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# The Democratic Viability of Islamic Opposition in Egypt A Theoretical and Comparative Perspective

Submitted by: John Morrissey

In response to the increasingly authoritarian government of Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood has emerged as the only meaningful opposition party—even though the Brotherhood has been illegal for the last fifty years. Despite its often violent and murky past, in the last twenty years the Brotherhood has preached a platform based on moderate and peaceful Islamic activism as well as the compatibility of democracy and Islam. However, there are still elements of the Muslim Brotherhood that suggest certain democratic values would be abandoned should the Brotherhood achieve power, and some critics who contend that the recent changes in the Brotherhood are a ploy to achieve political power.

A comparison to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), an Indian Hindu-nationalist party, as well as a vein of democratic theory known as moderation theory, are both useful tools to address these concerns. The comparison of the BJP to the Muslim Brotherhood demonstrates that, in the case of both parties, popular support was linked to the party's status as the only viable opposition to the existing political regime, not support for a religious platform. The popularity of oppositional rhetoric allows for cleavages within the party to be temporarily masked. Pre-existing political elites who controlled the party voiced a religious platform that is not representative of the party's new popular support but did not cost the party that popular support. Achieving political power

forces the entrenched party elite to confront the true nature of its support or risk losing it. Moderation theory posits that rational decisions by political elites within the party lead the party to adopt a more moderate platform in pursuit of electoral success, which has already happened several times during the recent history of the Muslim Brotherhood. Both analytic tools suggest that, if legalized and Egypt's political system democratized, the Brotherhood would positively contribute to democratic governance in Egypt.

While the Muslim Brotherhood's recent return to prominence was a product of party decisions of the last twenty years, an understanding of the origins of the Muslim Brotherhood is necessary to understand the controversial space the group occupies in the Egyptian political and social sphere. Much of the early history of the Muslim Brotherhood is unclear but it is known that the organization was founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna. The group often participated in anti-Christian activism as a method of opposing the British occupation of Egypt (Mitchell p. 2). Soon after its formation, the Brotherhood established itself as one of the only effective anti-colonial groups, earning it a great deal of grassroots public support very early in its history (Mitchell p. 9). One stated goal of the organization at its inception, which continues to this day, is the installation of the *Sharia* as a national body of law. This made the Brotherhood one of the first

overtly political Islamic groups established and has existed as such continuously since its founding, despite many crackdowns by various governments. The relative antiquity and persistence of the group has given it a perception of historical legitimacy in the eyes of many Egyptians. Furthermore, the role the Brotherhood in the establishment of an independent Egyptian state earned the group the temporary support of the newly established government under Gamal Nasser.

Shortly after the Brotherhood's founding, there were two organizational developments that have continued to shape how many have viewed the Muslim Brotherhood. The first was the involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood in social services; by creating a social welfare branch, the organization was able to receive government funding and avoid classification as a religious organization (Mitchell p. 37). This allowed the Brotherhood to avoid the state crackdowns against "religious" organizations when Arabian identity began to be used as a source of legitimacy for the secular Egyptian state under Nasser by the early 1950s. The provision of social services became especially important following Nasser when Sadat, Nasser's successor, began attempting to court US aid in the 1970s. In an effort to bring Egypt in line with norms of the capitalist first world, Sadat reduced the heavy government spending that Nasser had used to provide social services to the Egyptian population. The result was the emergence of a faith-based welfare system in which the Muslim Brotherhood which used mosques and religious organizations to provide and distribute services previously provided by the state (Harrigan p. 101). This has increased the Brotherhood's appeal to sectors of the population that might not be drawn to the Brotherhood by its religious activism (Harrigan p. 104). Since this retreat, the government has been unable to reclaim the

role it previously held under Nasser, as the state is often unable to compete with the services provided by the Brotherhood (Harrigan 105).

The second major organizational development was the creation of the Secret Apparatus, which occurred sometime between 1930 and 1947 (Mitchell p. 30). The Secret Apparatus was a paramilitary branch of the Brotherhood that used violence as a means to achieve its goals. Several factors led to the Secret Apparatus having a growing role in the Muslim Brotherhood's early history. World War II provided Banna with an opportunity to begin to collect the necessary arms for such a group (Mitchell p. 26). The Muslim Brotherhood legitimized their acquisition of arms by claiming that the creation of an Israeli state at the expense of the existing Palestinian community required a group to defend Palestinian interests. Internal schisms within the Brotherhood also limited the effectiveness of the formal leadership, which led to increased emphasis on the more streamlined Secret Apparatus (Mitchell p. 55). However, the formal leadership of the Brotherhood did have firm control over the actions of the Secret Apparatus. The assassination of a judge, which Banna did not approve of, led him realize this (Mitchell p. 78). The relationship of the formal leadership and the Secret Apparatus is not clear, since the Secret Apparatus was, by nature, secretive. Its existence was well-hidden from Egyptian and British authorities for a period of time and was only discovered by chance when the leader of the Secret Apparatus was arrested by authorities in 1948 with a briefcase containing details about the members and its operations. Much of the uncertainty surrounding the Brotherhood is a product of the lack of concrete knowledge of the role of the Secret Apparatus in the organization and how vital it was believed to be by the formal leadership.

This uncertainty regarding the role of the Secret Apparatus in the Brotherhood has created some competing interpretations of how the history of the Brotherhood has affected the organization. Some scholars see the provision of social services as the defining element of the Brotherhood's foundation, while others believe the creation of the Secret Apparatus defined the existence and legacy of the Brotherhood. Juan Cole believes in the former's importance, that the Brotherhood was created as a moderate organization dedicated to providing social services (Cole 51). Although Cole does acknowledge the radicalization inherent in the creation of the Secret Apparatus, he believes the radicalization to have been temporary and caused by the consequences of British imperial policy, specifically the creation of Israel (Cole p. 52, 55). Cole sees the Brotherhood's commitment to private property (the group opposed land reform in Egypt) as evidence that the group wanted to establish a moderate government, distinct from the dictatorial models present in European fascism (Cole p. 44-45). Ultimately, it was Nasser's popularity that prevented the group from ever assuming power after independence, although the lingering popularity of the Brotherhood eventually led Nasser to crack down on the group in the interest of preserving his own political power (Cole p. 56-7).

Many other people and organizations, most notably the Egyptian government, focus on the militant elements of the Brotherhood's past. In conjunction with the creation of the Secret Apparatus, subscribers to this view on the Brotherhood often focus on the ideologue Sayid Qutb, who Cole regards as a fringe member of the movement (Cole p. 64-65). Initially Qutb did not join the Brotherhood due to an intellectual rivalry with Banna, and eventually he fled Egypt for America in the midst of a British crackdown on Islamic activism (Wright

p. 23-4). While in America, Qutb came to view the west as a spiritual wasteland, mainly due to its separation of church and state. This stay in the United States radicalized him and became an early influence on his religious philosophy. After returning to Egypt following Banna's assassination in 1949, Qutb was soon imprisoned for anti-government activism. While in prison, Qutb released his manifesto, *Milestones*. In this work, Qutb divided the world into "us (people and government who practiced an extremely strict adherence to Islamic law) versus them (everyone else including Muslims) (Haddad p. 79-86) and, in this sense, some view Qutb's work as the ideological underpinning of many acts of Islamic extremism, including the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Wright).

Other scholars, such as Lawrence Wright, believe Qutb had a more active role within the organization. While Wright does not make any judgment on the democratic viability of the Muslim Brotherhood due to the limited timeframe of the Brotherhood covered in his book, his narrative of Qutb's later years show his belief that Qutb had a significant role within the organization. During his time in prison, Qutb reopened lines of communication among the imprisoned Brothers (Zollner p. 26-7). Despite being radical, Qutb's philosophy was a rebellion against Nasser's secular regime and offered a criticism more relevant to the situation of an Islamic leader who ruled a repressive secular state. While how seriously the organization took this view is debatable, Qutb's analysis represented a shift in focus from a nationalist struggle to a revolutionary struggle. Qutb's eventual execution by the state led some to see him as a martyr (Wright p. 31). These events had the effect of reinvigorating the Brotherhood and helping it dampen the effectiveness of subsequent crackdowns. People who still believe the Brotherhood to be radical

often point to Qutb's work and role in the organization as the defining element of the Brotherhood. Most importantly, these two interpretations of the Brotherhood demonstrate that there is a lot of room for interpretation when rendering a judgment about the group based solely on its origins. However, recent development suggest that the "moderate" Muslim Brotherhood offers a more accurate way of understanding the group's past in relation to the present.

The next major relevant organizational development was the moderation of the Muslim Brotherhood, demonstrated by its participation in the 1984 parliamentary elections. At the time, the Brotherhood was (and remains) illegal. However, participation in elections demonstrated a willingness to interact with the state through open, official and legal channels, a major turn for the Brotherhood whose legitimacy has been historically based in the informal sector. The "new" Brotherhood first participated in the 1984 parliamentary elections and, in the 1987 elections, adopted its signature slogan of "Islam is the solution" (Mecham p. 190). The group ran on a platform of the compatibility of its Islamic platform with a democratic system of governance. A 2010 statement by the Brotherhood demonstrates that its stated stance was that the organization priority was not "Implementing Islamic law, however, in moderation but becoming a party and promoting Islamic values in a democratic system" (Mayton 2010b). In fact, elections became the Brotherhood's main method of engaging the Mubarak government after 1984 (Mecham p. 191). In order to engage the government, the Brotherhood has not isolated itself to working solely with Islamic activism but has worked with a wide array of other political actors, including secular socialist and liberal parties (Mecham p. 190-191). These actions demonstrate the main priority of the

Muslim Brotherhood, that inspiring meaningful political reform through pragmatic means is a major goal of the party.

After this initial foray into politics, the Brotherhood began to clarify the political positions it stood for. Although many of its platforms remain murky to this day, mainly due to its illegality, in 1991 the Brotherhood and other opposition groups committed themselves to a ten-point political platform that included many of the characteristics associated with a western democracy, such as free formation of political parties, direct election of the president, independent judiciary, freedom of the press, and allowing non-Muslims to follow their own religious laws (Mecham p. 192). This demonstrates that the Muslim Brotherhood was no longer solely representative of those pushing for an Islamic government, but that it also represented a democratic alternative to Mubarak's continued move toward authoritarianism. Furthermore, this call for democratic norms represented a clear borrowing from the western concept of democracy (Mecham p. 194), a radical departure from Qutb's belief that the western model of statehood was alien to Islam.

Another key element of the Brotherhood was establishing control over the professional syndicates in Egypt. This has allowed the Brotherhood to expand its appeal by providing an avenue to address employed Egyptians. The syndicates also serve as means for the distribution of the public services offered by the Brotherhood, as well a source of professionals that aid in the provision of these social services. The role played by the Brotherhood in the professional syndicates has also proven the Brotherhood's leadership to be competent and honest administrators, adding to their reputation as a potentially effective alternative to the status quo (Demmelhuber p. 125).

This new call for democracy resulted in a surge of grassroots popular support from the Brotherhood (Mecham p.193). However, this support has led to a corresponding crackdown by the Mubarak government. During this crackdown, there was a revival of references to Qutb by the government in an attempt to ostracize the Brotherhood from mainstream Egyptian government. In particular, one recent march of masked students was highlighted as reminiscent of the Secret Apparatus. This association of the Brotherhood with its murky, and often radical, past is the rhetorical centerpiece of the government's efforts to curb the enthusiasm of the Brotherhood. Government arrests have often targeted moderates within the party, limiting their influence.

Despite these crackdowns, the Brotherhood had a surprisingly successful electoral performance in 2005. Despite running as independents, candidates associated with the group won 88 (20%) seats and became the largest opposition to Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP). This again demonstrated that the Brotherhood had become a credible and popular political alternative to Mubarak's government (Mecham p. 193). During the campaign, the group advocated an inclusive national citizenship, not tied to religion, as some had believed might occur (Mecham p. 199). Two of the elected parliament members were female, although concerns have not faded that, if in power, the Muslim Brotherhood would practice some forms of gender discrimination (Mecham p. 200). The group emerged from the elections with a new level of popular legitimacy in the eyes of the Egyptian population and a level of credibility in the eyes of international actors (Mecham p. 194).

This increased role in the public sphere, however, did not usher in a new era of stability

within the organization. If anything, the group now finds itself on the most unsure footing since its entry into politics, partially due to its electoral success. 2007 was a particularly tumultuous year: in response to the success of the Brotherhood at the polls, the government passed a series of constitutional amendments that outlawed any form of political activism based on religion (Amnesty International 3/18/2007). This basically eliminated any likelihood that the government would legalize the Brotherhood in the near future. This recent round of repression has had serious effects on the group. Some believe that it stifled the group's attempt at mimicking its sister movements in other countries such as separating the political party from the rest of the organization. This would make the political branch of the Brotherhood, which is generally moderate, independent from the broader social/religious movement, controlled by a generally conservative party hierarchy. This separation has led to a moderation of the political platforms among the Egyptian Brotherhood's regional sister movements (Brown 2008 p. 12, 18).

The government's repressive policies can be seen as an effort to validate its radicalism-based view of the Brotherhood. By outlawing religious-based political activism, the government is forcing the Brotherhood to confront a new political reality that the Brotherhood's democratic policies will not allow them to rise to the head of government, offering incentives for the Brotherhood to retreat from its democratic platforms. The repression has prevented the separation of the party from the broader religious movement, which would likely have a moderating effect on the political branch and make the party consistent with the constitutional amendments. These amendments mean that the government can punish the group for acting through official

channels. However, if the group attempts to act through unofficial channels, the government will interpret this as a formal return to the days of the Secret Apparatus, validating government critiques of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as repressive state policies.

By behaving in an authoritarian manner and changing the constitution based on political convenience, the Egyptian government is encouraging a democratic backslide of the Brotherhood in other ways. Political actors are unlikely to behave in ways that cannot be justified by the institutional or cultural norms of a society (Tezcur p. 73). The Egyptian government is eliminating the democratic norms that would restrain political actors from acting through unofficial and undemocratic means. An important implication of the government's policies against the Brotherhood is that the government views the Brotherhood as a threat mainly to political power, not as a terrorist organization. By attempting to demonstrate that the Brotherhood has maintained its connections to extremist interpretations of Islam, the government would alienate the Brotherhood from the majority of the Egyptian population and minimize its political influence.

In 2007, the Brotherhood circulated a draft party platform among intellectuals in Egypt, which was subsequently leaked to the press (Brown 2008 p.1). This was the most detailed platform issued by the group to date and was an effort to address some of the criticism the group received for its often vague statements in opposition to the current government. While the greatest accomplishment of the platform may be that the vast majority of the it did not raise any major controversies, the platform not only raised some question in regard to the internal coherence of the group but also detailed several policies that would be antithetical to a democratic government (Brown 2008 p. 5). However, the

main focus of the platform remained grounded in social and economic issues, not religious issues (Brown 2008 p. 5)

Two small portions of the platform raised major concern. The first was a provision against allowing women and non-Muslims to serve as president of the state, reasoning that only a Muslim male can lead a Muslim state. This renewed fears that a government under the Muslim Brotherhood might result in a step backwards for the rights of women and religious minorities. Though this platform was only a draft, the inclusion of this position into the draft sparked a heated debate within the organization about whether such exclusions is consistent with Sharia law (Brown 2008 p. 5).

The other major controversy in the draft was the creation of an extra-constitutional body of religious scholars to ensure that all legislation is consistent with Article II of the Egyptian Constitution, which dictates that all law must be in accordance with the Sharia (Brown 2008 p. 4). This was troubling for a number of reasons. First, it was a departure from the transparent and democratic nature of previous Brotherhood positions. Furthermore, it represented a major philosophical shift from allowing individuals to interpret religious law for themselves and toward the potential of having a state-imposed religious orthodoxy forced upon the population. The language of the passage was not clear, although it did suggest that this body of scholars might have final say in several legislative realms. Leadership within the organization has suggested that if a final draft would ever be produced, this portion would be omitted (Brown 2010 p. 11)

In response to the crackdown from the government and the blowback from the leaking of the draft, the Brotherhood has begun a slow retreat from the public sphere under new leadership. The recently appointed leader the organization, Muhammad Badi, has a reputation

for engagement through the religious movement more than the political movement (Brown 2010b). Despite Amnesty International's call for the government crackdown against the Muslim Brotherhood to end, the government has recently escalated its crackdown by targeting high-ranking officers of the Brotherhood, a departure from its previous crackdowns (Mayton 2010a). In this context, the Brotherhood's retreat does not bode well for opposition to Mubarak in Egypt. It is widely expected that Hosni Mubarak will have his son, Gamel, succeed him following the end of his term (Demmelhuber p. 119). Some analysis suggests that, besides making a mockery of the democratic rhetoric of the current government, it will also benefit a converging class of business and political elites, who will likely profit from Gamel Mubarak's technocratic inclinations (Demmelhuber p. 119). The creation of a "Mubarak dynasty" in Egypt would represent the continuing erosion of democratic governance within the country.

The enormous role played by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egyptian opposition enhances the importance of any contribution to democratic governance. The two major controversies in the 2007 platform represent a democratic backslide from previous positions. Moderation theory, developed by Robert Michels in a study of European radical socialist parties, can be useful when addressing whether these positions would serve as a serious barrier to democracy in Egypt. Although socialism and Islam are certainly not identical, the holistic nature of the socialist philosophy has certain parallels with the increased role of Islam (represented by the Ulama Council) in the 2007 party platform. Also, like the Brotherhood, the socialist parties studied by Michels were initially outside of electoral politics.

Guines Tezcur specifically relates moderation theory to Islamic opposition

movements in Iran and Turkey, finding that a moderation two of Islamic parties in both states did indeed occur (Tezcur p. 83). Tezcur describes the Islamic parties he focuses on as often having weak democratic credentials in the face of authoritarian regimes, which can certainly be applied to the Muslim Brotherhood (Tezcur p. 71). He also believes that the process of Islamic-based opposition appears to be a natural and organic process, noting that it occurs in the context of both a theocratic government and a relatively secular democracy (Tezcur p. 74). The Islamic opposition movements, according to Tezcur, were a "product of soul searching among younger Islamicists" that led to an abandonment of "utopian goals in favor of pragmatic, pluralistic and moderation discourse" (Tezcur p. 74). The re-entry of the Brotherhood into electoral politics and the role of the younger moderate faction within the group fit the Brotherhood into Tezcur's analysis of Islamic opposition movements.

One major assumption Michels based his study on is that political parties are controlled by elites, who could (and often did) make decisions without input from the party as a whole (Michels, quoted in Tezcur p. 71). A later discussion on the internal structure of the Brotherhood shows that the organization does indeed have a strong centralized hierarchy that has control over the party apparatus, meaning that Michel's assumption does not preclude the Brotherhood from his theory. Michels believes that the pursuit of votes and the organizational structure cause the moderation of political parties within a democracy because elites within the party make rational decisions to shift policies to the center in the pursuit of electoral votes or risk electoral failure (Michels, quoted in Tezcur 71). In fact, the use of an Islamic identity may simply be an instrumental choice by the party to appeal to a broadly defined



identity, as was the case with some Islamic activism in Turkey (Tezcur p. 80). Literature on the radical socialist parties indicates that their involvement in parliamentary politics has brought about moderation (Tezcur p. 73).

Moderation theory can be applied to the Muslim Brotherhood. First, it should be noted that the recent post-1984 moderation process can be seen as consistent with moderation theory. The decision was made by elites within the organization, since there was no external electoral accountability prior to entry in the 1984 elections. Entry into electoral politics, with the Brotherhood's current respect for existing political institutions, is a clear moderation from the philosophy of some of its earlier ideologues, especially that of Qutb. One key element of the moderation process is the abandonment of exclusivist rhetoric (Michels, quoted in Tezcur pp. 71-2). This would be good news for the Coptic Christian minority and women, in regard to a more open field for candidate selection. Indeed, Abdul Moneim Aboul, a jailed moderate leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, seems to confirm this possibility, saying that the provisions against Copts and women serving as president are not final (Mayton 2010a). Also, in describing loyalty to a socialist identity, Michels comments that beliefs do not directly lead to decisions by actors but rather political actors are predisposed to certain beliefs because of their ideology (Michels, quoted in Tezcur p. 73). The Brotherhood's Islamic identity would not prevent a repeal of the position against non-Muslims. Previous ideological shifts have demonstrated that the Brotherhood's Islamic identity has not been a serious barrier to other democratic party platforms.

As such changes take place within the party, "party organization acquires a life of its own at the expense of revolutionary principles" (Michels, quoted in Tezcur p. 71). However,

there needs to exist popular sentiment to continue to drive the Brotherhood away from positions antithetical to democratic governance. World Public Opinion polls demonstrate that this would be the case: a 2008 poll showed that 98% of Egyptians agree that the *will of the people* should be the basis of the authority of the government (emphasis added, WPO 2008). Ninety-seven percent believes that the will of the people should have a greater influence in the government than it already does (WPO 2008). Other polls conducted by World Public Opinion show that 75% of the Egyptian population believes it is important that a country is governed democratically and 67% believes it is important to be able to express unpopular views (WPO 2009). These polls demonstrate that the Egyptian population will continue to enable party leaders to make rational decisions toward an increasingly moderate platform. Recent development seems to confirm this, as it is expected the Brotherhood will defer to existing political institutions instead of creating new ones in any subsequent platforms (Brown 2008 p. 16).

Another crucial causal factor of moderation is the party's lack of resources. Once an electoral strategy has been established, it is often not possible for the party to pursue an alternative strategy (Tezcur p. 76). Changes made by the elite, out of calculated self-interest, become the genuine direction of the party. However, the actions of the state can change or prevent this moderation. The greater the threat from state oppression, "the more cautious and risk adverse reformers are" (Tezcur p. 75). By threatening the group with repression, decision makers within the party will avoid using open and official channels to accomplish their goal. Repression affects the rational decision of the elite within the party because it alters the cost-benefit analysis that elites make in their decision to potentially moderate the party. Ultimately,

repression increases the cost of operating in an official and transparent manner, disincentivizing their use.

Socialist and other Islamic parties are not the only relevant examples when discussing the democratic viability of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India provides another extremely useful comparison. The BJP is a Hindu-nationalist party that rose to prominence in the late 1980s and played an increasingly large role in Indian politics, culminating in the creation of its own government from 1999 to 2004. As the party came to power, its Hindu nationalist stance (which was its defining attribute into the early 1990s) morphed into a more centrist political ideology. This change was a consequence of the democratic structure of the Indian government and the popularity of oppositional rhetoric to the existing political order, in the case of the BJP, the Congress Party.

In the case of the BJP, the popularity of oppositional rhetoric increased support for the party but masked internal cleavages within the party and its voters. During this time in which cleavages are less important, the internal structure of the party empowers an inherited conservative party elite, allowing them to control the rhetoric of the party. The result is that certain elements of the party's rhetoric are not representative of the party's popular support, but those who disagree with the parts of these parts of the party line stay with the party because it offers the best chance to change the political status quo. Once the party achieves a significant degree of popularity in an open political setting, these cleavages become salient and the party must realistically address its support or risk losing it. It is important to recognize that a party having a religious platform does not make it impossible to attract the support of those not interested in its religious message. The BJP, similar to the

Muslim Brotherhood, had significant economic and social reform platforms, tapping into the large segments of the population who felt disempowered or ignored by the Congress or Mubarak governments.

India had initially formed a state based on secular nationalism, although Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, adopted a narrow form of state-sponsored secularism (Jugersmeyer p. 107). Key to this secular nationalism was the protection of religious minority rights, especially the rights of Muslims. The BJP made the claim that this was actually preferential treatment of Muslims, who did not deserve a role in what the BJP believed was India's Hindu civilization. Calling this protection of religious rights "pseudo-secularism," the BJP wanted the state to formally adopt an exclusively Hindu culture as a means to reclaim its previous cultural glory. This was an exclusivist ideology, which defined religious minorities as foreign to Indian culture.

Following India's independence, the state was essentially a one-party democracy, with the Congress party receiving the dominant share of the votes. Despite being basically unchallenged until the rise of the BJP, the Indian state remained a democracy. However, the Congress Party began to change as a second generation of political leaders, those not directly involved in national independence movement, began to assume leadership within the party. This new generation was more concerned with the political end of the Congress Party, which originally had a strong network of social institutions as well as a party apparatus (Varshney 2002 p. 241). This weakened loyalty to the Congress Party among its traditional support groups. The declining state of the Congress Party, which had been the bastion of secular nationalism in the Indian state, created the space that allowed communal political

developments, on which the BJP attempted to capitalize (Varshney 2002 p. 242-3).

It was within this context that the destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya took place. The mosque was built on the site of the alleged birthplace of the Hindu deity Rama and became a focal point of the Hindu nationalist movement in the early 1990s. After a series of demonstrations and unclear government positions, the mosque was destroyed, setting off a round of communal violence. Two organizations, the RSS and VHP, both linked to the BJP, were believed to have had a major role in stirring up the communal tension that led to the riots (Juergensmeyer p. 111). The BJP attempted to capitalize on the renewed salience of a politicized Hindu identity in electoral politics, going as far as releasing its own White Paper on the destruction of the mosque to present an alternative explanation and increasing the Hindu nationalist rhetoric. However, the BJP did not see an increase in its vote share following the destruction of the mosque and was generally humiliated at the elections (Hasan p. 15), an early indication that the success of the BJP was not only the product of Hindu nationalism.

This public failure forced the BJP to “harmonize its ideas with thirst for power” (Hasan p. 15). While maintaining a Hindu nationalist rhetoric, the BJP changed a number of its policies. It offered some policies that are friendly to Muslims under the guise of economic policies (Basu 1996 p. 61-2). Other economic policies have generally been viewed as liberal, especially catering to a rising middle class coming from the information technology sector, a reversal from its previous nationalist economic position (Hasan p. 18, Juergensmeyer p. 114). The BJP has made an effort to appeal to different groups, both at the federal and state level. It reversed its policy of not making coalitions in order to expand its power; in fact,

religion is no longer a major element in BJP coalition building (Hasan p 18, 16, Basu 2000 p. 399). At the state level, the BJP has made a greater effort to appeal to a diverse body of voters, going so far as to alter its message to appeal to different groups (Basu 1996 p.68). The closer the BJP has come to exercising national power, the more moderate it has become (Basu 2000 p. 384)

One major causal factor of the moderation of the BJP is what Ashutosh Varshney calls “the self-correcting mechanisms of Indian democracy” (Varshney 1995 p. 38). Varshney argues that the independence and unpredictability of government institutions, the realities of identity politics in India, and certain voting patterns punish parties for extremist rhetoric and violations of democratic norms. Institutional unpredictability, diversity, and independence have prevented a single party from monopolizing control of government institutions by preventing parties in power from being able to change the norms away from democratic governance (Varshney 1995 p. 40). When parties have challenged the governmental institutions, they have been rebuked, ensuring compliance with the existing democratic norms. Varshney points out that the judiciary branch decided that religious beliefs cannot overtake secular issues (Varshney 1995 p. 40). The BJP bumped up against these institutional barriers as it rose to political prominence and was forced to bring its policies in line with the democratic norms of Indian governance.

The role of identity politics in Indian democracy is twofold. First, the wide variety of cleavages in India means that a party cannot just appeal to a single cleavage group and expect to make serious political gains (Varshney 1995 p. 41). This reality forced the BJP to appeal to different groups and moderate its positions in doing so. The second role played by identity was that the continuing use of Hindu identity by

the BJP in political matters had diluted the meaning of the term (Varshney 1995 p. 39). As more and more people joined the BJP, its definition of what was truly a “Hindu” had to change to accommodate its new members. The result was that the term became watered down and what it meant to be a Hindu in the BJP in 1989 was radically different than what it meant to be a Hindu in the BJP in 1999. This dilution of the conceptions of Hindu identity led several of the more extreme Hindu nationalists to leave the BJP and form their own parties. By expanding its popular base, the BJP destroyed the cohesiveness of the very identity it was trying to preserve. The Hindu identity the BJP was trying to support became less exclusivist and identity politics based on this “Hindu” identity now had to accommodate a diverse body of support or risk losing support.

Politicization of “Hindu” identity with such a communal purpose also fueled “strategic voting,” meaning that people opposed to the BJP voted for the party they believed would have the best chance of defeating the BJP (Varshney 1995 p. 40). In effect, even though the BJP increased its vote share, it did not automatically gain political power because the BJP unified its opposition through its use of Hindu nationalism. The democratic process of the Indian government meant that creating an “in group” as the basis of a political party meant creating a unified opposition of the “out group.”

Similar developments within the Egyptian political system and the Muslim Brotherhood’s own platform suggest that the “self-correcting mechanisms” Varshney pointed out exist, or would exist if the Brotherhood achieved power, in the Egyptian political system. Despite the democratic backslide, the judiciary branch of Egypt has remained largely independent of the executive branch (which also controls the legislative), and has remained the target of Mubarak’s attempt to expand his

power (Phillips p. 21-2). In its initial ten-point opposition plan, the Brotherhood committed itself to maintaining the independence of the judiciary branch as well as creating a more empowered legislative branch through the creation of a parliamentary system (Mecham p. 192). The likely retraction of the creation of an extra-constitutional religious panel would signify a rededication to this liberal position. These institutions would check some of the less democratic positions of the Brotherhood.

The use of an “Islamic” identity is also creating a similar dilution of the politically constructed identity, as well as strategic opposition. Much like some groups that opposed the BJP in India, the Christian Coptic minority has openly advocated that people vote along an anti-Muslim Brotherhood line (Salam 2010). Given the significant percentage of the Copts in the Egyptian population, such mobilization against a specific group would likely have stifling legislative implications if the Brotherhood should be legalized and participate in parliamentary politics with anti-Coptic positions. A later discussion of cleavages within the Muslim Brotherhood will also demonstrate a dilution of a politicized Islamic identity. As the group has expanded, it has deviated from its norm of having a unitary party voice because an increasingly diverse group of people is being brought under the Islamic identity of the Brotherhood.

There are other reasons that suggest a moderation of the Brotherhood would take place if it were to be integrated into a democratic system because, like the BJP, the religious rhetoric of the party is not the cause of, or representative of, the popular support of the party. To understand how the religious rhetoric of a party might not be representative of its mass following, it is necessary to understand the structure of each party. In the case of the BJP, the party is directly linked to the Rashtriya

Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a volunteer organization that advocates an extreme form of Hindu nationalism. The RSS was founded in 1925 by middle-class Hindu nationalists to train young men to resist the appeal of a secular society (Juergensmeyer p 106). The philosophy of the group makes numerous references to a great Hindu past and a desire to restore that past by creating a Hindu nation (Juergensmeyer p. 107). The RSS supplied not only the early party cadres, but also the energy and dedication to get the BJP off the ground (Juergensmeyer 2008 p. 107, Basu 1996 p.64).

With this early control, the RSS turned the BJP into a centralized party, with much of the control lying with the party elite provided to the BJP by the RSS (Basu 1996 p. 60). It also created a situation of dependency, in which the BJP could not break ties with the RSS (Hasan p. 19). From its inception to its rise to prominence, the RSS had a firm grip on the internal mechanisms of the party. As the BJP expanded its support, this internal control would not change to reflect new, more inclusive realities of the party's support. Essentially, the people who came to support the BJP for oppositional reasons inherited a party apparatus that had its roots firmly in Hindu nationalism.

During expansion, the BJP began to move away from its traditional sources of upper caste Hindu nationalists support. Oliver Heath tracks the expansion of the BJP's electoral base, noting that when it first began to rise to prominence in 1989, the BJP was mainly a regional phenomenon, not a nationwide movement (Heath p. 232). The party expanded its support by courting voters in regions adjacent to pre-existing supportive regions, not through a simultaneous expansion of support (Heath p. 233). The regional spread of political support did have a direct role in the moderation of the BJP. It forced the BJP to abandon some of its religious platforms tied to regionalism,

most notably its desire to change the national language to a northern dialect of Hindi and exclude Urdu as an official language. However, as the BJP began to expand, it had to create a more nationally appealing language position and abandon its desire to change the national language. As the BJP began to expand its influence to other regions, it was forced to concede this platform to attract voters from other regions (Basu 2000 p. 386).

As it expanded, the BJP moved away from its traditional support by increasingly courting, a voter bloc known as Other Backward Castes (OBCs) (Heath p. 256). In fact, the OBC made up a group of the fastest-rising party personnel in the mid-1990s (Varshney 1995 p. 40). Eventually, the support from non-traditional locations was greater than support from traditional locations (Heath p. 256). The BJP was filling the space left by Congress as its second and latter generations of political leaders retreated from the social sphere. This validates Amrita Basu's assertion that the "BJP has given voices to sources of frustration and aggression that have little to do with religious faith" (Basu 1996 p. 58). The inability of increased religious rhetoric to attract more voters also suggests that the electoral success was not related to religious platforms, but accompanying platforms. The BJP was able to voice political grievances against the Congress system and capitalize on dissatisfaction with the political status quo (Hasan p. 15, Basu 1996 p. 64). During its rise to power, the BJP was able to consistently win the "anti-establishment" vote (Basu 2000 p. 385).

Thus, this new source of BJP support, which made up the majority of the support, came mainly from non-traditional voters who saw the BJP as a political movement against the Congress Party, not as an attempt to revitalize India as a purely "Hindu" civilization. Since the BJP represented the major viable opposition to

the Congress Party, the religious rhetoric preached by the inherited party elites in control of the party apparatus did not drive away the more politically oriented recent supporters of the BJP. However, once the BJP came to power, the divide between the traditional support and the more moderate recent supporters became salient. The BJP could not alienate these voters or else it would lose power and with it any chance the elites had at passing a religious agenda. The result was that, in accordance with moderation theory, RSS leadership consented to the moderation in exchange for political power (Hasan p. 15).

A similar occurrence is taking place within the Muslim Brotherhood. The cleavage between the conservatives and moderates is becoming increasingly salient, and would have a moderating effect should the Brotherhood participate in elections with the goals of winning them. The moderates, or reformers, draw their leadership from the professional syndicates and its support from the student movements and professional syndicates (Al-Ahram no. 970). As a whole, the group favors a greater emphasis on the electoral aspect of the movement, a separation of the party from the movement, and more internal democracy within the party. Many reformers have voiced a preference for a Turkish-style democracy (Mayton 2010b). The group also favors an active role for the group in Egyptian society (Madbouli 2010). Although the moderates tend to be younger than the conservatives, their leaders have still been in the movement since the 1970s (Al-Ahram no. 970). The reformers tend to have a more grassroots nature to their support and activism, having especially embraced the internet, party because the conservatives have a much stronger grip on the official channels of the party (Al-Ahram no. 970, Ursala 2009).

Key to understanding the conservative faction within the party is the fact that the faction does not automatically support religion over democracy (Madbouli 2010). The group does indeed want to put a greater emphasis on strengthening the ideological outreach of the group (Madbouli 2010). However, there is also a strong organizational component, with the conservatives favoring pre-existing and expedient organizational structure, even though they do not always favor internal democracy (Rashwan). This is not just a way of preserving their own power within the party, but also seen as a way of protecting the party itself. Leaders of the conservative faction moved through the ranks of the Brotherhood in the 1950s, in the context of the crackdowns by the British and eventually Nasser (Ursala). The fact that the quick, and somewhat secretive, organizational structure has helped and continues to help the Brotherhood survive new crackdowns by the government is recognized by the conservatives within the party.

The divide between the moderates and conservatives is becoming increasingly more apparent. In response to the 2007 platform, visible differences began to emerge between the two camps (Brown 2008 p. 6). Many reformers claimed the draft was not circulated among all party members and, thus, was not a product of the entire organization (Brown 2008 pp. 7-8). More recently, the election of a new Supreme Guide of the Brotherhood revealed the split between the two groups (Al-Ahram nos. 969, 983). While a compromise was used to select a new leader, many still felt it left out many of the moderates, who are disenfranchised by the current party structure (Rashwan). The result was that Mohammed Baidi, a conservative with a history in the ideological outreach of the Brotherhood, was chosen as the next (and current) Supreme Guide (Brown 2010, Al Ahram no. 983).

The internal structure of the Brotherhood empowers the conservative faction, mainly through seniority. While this does reward loyalty to the movement and promote the survival of the organization, it also means that the leadership of the Brotherhood has not changed to reflect its massive increase in popularity following the entry into politics, similar to the BJP. The Guidance or Shura Council, which formulates group policy and elects the Supreme Guide (head executive), is unelected (Phillips p. 12; Rashwan). The result is that this council is now controlled by the first-generation conservative faction and the party apparatus represent the ideological values of the conservatives, partly as a tactic to maintain its unique status among the Egyptian opposition groups (Brown 2008 p. 17). Unlike the BJP elite prior to electoral success, the elite within the Brotherhood have presented a more moderate stance. They have offered a progressive combination of democracy and Islam that looks toward the future as a source of inspiration, unlike the primordial view of Indian civilization initially offered by the BJP. While it is not always clear whether the Brotherhood's leadership sees Islam or democracy as its first priority, it is important to remember that the voice of the party is not always representative of the popular support, and those who control the voice of the party have a history of moderating their stances.

The change in popular support of the Brotherhood is a product of recent events, especially the offering of a democratic alternative to the current government and an increased role of the Brotherhood in the public sphere, while the leadership is a product of seniority. The makeup of party support has dramatically changed without corresponding changes in the party leadership. Like the BJP, the Brotherhood offers an alternative to the status quo that appeals to the self-interest of the

voters. The rise in popularity of both groups is not tied to its religious rhetoric, which has been a constant, but the ability of the party to offer a coherent and appealing alternative to the political status quo. Any retraction of the democratic platform, which is the basis of this alternative, would cost the Brotherhood dearly in public support. The Muslim Brotherhood has had an Islamic identity since its creation, but it is only through the addition of peaceful and democratic activism in opposition to Mubarak that the group has emerged as the only viable opposition party to Mubarak. Through participation in elections, the leadership of the party would have to confront this reality and realistically address its support or lose it.

The moderate faction has its roots in the more populist (and popular) elements of the Brotherhood. Many of the moderates started in student movements in the 1970s and became leaders of the professional syndicates (Phillips p. 14). The syndicates have served as a source of the Brotherhood's popularity because they serve as a means of distributing social services and demonstrate the administrative qualities of the Brotherhood that have made them exceptionally popular political candidates. Through its control of the medical syndicate, the Brotherhood is able to offer doctors better salaries than the government, run 22 hospitals, and have schools in every administrative district (Harrigan p. 104). These social services have expanded the popularity of the Brotherhood tremendously (Harrigan p. 104). The moderate factions of the Muslim Brotherhood are the group that has been the public face of the organization on the street and administrative backbone of the Brotherhood during its most recent rise to popularity starting toward the end of the 1980s. This method of expanding electoral support has branched the Brotherhood out toward non-traditional sources of support

through non-religious means, much like the BJP.

Demonstrating the electoral viability of the moderates is the electoral branch of the Brotherhood, in which the younger generation is extremely active (Mecham p. 103). The leader of the electoral branch is a moderate who has openly voiced his desire for a separation of the party from the broader religious movement (Brown 2008 p. 8). The success of this moderate branch in the 2005 elections demonstrates the support the moderates have from the Egyptian population. The role of the Brotherhood as the most successful political opposition to Mubarak means that casting a vote for the Brotherhood is also a rejection of the current status quo. Voting for a Muslim Brotherhood candidate does not automatically indicate support for the party elite. Similar to the BJP, the Brotherhood has expanded into non-traditional sources of support, partially by presenting themselves as the only alternative to the status quo. As the government continually deviates from its democratic rhetoric, the role of the Brotherhood as an opposition group becomes increasingly important. Displeasure with the current government in Egypt creates a legitimate reason to vote for the Brotherhood.

These similarities to the BJP suggest that the Brotherhood's most recent return to popularity is dependent on their ability to voice an *attractive alternative* to Mubarak. Their ability to do so thus far has kept the party intact, despite the emerging visibility of cleavages. If legalized, electoral politics will force the Brotherhood to address internal cleavages and make meaningful concessions to its numerous moderate supporters or risk losing their support. The very democratic reforms advocated by the Brotherhood and the source of its recent surge in popularity will politically isolate them unless they embrace the reforms.

Religious parties are not solely defined by their religious platforms. While a religious identity may appeal to some as a source of political authority, these parties often offer social, economic and political platforms that can attract support for entirely non-religious reasons. With the BJP and Muslim Brotherhood, respect for democratic institutions is a key element of both parties' political policies. In the case of the BJP, the already existing strength of Indian democratic institutions never made destruction of liberal institutions an option. The rhetoric of the Muslim Brotherhood for the respect of, and desire to create, democratic institutions is both an encouraging sign and a key element to its popularity. Political parties that do not practice a respect for democratic institutions will not consensually contribute to democratic governance in a positive manner, whether religious in nature or not, but to condemn a democratic party based on its belief in the role of religion is, in itself, an undemocratic practice.

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