repeatedly warned that the perpetual extension of the emergency law indicates the regime's intention to restrict already limited political freedom. Throughout the parliamentary sessions of the last ten years, Brotherhood deputies have questioned the prime minister, minister of justice, and minister of interior on the issues of prison torture, interrogation of citizens, and actions taken by intelligence officers. MPs have stressed that Egypt's violations of human rights provide an important pretext for international intervention in the country's internal affairs. The Brotherhood's inquiries pressured the parliamentary committee on Defense and National Security to organize a number of field visits to prisons in the summer of 2004, and Brotherhood deputies contributed to the written report of the committee's findings.<sup>33</sup> In June 2005, the parliament bloc addressed the issue of poor prison conditions and insisted that supervision be entrusted to the Ministry of Justice, rather than the Ministry of Interior.<sup>34</sup> Also during the 2000–2005 period, the Brotherhood bloc proposed the inclusion of an additional clause in the Law of Criminal Procedures to forbid the preventive detention of journalists and doctors based on mistakes that occur during professional practice.<sup>35</sup> Like most of the Brotherhood's initiatives, this legislation was decisively blocked by the NDP parliamentary majority.

From 2005–2010, the Muslim Brotherhood's platform and activities in parliament have been extended to encompass judicial independence. The Brotherhood entered the field with enthusiasm in the middle of the decade following a contest between the executive branch and dissident judges. As the government moved to bring some independent judicial voices to heel, the Brotherhood tried to push in the opposite direction, developing and endorsing proposals to remove tools of executive domination over the judiciary. Thus, in addition to rejecting NDP-proposed amendments that aimed to subject the judiciary to greater executive authority,<sup>36</sup> the Muslim Brotherhood submitted an alternative draft law. The draft, presented on March 7, 2006, by MP Subhi Salih, sought to separate judicial and executive authorities and ensure judges' neutrality and independence by holding them accountable only to the Judges Club. The NDP law was passed in its original form in 2006.<sup>37</sup>

In 2006, the Brotherhood bloc also developed its own alternative draft law for forming and organizing political parties. It sought to ease the formation of parties—which currently must be legalized by the quasi-governmental Political Parties Committee—and safeguard their freedoms, which have been violated through confiscation of their documents, restricting their activities, and eavesdropping on their communications. The proposal also would have freed party publications and newspapers from the restrictions of the Law of Press and Publications.<sup>38</sup> As with most Brotherhood initiatives, the alternative articulated the group's vision but had no legal effect; the government's 2005 Political Parties Law stands.

The Brotherhood's effort to guard civil rights has extended to proposed legislation on the Law of Criminal Procedures. On April 4, 2006 the Proposals and Complaints Parliamentary Committee approved the Muslim Brotherhood's legislation limiting preventive detention to a period of less than three months in the case that the accused person is not notified of the date of his/her tribunal session. The clause is intended to protect the accused from interrogation and distinguish between preventative detention, which the Brotherhood considers a violation of civil rights, and actual imprisonment.<sup>39</sup> The Brotherhood bloc also proposed an amendment to the Penal Law calling for life imprisonment of interrogators and jailers who torture prisoners. However, the NDP majority rejected this amendment.<sup>40</sup>

In an effort to strengthen civil society, MP Yusri Bayumi announced in December 2008 that he was preparing a draft law to ensure the freedom to establish NGOs, labor unions, and professional associations.<sup>41</sup> Bayumi called for the simplification of the procedures necessary to form these bodies and demanded that the Ministry of Social Solidarity's systematic intervention in their administration be curbed. Parliament did not approve the draft law.

Regarding citizens' freedom of expression and association, the Muslim Brotherhood bloc earlier rejected a draft law proposed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs on April 2, 2008, forbidding demonstrations inside mosques. According to Brotherhood MPs, the real aim of the proposal was to further reduce spaces available for free expression under the pretext of protecting places of worship.<sup>42</sup> During the discussion of the draft law, MP Husayn Ibrahim proposed adding a clause to allow demonstrations for important national and religious causes, as well as all peaceful demonstrations during the daytime, as long as they do not risk damaging mosques or politicizing places of worship. The parliament ignored Ibrahim's suggestion.

Finally, on freedom of the press, in 2009 MP Muhsin Radi proposed a draft law to cancel Article 190 of Law 58/1937, which forbids journalists from publishing the procedures and decisions of tribunals deemed destructive to the public order and citizens' morality. According to the Brotherhood bloc, the current article not only restricts the freedom of the press,<sup>43</sup> but also violates the constitution, which states that all tribunals are public.<sup>44</sup>

### Social and Economic Legislation

In general, the Muslim Brotherhood has used its parliamentary presence to call attention to the government's socioeconomic shortcomings, including its allegedly exclusive representation of the interests of the business elite, negligence of the needs of lower-income classes, and failure to address the country's serious developmental problems or more accurately development problems. The Brotherhood has pursued these themes through inquiries, more formal interpellations, assessments of national budget proposals, and related media activities. Brotherhood deputies have repeatedly blamed the government for inflation, unemployment, rising prices, corruption, and the decline in wages. In the same regard, they have also stressed that the government's economic failures have aggravated phenomena of social instability, such as crime, sexual harassment, and the illegal migration of Egyptians.<sup>45</sup>

For a variety of reasons, between 2000 and 2005, the Brotherhood bloc voted against all annual budgets submitted by the government to the People's Assembly. Most significantly, the seventeen deputies cited asserted that despite the government's increased social expenditures,<sup>46</sup> the quality of health and education services had not actually improved, and that economic burdens continued to afflict lower-income households. According to the Brotherhood bloc, each budget should have allocated greater public funding for long-term investments in an attempt to create jobs and increase economic growth. The Brotherhood also repeatedly criticized the government for failing to increase the country's tax revenues and decrease its budget deficit, as well as its allocation of subsidies for Egyptian exports, a decision the Brotherhood claimed would benefit few. Lastly, the Brotherhood rejected government taxation policies that it saw as unduly burdensome to lower-income households.<sup>47</sup>

With regard to the national debt, MP Hamdi Hasan directed an interpellation to the prime minister and the minister of finance in January 2004 concerning the debt's ballooning size, which had reached the equivalent of 90 percent of the GDP.<sup>48</sup> Hasan accused the government of failing to contain the debt increase and claimed that it had not been transparent regarding its size, which has negative ramifications for the public debt and social spending.<sup>49</sup> In 2004, MP Sabir 'Abd al-Sadiq also addressed the government with an interpellation on the gap between its annual expenditure rate and revenues<sup>50</sup> and criticized it for failing to facilitate economic liberalization as well as its channeling of foreign direct investment to sectors with limited productivity, such as oil.

Throughout this period, the Brotherhood bloc also pursued issues of administrative corruption, bribes, and private exploitation of public property by way of inquiries and interpellations, as well as evidence gathered in the Central Auditing Organization's (CAO) annual reports.<sup>51</sup> In 2002 the CAO report revealed 72,000 cases of financial government corruption,<sup>52</sup> and Brotherhood MPs claimed in 2004 that corruption was costing Egypt more than 100 billion Egyptian pounds per year.<sup>53</sup>

The Brotherhood also focused on the government's lack of economic transparency and provision of false information. In February 2004, Brotherhood deputies accused the government of providing incorrect economic indicators that contradicted those found in the reports of international organizations; statistics released by the regime claimed that economic growth for Egypt (4 percent) was higher than international assessments (2 percent).<sup>54</sup>

In 2004, movement deputies severely criticized the government's privatization and trade liberalization policies, on the grounds that they had negative impacts on livelihoods and the public debt. They argued that these policies were leading to sharp price increases in basic goods such as food, steel, and construction materials, while wages and salaries failed to rise commensurately. They held the liberalization policy and the floating exchange rate responsible for the devaluation of the Egyptian pound by 50 percent. Furthermore, the privatization of public establishments resulted in unemployment because private entrepreneurs refused to retain former public employees,<sup>55</sup> and the government spent available social security funds in a vain attempt to pay off the internal public debt.<sup>56</sup>

In March 2004, the Brotherhood bloc waged an intense public campaign to pressure the government to discuss the enforcement of a monopoly law, which it reasoned would revive the Egyptian industrial sector, improve the quality of Egyptian manufactured goods, and stabilize prices.<sup>57</sup> The Brotherhood claimed a rare legislative success in this regard with the passing of the Law of Protecting Competition and Forbidding Monopoly in February 2005, which forbids deals and mergers between companies that hinder competition and oust smaller competitors from the market.<sup>58</sup>

With its increased representation in the 2005–2010 parliament, the Brotherhood has continued with similar efforts. Its deputies have again voted against the annual budget. Further, they have criticized the Plan and Budget Committee for its lack of transparency and proposed reallocating public funds from various sectors—such as subsidies on exports and energy, and media budgets—to education and public health. Brotherhood MPs reiterated their proposals to cut the budget deficit, improve the quality of health and education services, increase public investment in order to create jobs, and monitor privatization projects.<sup>59</sup> In response to the 2008/2009 budget, the bloc proposed revisiting the country's taxation and tax collection policies. In 2009/2010, several of the 88 Brotherhood deputies refrained from criticizing the government for its attempts to stimulate investment and reduce subsidies, but they pushed it to reprioritize the social agenda and demanded tax reform.

In recent years the Brotherhood bloc has continued its anti-corruption campaign, claiming that successful curbs on corruption would improve the country's investment climate and alleviate some of the negative impacts of privatization on the lower and middle classes. In 2007, Brotherhood deputies accused the government of allowing some companies to gain monopolies

over food staples by failing to control prices.<sup>60</sup> On January 13, 2008, MP Sa'd al-Husayni proposed a draft law to amend the Competition and Monopoly Law of 2005 in order to apply stricter penalties to monopolies. The draft law proposed exacting a penalty of 1 billion Egyptian pounds on monopolists, canceling their business permits, fining the managers of their companies, and possibly sentencing them to prison.<sup>61</sup> The NDP majority rejected the measure.

In 2007 and 2008, the Brotherhood parliamentary bloc questioned the minister of finance on the government's mismanagement of social security funds, and its use of the 270 billion Egyptian pounds from the Indemnities and Salaries Fund to cover the public debt. In 2008, the bloc directed 104 inquiries and 12 interpellations to the government on the import of expired foods, especially wheat, which had been allegedly carried out by businessmen close to the regime.<sup>62</sup> In December 2008, MP Muhsin Radi accused the government of wasting several billion Egyptian pounds worth of grant money provided by international donors to develop education, local governance, agriculture, microcredit, and women's empowerment.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, in areas intertwined with questions of political reform and economic policy, the Brotherhood has used its parliamentary bloc to develop its general policy inclinations into a sustained series of initiatives and detailed proposals to demonstrate that it can offer a comprehensive alternative vision for Egyptian politics. But what of the more traditional areas of concern for the movement? The Brotherhood has worked to pursue this new comprehensive agenda without abandoning its longstanding emphasis on religion, morality, and the family. A close examination of its record in parliament reveals only partial success in pursuing the new, broad agenda alongside the older, narrower one.

### **Religious and Moral Legislation**

Throughout the 2000–2005 and 2005–2010 parliamentary assemblies, the Muslim Brotherhood has pursued its traditional religious and moral platform based on calls for the application of Shari'a.

Most interestingly, the Brotherhood has worked hard to portray its religious agenda as compatible with—and even a full expression of—its comprehensive reform program. Some of the religious issues it has raised, such as the right of veiled women to be hired for government-funded television channels, have been linked to the freedom of expression and belief. On other issues, such as torture and the rights of the press, the Brotherhood has used its religious and moral priorities to defend political freedoms and human rights.

But even as it has worked to integrate its various agendas, the Brotherhood has made an unmistakable shift in emphasis. The movement's religious and moral platform in parliament has clearly declined in salience over the last ten years. Brotherhood deputies have been preoccupied with parliamentary debates on constitutional amendments, political freedoms, and socioeconomic legislation,

often at the expense of Shari'a-based legislation. But the change of emphasis is relative; Brotherhood deputies have not been silent on religious issues.

In a few rare instances throughout the 2000–2005 People's Assembly, Brotherhood deputies addressed moral and cultural issues closely related to the application of Shari'a. For example, they presented the following inquiries:

- To the Ministry of Culture in 2001 concerning the government-funded publication of three novels containing direct “sexual references” that the Brotherhood considered offensive to Islamic and public morals. The inquiry led to the suspension of several officials in the Ministry of Culture, which henceforth sought the judgment of al-Azhar on the content of government-funded books and publications.
- In June 2002, Brotherhood deputies questioned the government in relation to what it perceived as official attempts to limit al-Azhar's role in the educational sector and de-emphasize religion and Arabic language in school curriculum.
- To the government regarding the “Miss Egypt” beauty competition in April 2004, which the Brotherhood rejected as an insult to Islam and an act of defiance to Shari'a.<sup>64</sup> The Brotherhood also called for the resignation of the Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar in 2003 due to his mild reaction to the French government's decision to ban the veil in schools and universities and criticized the decision of the Egyptian Ministry of Information to forbid female TV anchors from wearing veils.<sup>65</sup>

In terms of legislative proposals, Brotherhood deputies presented legislation in 2002 to adjust laws to the framework of Shari'a<sup>66</sup> and to forbid critics of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad from entering Egypt. In 2003, the Brotherhood pursued similar legislative initiatives, including measures to forbid alcohol in Egypt and ban art that makes obvious references to sexuality, such as movies that have intimate scenes and concerts featuring female singers. The Brotherhood bloc also proposed draft legislation aiming to strengthen articles of criminal law that punish acts of adultery, the consumption and purchase of alcohol, and gambling. The proposed articles, which were not passed in the assembly, would have subjected certain perpetrators of these crimes to monetary fines, imprisonment, and even whipping.

The Brotherhood bloc also proposed amendments and laws to preserve the institution of al-Azhar and its independence. Brotherhood MPs proposed laws to reform al-Azhar's institutional framework, decision-making process, and the management of its endowments. Several times during the 2000–2005 assembly, MP 'Ali Laban presented his draft of a proposed amendment to Law 103/1961 stipulating that the Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar and the associated

Board of Religious Scholars should be popularly elected rather than appointed by the government, as has been the case since the 1950s.<sup>67</sup> Also during this period, MP Husayn Ibrahim proposed a draft law to restore al-Azhar endowments that had been confiscated by the government.<sup>68</sup>

During the People's Assembly of 2005–2010, the Brotherhood continued its efforts to secure al-Azhar's independence by rejecting a December 2006 draft law sanctioning the appointment of high al-Azhar officials, which was nevertheless passed by the NDP majority.<sup>69</sup> In 2008, the Brotherhood bloc questioned several figures—including the prime minister, the minister of religious affairs and endowments, and the minister of development—accusing the government of weakening al-Azhar University by cancelling its branches in some governorates and neglecting the development of its curriculum.<sup>70</sup>

Brotherhood deputies continued to raise issues similar to those it had raised in the 2000–2005 assembly pertaining to the application of Shari'a and morality. In 2007 MP Muhsin Radi questioned the minister of religious affairs and endowments on his policy of allowing the security services to control mosques and limit the preachers' proselytizing activities.<sup>71</sup> In the plenary debate related to Radi's question, several movement deputies raised other objections to the Ministry, criticizing it for publishing a document condemning female circumcision, forcing preachers to attend lectures organized by the Egyptian Anglican Church in Alexandria, and asking Friday preachers not to curse Israel.<sup>72</sup>

Just as it has tried to connect its religious agenda to political reforms, the Brotherhood has tried to introduce Islamic principles into its economic program in order to demonstrate their relevance to citizens' needs and Egypt's developmental challenges. Thus, Islamic banking and economics have become an element of the Brotherhood's parliamentary activities to promote Shari'a and Islamic morals. In 2008, MP Ibrahim al-Ja'fari proposed a draft law to amend the Law of the Central Bank,<sup>73</sup> entreating it to create Islamic banking supervision units and run Islamic banks in a manner different from commercial banks. However, parliament rejected the draft law. Later in the 2005–2010 assembly, Brotherhood deputies attempted to present Islamic banking as a solution to the global financial crisis. Elaborating on the concept, MP 'Alam al-Din al-Sikhawi proposed in 2008 the introduction of an alms law (*zakat*) that would oblige Egyptian Muslims to give their regular Islamic tax payments to special banks, which then would distribute them among poor households and unemployed citizens.<sup>74</sup>

In terms of other legislative efforts related to the Brotherhood bloc's religious and moral platform, in 2008 and 2009 several MPs proposed amendments to the Law of the Child, a government initiative designed to bring Egypt in line with international human rights standards. Brotherhood deputies entered the debate by citing legal components they considered contradictory to Shari'a<sup>75</sup> and sought to change three issues in particular. First, the bloc objected to

the application of legal penalties for marriage under the age of eighteen years, which the Brotherhood considered a violation of the Shari‘a-based legal age of sixteen years. Second, it claimed the government’s power to interfere in family affairs in order to protect children ran contrary to the Islamic principle of household privacy.<sup>76</sup> Finally, the Brotherhood protested vehemently against the stipulation of the law that enables mothers—including single mothers—to pass their family names to their children, claiming that the clause is a sign of aggressive de-Islamization and Westernization in Egypt. The Brotherhood may have scored rhetorical points, but its efforts left no legal impact, as the NDP’s draft law passed without modification.<sup>77</sup>

### Women’s Issues

The Brotherhood’s attempt to combine a broad reform agenda with a specifically religious vision has caused confusion and ambivalence on issues relating to gender and the family. Throughout the 2000–2005 and 2005–2010 assemblies, Brotherhood parliamentarians failed to develop a clear, policy-oriented platform regarding women’s rights and political participation. Movement deputies have to a great extent viewed women’s issues through their usual religious and moral lenses and thus treated them exclusively based on their “compatibility with Shari‘a provisions.” As a result, the Brotherhood bloc has been preoccupied primarily with defending the religious rights of Muslim women—such as the right to veil and protesting against government-introduced legislation “incompatible” with Shari‘a provisions. Brotherhood leaders have generally resisted calls for a greater role for women in public life, but they have grounded their opposition in fairly cautious terms. Despite the failure to present a fully alternative vision, the Brotherhood bloc has also made some initial forays into developing a more positive (and not merely defensive) agenda on social issues, in an attempt to address the needs of women, albeit in a manner that might strike some intended beneficiaries as paternalistic.

On various occasions throughout the People’s Assembly of 2000–2005, the Brotherhood bloc defended the right of women to veil and criticized government voices that pushed for a ban of the full face veil (the *niqab*) in public spaces.<sup>78</sup> It has continued these attempts in the 2005–2010 Assembly.

In the current assembly, the Brotherhood bloc has actively participated in parliamentary debates on the aforementioned Law of the Child, several aspects of which touch on women’s rights.<sup>79</sup> The draft, which sought to reinforce the ban on female circumcision and place even harsher restrictions on the practice, faced severe criticism from movement deputies who maintained that it violates Islamic teachings and attempts to impose Western values and morality on Egyptians.<sup>80</sup> Muhammad Sa‘d al-Katatni, the head of the Brotherhood parliamentary bloc, said in 2008 that the abolition of female circumcision runs “counter to the norms, customs, and nature of the Egyptian people.”<sup>81</sup>

The law passed in June 2008, banning female circumcision as the NDP had intended, with a clause stipulating that the practice is permitted only in cases of “medical necessity.”<sup>82</sup>

Throughout the 2005–2010 People’s Assembly, the Brotherhood bloc has also dealt with legislation on the representation of women in politics. Most notably, the Muslim Brotherhood rejected the Law of Women’s Quota, which passed the Assembly in June 2009. Among other changes, the law added 64 new seats specifically for women to the People’s Assembly, thus increasing the total number of Assembly seats from 454 to 518. The Brotherhood deputies considered the amendment a response to external pressures and warned that the change would open the door for other “social groups” to make similar demands, hinting to Egypt’s Christian community.<sup>83</sup> The Women’s Quota Law, they said, serves the interests of the NDP and ultimately contradicts the constitutional article<sup>84</sup> that proclaims all Egyptian citizens as equal.

While the Women’s Quota Law will expand women’s political participation in Egypt, its actual application stands to benefit the ruling National Democratic Party and consolidate its power in the People’s Assembly, at least in the short run. Because the NDP controls the state resources and institutions vital to winning women’s seats, these new slots will be difficult for the Brotherhood and other opposition parties to win with independent MPs. And the Muslim Brotherhood is an especially unlikely recipient of these seats, due to its enduringly ambivalent position toward women in politics.

## **Has the Brotherhood in Parliament Articulated a Reform Vision for Egypt?**

Although the remarkably active Muslim Brotherhood bloc has dealt with a wide range of issues in parliament over the past decade, social, economic, and political legislation have been at the core of its platform and activities, both in terms of oversight and legislative attempts.

Social and economic concerns such as monopolies, corruption, privatization, tax systems, and public debt have occupied the Brotherhood bloc’s agenda, culminating in an extensive use of oversight powers to address failed government policies at these levels. Brotherhood deputies have also made extensive use of their—limited—legislative tools to address Egypt’s lack of freedom and political reform, although to no avail. They have protested and attempted to block government-proposed constitutional and legal amendments that are interpreted as attempts to consolidate Egypt’s semi-authoritarianism. But the prioritization of these issues has often come at the cost of the Brotherhood’s religious and moral platform, which enjoyed a formative role in the movement’s parliamentary participation before 2000. Indeed, the Brotherhood’s religious and moral platform has been reduced to illiberal stances on women’s issues and scattered calls for the application of Shari’a provisions.

Several factors can account for these shifts in parliamentary priorities and activities of the Brotherhood. First of all, broad public debates in Egypt since 2002 and 2003 have focused increasingly on the issue of political reform and the need to hold the government accountable for its performance in social and economic fields. Freedom and governance deficits have become integral components of regular press coverage, opinion writing, and television talk shows. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that a significant part of the Brotherhood's parliamentary platform has reflected the growing discourse on reform, freedom, and governance in Egypt. The 2004 Reform Initiative, the 2005 electoral program, and the 2007 draft party platform have represented milestones in this regard.

Secondly, the "reform drive" of the Brotherhood has been bolstered by systematic efforts from other political forces in Egypt to reach out to the movement and join it in developing a grand opposition platform. However ambivalent these efforts seem at times, both liberal and leftist forces have cooperated in this effort, yielding a nationwide social debate on social, economic, and political reform that became especially animated from 2003 to 2005.

Lastly, the diverse composition of the Brotherhood bloc helps explain its changing priorities and activities in parliament. In the current assembly especially, the 88 Brotherhood MPs come from many different professional and scientific backgrounds and are thus qualified to address a wide range of parliamentary issues, as demonstrated by the level of detail with which they have discussed annual budgets and legislation pertaining to political freedoms.

Yet the relative marginalization of the Brotherhood's religious and moral platform in parliament has posed a serious challenge for the movement: how can it pursue social, economic, and political reforms in parliament while preserving its Islamic credentials? While the Brotherhood has been blocked from forming a political party, one strategy for dealing with the tension between its specific religious and broad political agendas is to formalize political operations in organizational terms. And indeed, in recent years, one can observe a functional separation between the parliamentary bloc, which addresses reform issues, and the leadership of the movement—the General Guide and the Guidance Office—that prioritizes religious and moral concerns in official pronouncements, media statements, and other activities. The themes of the Brotherhood General Guide's Weekly Address between 2005 and 2009 generally were very much in line with this trend.

Yet a second and equally serious challenge has resulted from the limited outcome of the Brotherhood's participation in parliament, especially in terms of legislative output. In the eyes of many Brotherhood constituents and activists, the movement's pursuit of reform issues in parliament has simply not paid off; its de-emphasis of religious and moral issues has proven vain and fruitless. Nor has the Brotherhood's participation in parliament, they argue, opened Egypt's political sphere. The Brotherhood's leadership has increasingly felt the need

to account for this negative balance and offer explanations for its priorities to the rank and file. Discussion and debate surrounding this issue have called into question the priority of political participation as a strategy, especially in comparison to the success of wider social and religious activities. One outcome of this growing issue has been a changing balance of power within the movement's leadership between advocates of political participation and those concerned with the Brotherhood's social and religious role.

### **Future Prospects: Preservation and Stagnation**

Viewing the events of the past decade year-by-year from the perspective of the Muslim Brotherhood, one would be struck by the rapid, almost heady ascent of the organization in relation to the Egyptian regime followed by a sometimes gradual but definite decline.

In the first half of the current decade, the Brotherhood managed to overcome many of the effects of the harsh repression of the 1990s, select a new leader on two occasions, place itself at the center of Egyptian political debates, reach out to other opposition forces, develop a clear reform agenda, attract and foster the public role of a new generation of movement activists, and show that it was the most viable opposition political movement in the country.

However, in the second half of the decade, the Brotherhood has felt the brunt of repressive measures, with its activists harassed and some leaders arrested, its space for political opposition constricted, and clear preparations underway in government to exclude its candidates from the next round of parliamentary elections. While the movement did manage to select a new leader in 2010 (for the first time replacing a head who retired rather than dying in office), the process provoked bitter public arguments among leaders, a very unpleasant experience for a movement with a marked aversion to airing dirty laundry.

But again, movement leaders insist that they measure their success only in the long term, and if that is the case, they have room for satisfaction. They have navigated the ever shifting rules of Egypt's semiauthoritarian order and shown not just resilience, but also deeply-rooted support and occasionally even an ability to seize the initiative. They have entered politics with enthusiasm without being co-opted or corrupted, have become more sophisticated, and have shown the ability to articulate not only appealing slogans, but also detailed proposals. The Brotherhood has also weathered a difficult post-September 11 international environment, convincing some international observers that it is not linked to al-Qaeda, and that it may even be the sort of Islamist movement that the West can safely engage.

Yet any further progress would seem to require a renewed political opening in Egypt. It is difficult to see the Brotherhood continuing to play such a public role absent some political reform. Here the Brotherhood may have learned a hard lesson over the past decade: the better their leaders play the

political game, the more likely they are to be shoved out of the political arena (or, to maintain the metaphor, the more the rules of that game are rewritten to exclude them). In short, the Brotherhood has encountered a paradox: the more it presents itself as a credible force for political reform, the less reform is likely.

And the Brotherhood's slightly improved level of international respectability is proving of limited utility. It is true that the Brotherhood no longer frightens most Western governments, and that foreign diplomats, academic specialists, and journalists now have a far greater knowledge of and sophistication about its ideology and programs. However, the Egyptian regime has also demonstrated its own importance to several regional diplomatic processes that the United States in particular holds dear, and the Brotherhood is aligned with a set of political forces (such as Hamas) deemed inimical to Western interests. Thus, despite the Brotherhood's increased respectability, the international community will likely place few roadblocks to continued repression of the movement.

Facing the challenges of operating in Egypt's semiauthoritarian political sphere, making more noise than tangible progress in parliament, and eyed with mistrust by other opposition actors, the Muslim Brotherhood has scaled back its political ambitions to mere self-preservation. The organization has been forced to prioritize the management of its own internal affairs over its political role and opposition activities. Furthermore, the Brotherhood's ability to clarify the ambiguities regarding important political and societal issues has been compromised by the strong and sometimes contradictory pulls of its diverse constituencies and critics. And the most comprehensive attempt to address all "gray zones"—the draft party platform—has been effectively withdrawn by a movement that increasingly consider shyness a virtue.

The first major impact of the regime's continued repression of the Brotherhood and restrictions on its participation has been a gradual closing-off of the formal political sphere for the movement. In spite of the Brotherhood's significant representation in the current People's Assembly and the solid appearance of its parliamentary bloc, it has become an isolated movement with little influence on the outcome of the legislative process and on Egyptian politics in general. Prospects for the future do not look any different. Indeed, almost no one in the Brotherhood's leadership expects it to secure more than a dozen or so seats in the People's Assembly that will be elected in the fall of 2010.

The second major impact has been a growing recognition by many Brotherhood leaders that the movement is under siege and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The dominant view within the movement is that the Brotherhood should focus its energies on sustaining organizational solidarity in the face of regime repression rather than expend efforts in a futile bid for political participation. In other words, the closed environment in which the Brotherhood has been operating—which has worsened following 2005 parliamentary elections and was manifested as recently as February 2010 in another wave of arrests of Brotherhood leaders, including a vice general guide and three

members of the Guidance Office—offers no incentive for continued prioritization of political participation, prompting the movement to turn either inward or toward the social and religious aspects of its activism.

Under these conditions, it comes as no surprise that the Brotherhood's internal dynamics have been shaped by a series of debates on the strategic value of political participation. Brotherhood leaders who argued for more participation have either changed their minds or lost ground in these internal debates. And in the current environment, it becomes far more convincing to argue for relative isolation, a focus on internal organizational solidarity, and the prioritization of social and religious activism.

In the recent December 2009 elections for the movement's leadership, the sixteen-member Guidance Bureau and the position of the General Guide have all illustrated the depth of the internal divisions and growing augmentation of the Brotherhood's isolationist tendencies.<sup>85</sup> An influential moderate, and arguably the Brotherhood's most outspoken defender of political participation, 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, lost his position in the Guidance Bureau to opponents whose priority is the movement's social and proselytizing activities. (Shortly after, he sparked a flurry of comments when he abandoned—at least for rhetorical purposes—his dedication to participation by floating the idea of suspending political involvement for twenty years.) While a fellow advocate of participation, 'Isam al-'Iryan, was elected for the first time, in his public statements he has demonstrated a new ability to toe the new line and reflect movement consensus. Along with Abu al-Futuh, Muhammad Habib, the deputy general guide, was also ousted. Hardly the enthusiast for an unrestrained political strategy—he was unafraid, for instance, to voice his individual opinion that the Brotherhood had competed for too many seats in 2005—Habib worked hard to build bridges with those outside the Brotherhood and worked internally for consensus between advocates of both participation and isolation. Very few of the office's re-elected members, including the head of the Brotherhood's parliamentary bloc, Muhammad Sa'd al-Katatni, can be considered pro-participation, and the leader reputed to be friendliest to advocates of political participation, Khayrat al-Shatir, remains imprisoned and unable to participate fully in Brotherhood deliberations.

Finally, the newly-elected general guide, Muhammad Badi', is known for his interest in the movement's internal solidarity and its activities in the social and religious spheres. In regard to political participation, Badi' acknowledged in his January 2010 acceptance speech that the Muslim Brotherhood represents itself in parliament and community work as a peaceful and legitimate force to bring about reform in Egypt.<sup>86</sup> However, Badi' also asserted the Brotherhood's traditional formula that true reform begins at the level of individual souls, spreading through families and society in order eventually to affect the country's political situation—a clear indication of his inclination to re-prioritize social and religious activism.<sup>87</sup>

The Brotherhood's retreat will not be total. None of its leaders argues for complete withdrawal and isolation, and Egypt's increasingly closed political system still leaves a few doors ajar for opposition voices. The Brotherhood is likely to secure a smattering of seats in the new parliament if it decides to run. It, along with the regime, will survive. But the contest between them is entering a new phase, and preservation of both parties may imply political stagnation for the country. With the Brotherhood's retreat, a fleeting opportunity that seemed to arise in the middle of the decade for building a more pluralistic political system and for an open political contest between competing visions for Egypt's future appears to have been lost.



## Appendix A

Election year	Seats contested	Seats won
1976	1 (as independents)	0
1979	2 (as independents)	0
1984	18 (under New Wafd party list)	8
1987	40 (as part of the Islamic Alliance, with the Socialist Labour Party and Socialist Liberal Party)	38
1990	0	0
1995	160 (as independents)	1
2000	70 (as independents)	17
2005	150 (as independents)	88

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- 4 In Egypt, the most notable movements sprang from the thought of Sayyid Qutb, a Brotherhood leader who viewed existing political and social systems as non-Islamic. The current leaders of the Brotherhood repudiate the most extreme elements of Qutb’s ideology but they have not disowned Qutb himself, provoking suspicions among some movement critics.
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