

FROM AL-DA'WA TO AL-HIZBIYYA:
MAINSTREAM ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN EGYPT,
JORDAN AND PALESTINE IN THE 1990s

by
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The optimism of the 1980s about the prospects of integrating the moderate Islamic movement in the process of democratization has been undermined by the growing repressive political climate of the 1990s. The existing autocratic regimes proved to be as resilient and tenacious as their radical Islamic opponents. Although the acceptance of democracy by the moderate Islamic movements is the ideal, their participation in elections in a repressive environment entails severe risks, leading in extreme cases to the loss of credibility and marginalization. In this paper past strategies of the moderate Islamic movements in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine are compared. Taking part in elections is regarded as just one option, which has not always been the optimal one. Also the internal structure of the moderate Islamic movement is looked into for its democratic potential.

Introduction

During the 1980s many experts on the Islamic movements in the Middle East were cautiously optimistic about the possibilities of integration of the Islamic movement into the body politic. The acute economic crises and the ensuing restructuring programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank forced the state to loosen its grip over the economy and society. As a result, the private economy expanded and the stranglehold of the bureaucracy loosened. In this atmosphere political parties were allowed to operate, relatively free parliamentary elections were held, and civil liberties were increasingly respected. This process of economic liberalization and political democratization provided new opportunities for the Islamic movement. Eventually, it was hoped, the Islamic movement would gain its legitimate

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place in the new balance of political forces. While its more radical wings would be trimmed, its moderate current would be included into the parliamentary system, a political process called "integration",¹ "institutionalization",² "normalization",³ or "incorporation".⁴

Positive evaluations of the first signs of the retreat of the state were complemented by changes in political ideology of the moderate Islamic movement. Whereas in the 1940s the Muslim Brotherhood in its classical form as an organisation was geared to spreading the call, *da'wa*, condemned party politics and the multi-party system as *hizbiyya*, in the 1980s it accepted the parliamentary system and elections as a legitimate means of gaining power and establishing a position in society. By distancing itself explicitly from the radical Islamic movement, the leadership tried to dispel any lingering suspicions about its own past to establish an Islamic state by violent means.

The democratic shift in the Islamic movement was reflected in new, appropriate theoretical constructions. According to Gudrun Krämer, the core of contemporary Muslim political thought is to check and limit arbitrary personal rule and replace it with the rule of law,⁵ while John Voll and John Esposito take attempts seriously by modern Islamist thinkers "to establish authentically Islamic democratic systems." In these attempts *tawhid*, unity of God, is given the meaning of the equality of man before God; *khalifa* has been interpreted as man's viceregency of God on earth, enhancing individual responsibility and equality; while *shura*, consultation, is regarded as upholding the mutuality and equality between persons in giving each other advice, rather than the ruler asking the ruled for advice, as is the case in the traditional interpretation of the concept.⁶

¹ Gudrun Krämer, "The Integration of the Integrists: A Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia." In *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, ed. Ghassan Salamé, London, 1994 : 200-226.

² Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Egypt's Islamic Activism in the 1980s," *Third World Quarterly* 10 (1988) 2 : 647

³ Gehad Auda, "The 'Normalization' of the Islamic Movement in Egypt from the 1970s to the Early 1990s," eds. Martin E Marty and R. Scott Appleby *The Fundamentalism Project. Accounting for Fundamentals. The Dynamic Character of Movements*, Chicago, 1994 : 375.

⁴ Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "Islamic Mobilization and Political Change: The Islamist Trend in Egypt's Professional Associations," In: *Political Islam. Essays from Middle East Report*, eds. Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, Berkeley, 1997 : 131.

⁵ Gudrun Krämer, "Islamist Notions of Democracy," *MERIP* 183 (July/August 1993) 4 : 2-8

⁶ John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (1996) : 25-27. Compare with Gehad Auda who states that "[T]his older view was based on disdain for politics, seeing the state in the light of a simple and direct relationship between the ruled,

Despite these optimistic views, skepticism among scholars about the prospects of a democratic transition has not been not dispelled. On the level of power politics, few experts regard liberalization, let alone democratization, an easy or an inevitable process. Most argue that the ruling elite will only implement cosmetic changes and will not lead their countries to democracy.⁷

Nor has the ideological embracement of democracy by the Islamic movement convinced everyone. Referring to the hierarchical organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood critics doubt the sincerity of the commitment of the Islamic movement to democracy. Those skeptics who lay stress on 'the spirit of tolerance' as a precondition for democracy see no signs of promise in the dominant position the Islamic movement has acquired in civil society. Rather than an indication of its vitality, they regard it as the end of a long tradition of tolerance in the last safe havens in Egyptian society.⁸

In the following pages I will adhere to the less optimistic current in interpreting the chances of democracy. It is true that in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine there were reasons for optimism in the 1980s and even in the 1990s. Everywhere civil society was becoming stronger and the state was forced to draw up a social contract with the political opposition. In Egypt and Jordan the Muslim Brotherhood even participated in parliamentary elections, and in Palestine Hamas showed itself at times willing to take part in the elections for the first Palestinian parliament in January 1996. In all these cases democratization seemed a first step towards integration of the Islamic movement.

This trend was, however, reversed. At the time of writing the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood finds the leaders of its third generation in jail, its political alliance threatened and its party headquarters closed down. In Jordan the opposition of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) is rendered ineffectual in parliament, while in Palestine bomb attacks in February and March 1996 ended attempts to integrate the Islamic movement into the emerging Palestinian political structure.

In hindsight the optimism of the 1980s was overblown. Not only was the state less in retreat at the time than most observers believed and was the radical violent Islamic movement more tenacious than expected, also

neglecting the differences among Muslims or between Muslims and Copts, and locating political power in the hands of the ruler." Gehad Auda (1994) : 386.

⁷ Gudrun Krämer (1994) : 202.

⁸ Mustapha Kamil al-Sayyid, "A Civil Society in Egypt?" In: *Civil Society in the Middle East*, ed. A.R. Norton. (1995) : 276-282

the transition within the moderate Islamic wing from spreading the Islamic call (*da'wa*) by peaceful means to the acceptance of the multi-party system and democratic elections as a way of establishing an Islamic society (*hizbiyya*) was not a successful one.

It is especially the transition from *da'wa* to *hizbiyya* within the adverse political environment of the 1990s that is problematic. This paper assumes that a clear and real transition from the one to the other would be an important step towards democracy in the Middle East. It implies that the Islamic system or state could be installed by democratic means. The unconditional acceptance of *hizbiyya* means that the moderate Islamic movement accepts a multi-party system, abides by the outcome of parliamentary elections and is convinced of the necessity of political compromise. It also implies a rejection of its totalitarian claims that Islam provides a solution to all secular problems. The practical outcome would be that politics would become more pragmatic and less ideological.

However, one of the problems has been that this transition has always been ambivalent - and with reason. Activities geared to spreading the Islamic call - a gradual transition of the morals of Muslims through religious education - offers moderates the shelter of institutions as charitable societies when the state lashes out. It leaves room for Islamising society while gaining power indirectly through infiltration of sections of society. Moreover, an ambivalent attitude towards *hizbiyya* leaves more room for stressing Islamic moral purity, one of the main attractions of the Islamic movement. In the repressive political circumstances of the Middle East retention of this ambivalence is not at all irrational. On the other hand, it keeps politics in a state of immaturity.

The main argument of this paper is that while a clear acceptance of *hizbiyya* is an ideal, participation in the process of democratization/integration is an option in the strategy of the Islamic movement that does not necessarily work to its advantage. In Egypt, Jordan and Palestine the Muslim Brotherhood was in a continuous dilemma whether to choose for political participation, adopt *hizbiyya* and expose itself, or continue on the much safer path of *da'wa*. The paper will argue that *hizbiyya* provides opportunities as well as severe drawbacks. In the most optimistic scenario it offers the moderate Islamic movement the chance to capture a parliamentary majority and seize or share power - temporarily; in the worst case scenario it can lead to self-exposure and provoke the retaliation of the state. But *hizbiyya* also poses other pitfalls. It can lead to cooptation and encapsulation, the smothering and watering down of the programme of the movement, which is the main purpose of 'democratization' process as far as the ruling elite and the West is concerned. In all three countries different strategies led to different

results.

The paper will also consider the internal democratic structures of the moderate Islamic movement, as the final proof of *hizbiyya*. In all three cases democratic structures hardly existed. In Egypt the establishment of Hizb al-Wasat, in Jordan the existence of independent Islamists and in Hamas the continuous clash between 'moderates' and 'hardliners' shows that democracy is an issue, but that it has not been implemented internally.

EGYPT: FAILURE OF INTEGRATION

Integration

The present crisis between the state and the Brotherhood, as well the crisis within the Brotherhood itself, began during the 1970s when the Brotherhood embarked on its policy of integration. In this period it coopted a new generation into its ranks, thereby incorporating different cultural and generational approaches to the way the Islamic movement should proceed to establish an Islamic society.

The Muslim Brotherhood took a new lease on its life after its leaders were released from prison at the beginning of the 1970s. Umar Tilmisani, who had been appointed general guide (*murshid 'amm*) in 1973, set out on a new path of cooperation with the state. Both had a common enemy in the left and had the same goal of controlling the radical Islamic movement.⁹ The Brotherhood also received state support in negotiating with the radical Islamic movements, as was the case during the Zawiyya al-Hamra riots in Cairo between Copts and Muslims in the summer of 1981, prior to Sadat's assassination.¹⁰

Despite these close relations with the authorities, the Brotherhood was careful to pursue an independent policy. It criticised Sadat for deviating from the Islamic path by going to Jerusalem in 1977. Due to Sadat's idiosyncratic policies, tensions with the Brotherhood rose, even to the extent that during the September 1981 crackdown on the opposition the whole leadership of the Brotherhood was arrested.¹¹

⁹Gehad Auda, (1994) : 385

¹⁰Hamied Ansari, "Sectarian Conflict in Egypt and Political Expediency of Religion," *Middle East Journal* 38 (Summer 1994) : 413

¹¹Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Egypt's Islamic Activism in the 1980s," *Third World Quarterly*

Under Mubarak relations with the Brotherhood were normalised again and a *modus vivendi* was reached. According to this agreement, the latter would reject violence, abide by the law, respect the state's need for political and social stability, and support the government against the radical Islamic movement.¹² In return, the Brotherhood could pursue its policy of Islamising society.¹³ The Brotherhood was, however, not officially legalized. Nor did it acquire the right to establish a party or take part in parliamentary elections, because it was regarded as an organisation based on religion, and politics and religion could not officially be mixed.¹⁴

The only means the Brotherhood could pursue its policy of *hizbiyya* was through coalitions with recognised parties. The implementation of the new policy of the Brotherhood began when it formed a coalition with the New Wafd Party for the elections of 1984. The coalition won 58 seats of the 390 seats of parliament, 12 of them occupied by members of the Brotherhood. The Islamic Alliance (al-Tahaluf al-Islami), which the Brotherhood formed with the Labour and the Liberal Parties for the 1987 elections, won in total 65 of 450 seats, 35 of them for the Muslim Brotherhood. As a result, the Brotherhood became the major oppositional faction.

The adoption by the Brotherhood of *hizbiyya* was not a smooth process. Tensions between members of the older generation led to the banishment of Salih Abu Ruqaiq, and were compounded by more serious frictions between the older and younger generations. On this particular issue the older generations stood opposed to the younger generation, which saw *hizbiyya* as a means of reorganizing the Brotherhood and modernising its ideology. The younger generation believed that *hizbiyya* should not only be a tactical move to acquire power, but should be a long term strategy. In the 1970s most of the leaders of the younger generation had been active in the Jama'at al-Islamiyya at the universities. One of its most prominent spokesmen, Isam al-Aryan, had been *amir al-'amm* of the Islamic student movement.¹⁵ When Tilmasani died in May 1986 and Muhammad Abu al-Nasr was appointed his successor, Isam al-Aryan gained a seat in the Maktab al-Irshad, the highest advisory body within

10 (1988) 2 : 645.

12 Gehad Auda (1994) : 388.

13 See for a full discussion of the shift to democratic themes in the political thought of the Muslim Brotherhood, Martin Forstner "Auf dem legalen Weg zur Macht? Zur politischen Entwicklung der Muslimbruderschaft Ägyptens," *Orient* 19 (1988) 3 : 402-407.

14 Olaf Farschid, "Hizbiya: Die Neuorientierung der Muslimbruderschaft Ägyptens in den Jahren 1984 bis 1989," *Orient* 30 (1989) 1 : 57

15 Hamied Ansari, (Summer 1994) : 412.

the Brotherhood.¹⁶

It was during this time that the younger generation also started to make inroads into Egypt's associational life.¹⁷ Especially the elite associations of the free professions were their focus of attention. Younger Brotherhood members won 7 of the 25 seats in the elections of the executive board of the Medical Association when they took part in them for the first time in 1984, while in 1990 they already gained the majority of 20 seats. Even more spectacular, they won 45 of the 61 seats on the executive board of the Engineer's Association during their first elections in 1987.¹⁸ Isam al-'Aryan, who in the 1980s became vice-president of the Egyptian Medical Doctors' Association, embodied the success of the new policy of the Brotherhood. Through the associations and civil society the younger generation hoped to build their own power base from which to acquire power in parliament, and pursue the policy of *hizbiyya*, once the road for political participation was free.

Uprooting the Brotherhood

In hindsight the elections of 1987 marked the turning point in the relationship with the state. The Muslim Brotherhood had clearly overreached itself. Besides winning a substantial number of seats in parliament and making inroads in the professional organisations, the Muslim Brotherhood antagonised the state by turning the Labour Party into an Islamic party. Relations deteriorated further on account of its support for Saddam Hussein during the second Gulf War.¹⁹ In retaliation, the Ministry of the Interior began to harass members of the Brotherhood, especially the younger generation, which constituted the future of the moderate Islamic movement in Egypt and formed its most active and vigorous section.²⁰

The background of the abrogation of the tacit agreement was provided by an all out war of the state against the radical Islamic movement in 1992 and the failure of the policy of coopting the moderate Islamic movement as a means of taking the wind out of the sails of the radical movement.²¹ In the following years 1,500 people died in clashes between

¹⁶ "The Muslim Brotherhood is facing its worst internal crisis," *al-Wasat*, No. 251, 18-11-1996 : 22.

¹⁷ Moheb Zaki, *Civil Society & Democratization in Egypt, 1981-1994*, Cairo, 1994 : 43-45.

¹⁸ Carrie Rosefsky Wickham (1997) : 122-130.

¹⁹ Gehad Auda, "An Uncertain Response: The Islamic Movement in Egypt," In *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis*. ed. James Piscatori, Chicago, 1991 : 122.

²⁰ Olaf Farschid (1989) : 65

²¹ "Striking at the Islamists," *Middle East International*, 20 November 1992

the radical Islamic movement and state security forces, while thousands of members of the Islamic movement were detained in camps. In this repressive climate the Brotherhood's victory in the elections of the national Bar Association on 14 September 1992 formed a direct provocation to the state.²² The demonstration, which the National Bar Association organised on 17 May 1994 in protest against the death in police custody of the Islamist lawyer Abd al-Harith Madani, provided the last straw.²³

The year 1995 marked the collapse of the relations between the Brotherhood and the government. A new, more vigorous minister of Interior, Hasan al-Alfi, pursued a new policy of persecuting the Brotherhood and cutting its relations from society and politics. Uprooting the Brotherhood from its societal and political base was done by three methods, which constituted a frontal attack on the line of *hizbiyya* of the Brotherhood.

The first method consisted of preventing the Brotherhood from taking part in the parliamentary elections of November 1995. The campaign against the Brotherhood started in January 1995 when 28 of its members were arrested, among whom Isam al-Aryan.²⁴ Although nothing substantial was found to warrant their arrest, their custody was prolonged during the following months until they were brought before a military court in September.²⁵ In July another 228 members of the Brotherhood were arrested, among whom were five previous members of parliament who intended to run for the next elections, as well as fourteen new candidates.²⁶ Finally in October, one day before the official

²² "Fundamentalist gains," *Middle East International*, 25 September 1992.

²³ "'The Brotherhood' nominates prisoners as candidates for the elections. The prisons enter the electoral competition," *al-Wasat*, No. 183, 31 July 1995 : 14-15. According to *al-Wasat* Abd al-Harith Madani was the legal expert of the leader of the military wing of the al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya.

²⁴ Although the charges against Isam al-Aryan were probably trumped up, there are indications that he must have had close relations with more radical groups. According to Hamied Ansari, Isam al-Aryan was born in the village called Nahia in Imbaba district in Giza. Also Colonel Abbud al-Zumur, the top-ranking member of the Jihad organisation, who stood trial for the assassination of President Sadat, came from this village. Al-Aryan was married to the sister of one of the accused in the attack on the Military Technical College in 1974. In addition, he had played a mediating role in the Zawiyah al-Hamra riots in summer 1981. The riots there led to the assassination of President Sadat during the following October. However, Ansari notes that al-Aryan at least at that time, rejected the concept of *takfir*. See Hamied Ansari, (1994) : 408-417.

²⁵ "Setback for the Islamic coalition or the destruction of the bridges for the Brotherhood?" *al-Hayat*, 19 October 1995.

²⁶ "'The Brotherhood' nominates prisoners as candidates for the elections. The prisons enter the electoral competition," *al-Wasat*, No. 183, 31 July 1995.

announcement of the Brotherhood's candidates for the elections, another fifteen of its members were arrested, including Mun'im Abd al-Futuh, vice-president of the Arab Medical Doctor's Association.²⁷

By charging the arrested with "being members of an illegal organisation which aims to overthrow the system by force and disturb the social peace," the government played on the lingering fears among the public of the Brotherhood's "terrorist" past. Intimidatingly, Minister of Interior, Hasan al-Alfi, said in an interview that "the Muslim Brotherhood could expect to be outlawed and that its existence was illegal."²⁸ Despite the grave charges, the mild convictions ranging from three to five years imprisonment that were handed down a few days before the elections confirmed the political purpose of the trials. In total 87 of the national and local leaders of the Brotherhood were sentenced to terms in prison in 1996. Most of them belonged to the younger generation.²⁹

The second method of cutting the Brotherhood down to size, consisted of severing its relations with legal political parties. The state concentrated firstly on the Islamic Alliance (al-Tahaluf al-Islami), which the Brotherhood had established with the Labour and the Liberal Parties. At the end of 1994 the government organized a National Dialogue to rein in the Labour Party. The attempt failed to split the Labour Party internally, however. The faction in favor of cooperation with the Brotherhood, consisting of the brothers Adil Husain (secretary-general) and Magdi Husain, (editor-in-chief of the party newspaper, *al-Sha'b*), and their brother-in-law Hilmi Murad (vice-president of the Party), won the contest with the leader of the party Ibrahim Shukri.³⁰

During the following phase of repression the Labour Party consistently supported the Brotherhood. Even though it published a ten point programme which differed entirely from the programme "Islam is the Solution" with which it had entered the elections with the Brotherhood in 1987, it remained faithful to the Islamic Alliance.³¹ During the elections both political organisations coordinated their

²⁷ "Brotherhood revises its list of candidates for Egyptian parliament," *al-Hayat*, 11 October 1995.

²⁸ Interview with Hasan al-Alfi, *al-Hayat*, 28 August 1995.

²⁹ "Extension of custody of leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood after having given their case to the military tribunal," *al-Hayat*, 13 May 1996.

³⁰ Wahid Abd al-Majid, "Why did the Islamic Alliance persist in the face of numerous changes which could have led to a split?" *al-Hayat*, 30 October 1995; "Three currents compete for control over Labour Party on the eve of the elections," *al-Hayat*, 25 November 1995.

³¹ "Signs pointing to split in the Islamic Alliance," *al-Hayat*, 5 October 1995.

candidates with each other.³² Even after the disastrous election results, in which the Muslim Brotherhood won only one seat - by accident - and the Labour Party none, the Labour party declared it would continue the Islamic Alliance.³³ Only the much smaller and insignificant Liberal Party abandoned the Alliance.

The reactions of the other political parties were mixed. Whereas the left-wing Tagammu' Party leader Muhyi al-Din declared that, "we do not believe that the Brethren have become democrats. They use democracy to gain power; once they have it, they will kill us one by one,"³⁴ it was obvious that a wide political spectrum was against the repression of the Brotherhood. Among the defense attorneys were Diya al-Din Dawud, a Nasserist leader, Nu'man Jum'a, the vice-president of the Wafd and Nabil al-Hilali, a leftist who in principle defends Islamists.³⁵

The third method the state used to crush the Brotherhood was to isolate it from elite sections of civil society which it had penetrated during the previous years. Already in March 1993, the government had issued a law which set a quorum of fifty percent for syndicate elections. This measure was meant to activate the opposition against the Brotherhood in the associations.³⁶ However, in its campaign against the Brotherhood the government believed that things were not moving fast enough. Therefore, in February the Engineer's Association was put under police custody on the charge of embezzlement of funds and maladministration. In April 1995 its administration was seized and its central office closed down.³⁷ In his Labor Day speech Mubarak ominously warned against using associations for political purposes while neglecting the duties these organisations were supposed to fulfill for their members.³⁸ After the elections the intimidation campaign continued. In January 1996 the Bar Association was taken on by the state.³⁹

³² Interview with Ibrahim Shukri in *al-Hayat*, 21 November 1995.

³³ "Islamic Coalition prepares itself for the elections of the year 2000," *al-Hayat*, 12 December 1995.

³⁴ Interview with Khalid Muhyi al-Din: "When the Brethren gain power, they will kill us," *al-Hayat*, 25 May 1996.

³⁵ "The Brethren before the military court: attack is better than defense," *al-Wasat*, No. 191, 25 September 1995 : 22.

³⁶ Moheb Zaki, (1994) : 49.

³⁷ "Brethren arrested by orders of the public prosecutor," *al-Hayat*, 17 April 1995.

³⁸ "Mubarak attacks the Muslim Brotherhood and warns against their power over the professional syndicates," *al-Hayat*, 1 May 1995.

³⁹ Interview with the president of the Bar Association: "Monopoly of the Brethren reason for crisis of the Bar Association," *al-Hayat*, 2 February 1996.

Islamic democracy: the case of Hizb al-Wasat

Despite the repression, a request for recognition of a new party, called Hizb al-Wasat, was sent to the Committee for Political Parties (Lajnat Shu'un al-Ahzab) on 10 January 1996. In itself the request for recognition was not exceptional. Since 1986 several requests have been made by the Brotherhood for recognition as an Islamic Party, called either Hizb al-Shura, Hizb al-Islah or Hizb al-Amal, all of which had been rejected. New, however, was that the current founders belonged to the younger generation of the Brotherhood.

From statements made by the founders it was apparent that a revolt of the '*shabab*' (youth) against the '*shuyukh*' (the elders) had broken out. This was confirmed by the social and occupational background of the leaders of the new party. Its leader, Abu al-Ala Madi, was vice-president of the Engineer's Association. The other three founders, were Isam Sultan, a lawyer who had been chosen as president of the Student Union of the Cairo University in 1986,⁴⁰ Sallah Abd al-Maqsud a journalist, and Isam Hashish, an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Engineering.⁴¹ In a statement Abu al-Ala Madi said that "the youth of our society wants to express itself."⁴²

The generation gap expressed itself in a break with the traditions of the Brotherhood. From statements made by Abu al-Ala Madi it was clear that the younger generation regarded itself as the main victim of the mistakes made by the Brotherhood.⁴³ By adhering to democratic principles and taking the final step of becoming an independent political party the younger generation hoped to continue to play the political role which it had been playing since it had taken over the elite professional associations. Democratic structures would also replace the strict discipline of "listening and obeying" (*al-sama'a wa al-ta'a*) by which the '*shuyukh*' in the Brotherhood had prevented the '*shabab*' from taking their rightful place.⁴⁴

Ideologically, the party also represented a shift to a modern political party. It adopted ideas which had been formulated in the 1980s by thinkers as Tariq al-Bishri.⁴⁵ The vagueness of the concept of the *turath*,

⁴⁰ See for information on Isam Sultan: "Crisis deepens between Hizb al-Wasat and the Brethren," *al-Hayat*, 5 June 1996.

⁴¹ Information on Isam Hashish: "Military tribunal begins shortly to investigate the Brotherhood case," *al-Hayat*, 24 May 1996.

⁴² "A new split in the Brotherhood," *al-Wasat*, No. 208, 22 January 1996: 10-12.

⁴³ "The Muslim Brotherhood is facing its worst internal crisis," *al-Wasat*, No. 251, 18 November 1996: 22.

⁴⁴ "A new split in the Brotherhood," *al-Wasat*, No. 208, 22 January 1996: 11.

⁴⁵ See Roel Meijer, "Authenticity in History. The Concepts al-Wafid and al-Mawrith in

the Islamic heritage, on which the ideology of the party was based paved the way for a new start. Also the fact that a Copt, Rafiq Habib, son of the head of the Evangelical Church in Egypt, could play an important part in the party and in the formulation of its ideology was a sign of change. Rafiq Habib stated that the party was founded to fulfil a "cultural project" (*al-mashru' al-hadari*). This cultural project, according to Rafiq Habib, means to protect the Islamic Arabic civilization against the onslaught of Western civilization.⁴⁶

The ideological inclusiveness of the Hizb al-Wasat positioned the party in the middle of the Egyptian political spectrum. Its programme clearly reflected the middle class background of the younger generation active in professional syndicates, stressing, for instance, the equality between men and women, and accepting the right of women to hold leading positions in society. In addition, the party held that freedom of expression should apply to all political currents.⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, the new party looked for inspiration to the Christian Democratic Parties in Europe. Above all, it rejected terrorism and the idea on which terrorism was based, namely "self-righteous absolutism".⁴⁸

However, neither the state nor the old leadership of the Brotherhood were impressed by the new party. On 3 April the state arrested three leaders of Hizb al-Wasat, together with twelve members of the Brotherhood who did not have relations with the new party.⁴⁹ It charged the two leaders of Hizb al-Wasat with "trying to revive a secret organisation which tries to overthrow the government by force".⁵⁰ On 12

Tāriq al-Bishrī's Reinterpretation of Modern Egyptian History," ed. Manfred Woidich. *Amsterdam Middle East Studies*, Wiesbaden, 1990 : 68-83.

⁴⁶ Interview with Rafiq Habib "A Christian who takes part in the Muslim Brotherhood," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 17 May 1996.

⁴⁷ Interview with Abu al-'Ala Madi: "We are not a party of the Muslim Brotherhood, but our slogan is 'Islam is the solution,'" *al-Wasat*, No. 208, 22 January 1996 : 13

⁴⁸ Salim Azuzi, "Another view on the crisis of political parties and political forces in Egypt," *al-Hayat*, 31 May 1996.

⁴⁹ The three leaders were Abu al-'Ala Madi, Magdi Hashish, and Magdi al-Faruq. See "Expected refusal for legalisation of Hizb al-Wasat," *al-Hayat*, 10 May 1996. That the state was trying to discourage the leadership of the Brotherhood is clear from the high positions the arrested held in society. They were a director of the Islamic Center in Munich, an assistant professor at the Faculty of Engineering, a former member of parliament, an assistant professor of history at the Azhar University, a high employee of the Ministry of Education, two professors of the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Cairo, an employee at the Faculty of Economics and Political Science at Cairo University, the head of an Islamic Center in Bani Suwayf, a doctor at a hospital in Samnūd, and two businessmen. See for further details "Egypt: The military tribunal will begin shortly to investigate the case of the Brotherhood" *al-Hayat*, 24 May 1996.

⁵⁰ "The Muslim Brotherhood denies any relations with Hizb al-Wasat," *al-Hayat*, 11 April 1996. In addition they were accused of (1) founding an illegal political

May, by the time the request for legalisation was to be dealt with by the Committee for Political Parties, the accused were handed over by presidential decree to a military tribunal, as had happened with Isam al-Aryan and Abd al-Mun'im Abd al-Futuh previously.⁵¹ Under these adverse circumstances the Committee for Political Parties rejected the application form of the new party on 13 May.

If the leadership of the new party had accepted this defeat, the case of Hizb al-Wasat would have ended there and the conflict with the Brotherhood would have been papered over. But as the leaders of the new party took up their case before the Tribunal of Parties (Mahkamat al-Ahزاب) the hidden conflict with the Brotherhood was exposed. In its countermove the Brotherhood demanded from those members of the society who had signed the official mandate for recognition (*tawkil*) to withdraw their mandate on penalty of eviction.⁵² The leadership of the Brotherhood felt threatened by the new party, which if it did acquire legal status could have led to an exodus of the younger generation.⁵³ Also it could be a tool in the hands of the government to sow dissension within the moderate Islamic movement.

In response to the threat of the old guard, only 20 members of 74 members of the Brotherhood who had given their support withdrew their signature, leaving only a small margin for the legalisation the party - fifty being the legal minimum for starting the procedure.⁵⁴ When this became known it immediately caused a scandal. The older members of Maktab al-Irshad, who were not involved in the decision, accused Ma'mun al-Hudaibi and Mustafa Mashhur, the acting leaders of the Brotherhood, of taking unilateral action.⁵⁵ The younger members, who were in Tura prison, like Isam al-Aryan, went further, warning the leadership that they did not feel bound by the decisions made regarding Hizb al-Wasat. At the same time they demanded a larger degree of internal democracy.⁵⁶ The

organisation, (2) spreading literature which leads to the establishment of that organisation (3) belonging to an illegal organisation (4) belonging to a secret society (the Muslim Brotherhood), which calls for the abolition of the constitution. See *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 19 April 1996

⁵¹ "The case of the twelve members of the 'Brotherhood' ordered by presidential decree to be brought before military tribunal," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 13 May 1996.

⁵² "The Muslim Brotherhood intends to expel founders of Hizb al-Wasat," *al-Hayat*, 29 May 1996.

⁵³ "The Muslim Brotherhood is facing its worst internal crisis," *al-Wasat*, No. 251, 18 November 1996: 24.

⁵⁴ "Mustafa Mashhur: Hizb al-Wasat is a still-born baby," *al-Hayat*, 4 June 1996.

⁵⁵ "Conflict between members of Maktab al-Irshad," *al-Hayat*, 8 June 1996. See also comments by Isam Sultan in *al-Hayat*, 19 June 1996.

⁵⁶ "The crisis within the Brotherhood is deepening. Founders of Hizb al-Wasat criticise

extent to which the crisis had gotten out of hand became especially apparent when one of the leading Islamist thinkers of the older generation, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, spoke out against the Brotherhood for its course of action.

Results

By the beginning of 1997, the internal power struggle had led to some remarkable results. Besides exposing the undemocratic procedures in the Muslim Brotherhood, important members of the younger generation, such as Ibrahim Bayumi Ghanim, had taken the unprecedented step of leaving the Brotherhood for Hizb al-Wasat.⁵⁷ However, perhaps one of the most surprising results of the conflict was a report circulated by the Brotherhood among its members explaining the grounds for rejecting the establishment of a political party.

In this report the leadership made the difference between *usul* and *furu'*, the first meaning the principles and the latter secondary considerations. "The *usul* are", according to the report, "the belief that Islam is a complete religion covering all aspects of life (belief, rituals, and norms and values)...the rest of the aspects of life belongs to the *furu'*, among which is politics." The report went on to state that "as in principle the derivative (*al-far'a*) cannot take the place of the principle (*al-'asl*), this means that *da'wa* cannot turn into a political party as long as a party law exists which forbids the foundation of a party based on religion, and restricts its activities to politics alone without taking into account other aspects of life which constitute Islam."⁵⁸

This document shows that the Brotherhood in crisis retreats from *hizbiyya* and reverts to its former ambiguity as contained in *da'wa*. Partly this the result of state repression, partly the ambivalence of the Brotherhood itself.

al-Hudaybi," *al-Hayat*, 11 June 1996.

⁵⁷ "The son of al-Qaradawi joins Hizb al-Wasat," *al-Hayat*, 29 November 1996. Besides the son of al-Qaradawi, also the brothers of Isam al-Aryan seemed to have joined Hizb al-Wasat, *al-Hayat*, 8 January 1997

⁵⁸ "The leadership of the Brethren warns against fitna," *al-Hayat*, 7 December 1996.

JORDAN: RESTRICTIONS OF INTEGRATION

Introduction

The Brotherhood in Jordan has always been considered a "loyal opposition" and has functioned as the main political and religious support of the monarchy against its political opponents, whether in the form of the Pan-Arab nationalists of prime minister Sulayman al-Nabulsi in the 1950s⁵⁹ or the Palestinian resistance fighters during the civil war in 1970-71, or neighboring foes as Syria. As in Egypt during the 1970s and 1980s, the tacit agreement with the Muslim Brotherhood was also directed against the radical Islamic movement. In Jordan it was the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami) which formed the classical radical challenge to the regime and the Brotherhood.⁶⁰

However, the complete freedom the Brotherhood in Jordan enjoyed allowed it to penetrate society to a far greater extent than in Egypt. The democratic experiment that was initiated in Jordan in 1989 even provided the Brotherhood with the opportunity to acquire a strong position in parliament. The peace process on which Jordan embarked with Israel since 1991 has brought this freedom to an end, and it seems that peace and democracy have been two contradictory terms. But as the Brotherhood in Jordan was already in parliament and had been allowed to pursue *hizbiyya* to a greater extent than the Brotherhood in Egypt, it was easily encapsulated and rendered innocuous in parliament. In the power struggle between state and the Islamic movement the state has greater leverage by integrating the Brotherhood in the political system. It seems that the strategic decision of the Brotherhood to take part in elections has turned against it.

Licensed infiltration

At its foundation in 1945 the Brotherhood immediately acquired the status of a charitable society (*jama'iyya khayriyya*) which allowed it to play its classic role as a *da'wa* organisation by establishing, for instance, a Dar al-'Ulum (teachers trainings college).⁶¹ This meant that members of

⁵⁹ Uriel Dann, *King Hussein and the Challenge of Arab Radicalism. Jordan 1955-1967*, Oxford, 1989 : 60-61

⁶⁰ Hani Hourani, Taleb Awad, Hamed Dabbas, Sa'eda Kilan, *Islamic Action Front Party*, Amman, 1993 : 15-16

⁶¹ Zakí al-Tahla, *The Political Islamic Movement in Jordan and Democracy. The Islamic Point of View*, Amman (in Arabic) 1996 : 14.

the Brotherhood could take part in elections on an individual basis in 1951 and 1954,⁶² a line of policy that was changed during the elections of October 1956, when the Brotherhood won four seats as a political party.⁶³ However, after political parties were banned in 1957 and martial law was established, the Brotherhood could revert to its previous ambiguous form as a charitable society.

With the Islamic resurgence in the 1970s, the Brotherhood became openly active again by supporting the Iranian revolution and rejecting the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty as a "stab in the back of the Arab and Islamic nations".⁶⁴ Although these political positions ran contrary to those of King Hussein, the tacit alliance remained intact as was evident in their joint support of the Syrian Brotherhood in its struggle against president Asad at the beginning of the 1980s. Not until Jordan restored its relations with Syria in 1985 and detained for the first time several hundred Brothers did the *modus vivendi* of the previous decades come under pressure.⁶⁵

By then the Muslim Brotherhood had already acquired a considerable stake in Jordanian society. Its status as a charitable organisation had enabled the Brotherhood to infiltrate many official institutions. Most conspicuously, it has brought the Ministries of Education and Awqaf under its control, and traditionally provides the General Secretary of the Ministry of Education. The Brotherhood's power in these institutions is illustrated by the appointment of one of the Brotherhood's leaders as minister of Education in 1970, while another, Abd al-Latif Arabiyyat, became Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament in 1989-1993, after having been Secretary General of the Ministry of Education from 1982 to 1985.⁶⁶

The Brotherhood and the Islamic movement has also infiltrated civil society. In the more traditional field of *da'wa* the Brotherhood built a network of mosques throughout the country, while in the more modern field, like the universities, the Islamic groups gained a majority in the student unions on the campuses of universities of Amman and Yarmouk in the 1980s.⁶⁷ As in Egypt the younger generation of members of the Islamic movement established strong positions in the professional

⁶² *Islamic Action Front Party* : 11.

⁶³ Zaki al-Tahla (1996) : 16

⁶⁴ Robert B. Satloff, *Troubles on the East Bank. Challenges to the Domestic Stability of Jordan*, Washington, 1986 : 41

⁶⁵ Kathrine Rath, "The Process of Democratization in Jordan," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 30 (1994) 3 : 546.

⁶⁶ *Islamic Action Front Party* : 13-14.

⁶⁷ Satloff (1986) : 45

organisations. In 1996 six of the twelve professional associations were in the hands of the Islamic movement, among which the Engineers, the doctors, and pharmacist associations.⁶⁸

Islamic Action Front

In this situation Jordan embarked on its highly interesting democratic experiment. The immediate reason for terminating a 22 year period of martial law was the food riots in Ma'an in April 1989. In its choice between further repression, or democratization and the inclusion of the population in the political process, King Hussein chose for the latter. On 8 November 1989 for the first time since 1956 free elections were held, while a National Charter was announced for 1991 in order to secure the new relationship between government and citizens.

The Brotherhood fully accepted the challenge and threw its full force in the election campaign. The strength of the Muslim Brotherhood during the elections was reflected in the fact that it was the only political organisation to present a list on a nation-wide basis.⁶⁹ The Islamist candidates won 34 out of 80 seats in parliament. The Muslim Brotherhood had 20 of its 26 candidates elected. The remaining 14 seats were won by independent Islamists.⁷⁰

The second Gulf war of 1990-1991 further enhanced the position of the Brotherhood, as both Hussein and the Islamic movement supported Saddam Hussein. A National Front was formed which consisted of all secular as well as religious forces in parliament, and on 1 January 1991 the government announced a new cabinet in which the Muslim Brotherhood was represented. It was clear that the democratic experiment and the popularity of the Islamic movement, had forced the king to include the Brotherhood into the center of power. Characteristically, the Brotherhood demanded the 'ideological ministries' of Social Development, Education and Religious Affairs.⁷¹

The first signs of strain became apparent only after the opening of the Madrid Peace conference. On 17 June 1991 King Husain dismissed the cabinet and appointed Tahir al-Masri prime minister, a Palestinian who favored a negotiated peace with Israel. On 18 June the Brotherhood

⁶⁸ Raed al-Abad, "Government's 30-year-old Nuisance," *The Star*, 1996 (April, no exact date).

⁶⁹ Kamel S. Abu Jaber and Schirin H. Fathi, "The 1989 Jordanian Parliamentary Elections," *Orient* 31 (1990) 1: 77.

⁷⁰ Katherine Rath (1994): 545.

⁷¹ Beverley Milton-Edwards, "A Temporary Alliance with the Crown: The Islamic Response in Jordan," In *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis*. ed. James Piscatori, Chicago, 1991: 88-108.

leader Abd al-Rahman Khalifa stated: "We will not participate in any government that will negotiate with Israel or with its American partner."⁷²

Aware of the threat the Muslim Brotherhood posed to the peace process, the government first tried to contain the Islamic movement through democratic means. The adoption of the National Charter in June 1991 was partly intended to circumscribe the power of the Islamists by encouraging the secular opposition to organize itself. The Charter allowed for a multi-party system, political pluralism, the establishment of political parties, and increased press freedom, elements which in themselves were assumed to undermine the position of the Brotherhood in society.⁷³ In fulfilment of the National Charter, a law was adopted allowing the establishment of political parties in August 1992.

The Brotherhood's reaction was to follow the trend and fully accept the democratic rules. The Brotherhood embraced the principle of *hizbiyya* openly by establishing the Islamic Action Front (IAF; Hizb Jabha al-'Amal al-Islami). Nevertheless, it retained its character as a *da'wa* organisation by establishing the IAF as a separate political organisation which in principle was to function as an umbrella for all Islamist currents in Jordan.

Unsure of the effects the democratic measures would produce on the Islamic movement, the government finally resorted to more devious means to stem its rise. In August 1993 a new electoral law was introduced which substituted the bloc-voting system by a one-man one-vote system. This law was generally regarded as a means to curb the Islamic movement, because it rightly assumed that people would give their single vote to those candidates on whom they were dependent, whereas previously they could divide their numerous votes between different candidates. Within a largely tribal society, this system privileged the tribal elders.⁷⁴

Other restrictive measures during the election campaign further hampered the Muslim Brotherhood in achieving a victory. In order not to provoke the government, the Muslim Brotherhood was cautious enough not to field more than 36 candidates - less than half the seats.⁷⁵ In the end the IAF, won only 16, the independents 2 seats. As was intended, a vast

⁷² Beverley Milton-Edwards (1991) : 106.

⁷³ Beverley Milton-Edwards, "Façade Democracy and Jordan," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 20 (1993) 2 : 198.

⁷⁴ Frédéric Charillon and Alain Mouftard, "Jordanie: Les élections du 8 novembre 1993 et le processus de paix," *Machreb Machrek* 144 (1994) : 45.

⁷⁵ "Lacklustre campaign," *Middle East International*, 5 November 1993 : 11.

majority of the seats went to tribal representatives.⁷⁶

Restrictions

As the opposition of the Muslim Brotherhood against the peace process increased after the Oslo Accords of September 1993, measures against it were stepped up. The party law of August 1992 had already stipulated that for security reasons it was forbidden for parties to have ties with foreign countries, a clear hint to the pan-Islamist Brotherhood.⁷⁷ In the same vein press freedom was curtailed when in December 1993 a law was adopted in parliament which banned publication of items that could "harm the king or members of the royal family," damage "national unity", or undermine "public ethics."⁷⁸ Increasingly more subjects were deemed outside the purview of the press. Especially the combination between religion and politics was condemned and imams were advised "to leave politics outside the houses of worship".⁷⁹

After the Washington Declaration of 15 July 1994 and the signing of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel on 26 October in the same year it became increasingly clear that democracy and the peace process were incompatible. Parliament was neither consulted nor asked to ratify both documents until well after their signing.⁸⁰ The pre-democratic authoritarianism of the monarchy was reasserted when the king claimed the peace policy was his personal responsibility,⁸¹ while any critique was suppressed by portraying the peace process as a national goal.⁸²

When the king insisted on "normalisation" of relations with Israel prior to a comprehensive peace treaty and the complete retreat of Israeli troops from occupied territory, the opposition against the treaty extended beyond the Islamic movement and included several established politicians on whom the monarchy had relied in the past, such as Tahir al-Masri and Ahmad Ubaidat.⁸³ The sensitivity of the monarchy to criticism was especially shown during the assassination of the Israeli prime minister Rabin on 4 November 1995. While king Hussein mourned over a

⁷⁶ Schirin H. Fathi, *Jordan an Invented Nation?* Hamburg, 1994 : 202-210.

⁷⁷ "Now for liberalisation," *Middle East International* , 7 August 1992 : 11.

⁷⁸ "Set-back for the king's vision," *Middle East International* 18 December 1992 : 11.

⁷⁹ "King Hussein plays the waiting game," *Middle East International*, 5 November 1993 : 18.

⁸⁰ "Political confusion," *Middle East International*, 9 September 1994 : 8.

⁸¹ Mark Power-Stevens, "Jordan and the question of peace," *Middle East International*, 23 September 1994 : 15.

⁸² "Jordan and the question of peace," *Middle East International* 23 September 1994 : 16.

⁸³ "Hussein's toughest dilemma," *Middle East International*, 26 May 1995 : 7.

"brother, friend and partner", an Islamist paper gloated over his death, describing Rabin as "one murderer less". Referring to a "degraded and degrading press" the government announced further measures to curb the right of the press to "cross red lines, destroy national unity and undermine the achievements of Jordan."⁸⁴

The IAF has not been able yet to find an answer to these repressive measures. Having chosen for *hizbiyya* it is hamstrung in parliament where it is under the tutelage and the authoritarian paternalism of the king. The opposition to the peace process has been limited and ineffective because it was not able to voice its opposition. For its half-hearted position and internal squables it has lost much of its initial popularity, while it has not gained any compensation of power in parliament. For instance, the Brotherhood was denied the right as the largest political party to provide the Speaker for the yearly session of parliament in 1995.⁸⁵ Its protests against the restrictions on civil society were ignored.⁸⁶

Independent Islamists

Because on the whole the Muslim Brotherhood has remained loyal to the king and has been largely coopted into the 'democratic' system, legal oppositional Islamic currents have manifested themselves since the 1980s outside the Brotherhood as independents. The independent Islamists in Jordan show similarities with members of Hizb al-Wasat and the third generation members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Both belong to the younger generation of Islamists which led the Islamic resurgence at the universities in the 1970s; both are also conspicuous for their presence in the elite professional organisations, and both seem to be taking the brunt of state repression in the 1990s. These young independent Islamists in particular have not only shown the limits of the democracy of the state, but also the limits of the democratic procedures within the Islamic movement itself.⁸⁷

Although the government has so far not repressed the Islamist opposition, as is the case in Egypt, it nevertheless has persecuted the more radical Islamist dissidents as a way to set an example. The most prominent dissident is undoubtedly Laith Shubailat. Elected as independent Islamist

⁸⁴ "Caught between two moods," *Middle East International*, 17 November 1995 : 8.

⁸⁵ "King Hussein's speech from the throne," *al-Hayat*, 1 December 1995.

⁸⁶ "National Association of Journalists rejects changes in press law," *al-Hayat*, 5 December 1995

⁸⁷ See for an analysis of the role of the Islamist independents: Beverley Milton-Edwards, "Climate of Change in Jordan's Islamist Movement," in *Islamic Fundamentalism*, eds. Abdel Salam Sidahmed & Anoushiravan Ehteshami, Boulder, 1996 : 123-142

in parliament in 1984 and 1989, he has lately been reelected president of the Engineers Organisation of Jordan. Persecution of Shubailat started in the summer of 1992, when he and Ya'qub Qarrash, an independent Palestinian Islamist in parliament, who led the investigation in the corruption case against former prime minister Zaid Rifai, were arrested and put on trial before a military court on suspicion of being members of a militant terrorist group called Shabab al-Nafir al-Islami (Youth of the Muslim Herald).⁸⁸ In a clear warning to the Islamist movement, they were sentenced to twenty years in prison, only to be amnestied 48 hours later by King Hussein. Characteristically, King Hussein warned the Islamist movement that he would fight against "renegades" and the "ambitious", as well as "anyone who dares to threaten democracy.. or exploit freedom with the aim of subverting it."⁸⁹

However, his opposition against the government did not end. In 1993 Laith Shubailat boycotted the elections, protesting against the new electoral law.⁹⁰ In December 1995 he was again arrested, this time on charges of slandering the king (*lèse majesté*).⁹¹ In a speech given in Irbid he stated that "his Majesty the King and the government had worked on Zionising Jordan."⁹² Again he was brought before a military tribunal and sentenced to three years in prison. The outcry by the opposition parties against his arrest was instantaneous and widespread.⁹³ In November 1996 King Hussein personally fetched him from prison.⁹⁴

Although independents probe the outer limits of tolerance of the state for criticism, which has decreased since the peace treaty, the regime is relatively mild, amnestying its prisoners regularly. Even when Laith Shubailat was on trial he was allowed to stand for elections for the presidency of the Engineers Organisations in February 1996, which he won with a large majority.⁹⁵

Also in respect of the democratic content of the larger Islamic

⁸⁸ "Concerns over the future," *Middle East International*, 11 September 1992 : 14; and "Lamis Andoni, "Jordan and Palestine: debating the future relationship," *Middle East International*, 23 October 1992 : 6.

⁸⁹ "The king's pardon," *Middle East International*, 20 November 1992 : 14.

⁹⁰ George Hawatmeh, "King Hussein plays the waiting game," *Middle East International*, 5 November 1993 : 11.

⁹¹ "In the thick of it," *Middle East International*, 15 December 1995 : 10.

⁹² "Attorney general states that Shubailat will be held for two weeks," *al-Hayat*, 11 December 1995. See also Sa'eda Kilani, "Shbeilat is sentenced to 3 years, will appeal verdict," *Jordan Times*, 18 March 1996.

⁹³ "Opposition parties accuse government of provocation," *al-Hayat*, 14 December 1995.

⁹⁴ "Shubailat freed again," *Middle East Internal*, 22 November 1996 : 11

⁹⁵ Sa'eda Kilani, "Shbeilat wins JEA presidency," *Jordan Times*, 19 February 1996.

movement the independents are illustrative. Originally, the Islamic Action Front was established to mobilise all Islamic forces in the country. However, it quickly became clear that it was a front for the Brotherhood. When the 120 members of the consultative council contained only 18 independents, they resigned because they felt they "were rowing on a strange sea and were only vehicles to reach certain objectives."⁹⁶

PALESTINE: EVADING INCORPORATION

Introduction

Hamas (acronym of the Movement of Islamic Resistance: *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*) was founded by the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and is the largest Islamist Palestinian organisation.⁹⁷ As the Brotherhood's struggle was not directed primarily against the Israeli occupation but fell within the classic pattern of *da'wa* and was as such aimed at the "founding of the Islamic personality" and opposed to the "atheist" PLO, it was allowed by the Israeli authorities to acquire a hold over Palestinian civil society.⁹⁸ During the *intifada* in 1988 the quietist attitude of the Brotherhood changed and it launched Hamas under the slogan "Palestine from the river to the sea (*min al-nahr li-l-bahr*) is a holy trust afforded to Muslims by God."⁹⁹ According to this concept the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993 amounted to sacrilege. The coming of the PNA in May 1994 to Gaza and Jericho inaugurated, however, a new phase in the relationship with Hamas. If a Palestinian civil war was to be avoided and the peace process was to be saved, a agreement in which Hamas would accept 'Oslo' was imperative.

The relationship between Hamas and the PNA depended since May 1994 for a large part on the attitude of Hamas toward the elections of the first Palestinian council to be held in January 1996. By accepting the

⁹⁶ Beverley Milton-Edwards (1996) : 135

⁹⁷ Jean François Legrain, "The Islamic Movement and the Intifada," eds. J.R. Wasser and R. Heacock, *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads*, 1991: 175-189; Ziad Abu Amr, "Hamas: A Historical Political Background," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 23 (1993) 4 : 5-19; Graham Usher, *Palestine in Crisis. The Struggle for Peace and Political Independence after Oslo*, London (1995, a); Graham Usher, "What Kind of Nation? The Rise of Hamas in the Occupied Territories," *Race & Class* 37 (1995, b) 2 : 66-80.

⁹⁸ Graham Usher (1995, b) : 66

⁹⁹ Graham Usher (1995, b) : 64

elections Hamas would automatically acknowledge 'Oslo' and be included in the structures of the new Palestinian state. In contrast to the Brotherhood in other countries, Hamas' dilemma was not between *da'wa* and *hizbiyya*, but rather between *hizbiyya* and *jihad*, as it included within its ranks all shades of the moderate and radical Islamic movement. Participation in the elections proved the divisive issue between moderates and hardliners. This division also coincided to a large degree with 'insiders', leaders in Gaza and the West Bank, and 'outsiders', the more radical representatives of Hamas in its offices in Amman, Teheran and Khartoum.

Already in October 1993 shaikh Yassin, the jailed founder of Hamas, opened the internal struggle by stating why Hamas should take part in the coming elections: "because it wants to have influence on the daily lives of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories."¹⁰⁰ The subsequent bomb attacks against Israel by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam brigades, however, terminated the process of integration. In October 1994 Hamas killed 25 Israelis, injuring another 50. In 1995 others waves of violence followed, the worst one perpetrated in July. As a result, attempts by the moderate wing of Hamas to become incorporated into the emerging political system and establish a political party along the lines of the Jordanian Islamic Action Front were undermined. The hardliners were well aware that incorporation into the PNA system could spell the end of the *raison d'être* of Hamas. As with the IAF, incorporation entailed the danger of compromise, subjection and loss of credibility, as well as, possibly, the ultimate demise of the Islamic movement. On account of the impasse of the peace process a rejectionist *jihadist* attitude could count on a large popularity.

Hamas' dilemma

The PNA reacted to the disturbances of its relations with Israel in 1995 by clamping down on Hamas. In April it arrested more than 150 members of Hamas, closed down its newspaper *al-Watan*, and arrested its editor-in-chief, Imad al-Faluji as well as its director Sayyid Abu Masamih. The response by the 'radical' Hamas spokesman in Jordan, Ibrahim Ghausha was predictable: "In the period in which the PNA is completely taken in by the Zionist occupation, it executes its will by arresting the members and leaders of the Islamic movement." Also the Jordanian Islamic Action Front (IAF) protested that "the only one who will benefit from these measures is the Zionist enemy." It accused the

¹⁰⁰ Graham Usher (1995, a) : 29.

PNA of being anti-nationalist.¹⁰¹ The typical reponse of Arafat was that "the peace accords had been signed by the PLO as the only representative of the Palestinians and that all [Palestinian] organisations must respect it."¹⁰² Taking its cue from the surrounding authoritarian states, the PNA trials took place in military courts on charges of sedition. For instance, Sayyid Abu Masamih, director of *al-Watan*, was sentenced to two years in prison on the charges of "violating the freedom of speech and writing seditious pamphlets."¹⁰³

In the subsequent months Hamas pursued a dualistic tactic in order to avoid a total confrontation with the PNA as well as regain its internal unity and its credibility with the Palestinian population. While offering to hold a "full" and "open" dialogue with the PNA it tried to make as little concessions as possible.¹⁰⁴ In the meantime it was apparent that within Hamas the conflict about strategy had been intensified as a result of the crack down. The moderate wing was in favor of forswearing the armed struggle and establishing a political party to take part in the elections. The hardliners rejected any change in policy, but upheld the principle of negotiations with the PNA, if only for tactical reasons to gain time and rebuild the organisation. The bomb attack on 24 July on Ramat Gan meant a temporary setback for the moderates. Consequently, leaders of Hamas, such as Mahmud al-Zahhar, shaikh Ahmad Bahar, and shaikh Muhsan Abu Mu'ti were arrested again.¹⁰⁵ The fact, however, that Hamas did not claim the attack indicated that the moderates had gained the upper hand.¹⁰⁶

By the time the leadership was gradually released in October, the situation had changed drastically in favor of Arafat and the PNA.¹⁰⁷ The Taba Agreement - Oslo II - had finally given the peace process a momentum, and the provisions of the agreement - evacuation of Israeli troops from the major Palestinian towns on the West Bank, scheduled

101 "Raïd on newspaper Hamas and arrest of seven of its employees," *al-Hayat*, 14 April 1995.

102 "No agreement with Hamas before it recognises the peace accords," *al-Hayat*, 15 April 1995.

103 "Jibril calls for revenge on Israel and warns Arafat for armed confrontation," *al-Hayat*, 16-5-1995.

104 Maha Abd al-Hadi, "Secret political agreement between Islamic opposition and PNA," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 8 June 1995.

105 "Hamas asks PNA to stop its razzias against its members," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 27 June 1995.

106 "Hamas criticizes the handing over of Abu Marzuq to Israel," *al-Hayat*, 3 July 1995; "Hamas extends terrorism to Israel and discusses with Gaza," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 31 July 1995.

107 "PNA lets two leaders of Hamas free," *al-Hayat*, 17 October 1995.

elections of a Palestinian parliament and presidential elections for 20 of January - gave Arafat the initiative back and offered him the opportunity to reestablish his legitimacy. The pressure on Hamas to decide whether to take part in the elections therefore mounted and resulted in widespread confusion and contradictory statements. For instance, while the spokesman for Hamas in Gaza, Mahmud al-Zahhar, said no decision had been taken on participating in the elections and renouncing violence, Imad al-Faluji, announced that "the decision to found a political party had already been taken."¹⁰⁸

The internal confusion did not end until an intensive campaign was initiated to bring the moderates and hardliners into line. Three moderates of Hamas with close ties to Arafat, Khalid al-Hini, Abdallah Mahanna and Sa'id al-Nimruti, took the initiative to mediate in August. They involved Hasan al-Turabi, the Sudanese Islamist leader, in the reconciliation attempt and on 4 October the first meeting was held between the mediators and representatives of the outsiders in Khartoum. The announcement made at the end of the meeting - that "we regard military action as a strategic means to liberate Palestine" - indicated that the hardliners won the internal struggle.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, some moderates as Imad al-Faluji who had collaborated too closely with the PNA were thrown out of Hamas, and the discussion about the political party of Hamas, Hizb al-Khallas al-Islami, was scuttled.¹¹⁰

The success of the hardliners seemed to be confirmed during the negotiations between Hamas and the PNA from 20 to 23 December in Cairo. The second meeting had taken place in Khartoum, but this time it included the full delegation of the 'insiders' as well as the 'outsiders'.¹¹¹ At the end of the negotiations Hamas announced that it would not renounce the armed struggle and that it would not take part in the elections. Despite these setbacks, the spokesman for the PNA said that the negotiations had been a "success for sixty percent".¹¹² The positive

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Mahmud al-Zahhar: "Hamas will not change into a political party," *al-Hayat*, 20 October 1995; Interview with Imad al-Faluji: "PNA and Hamas have made mistakes in Gaza," *al-Hayat*, 24 October 1995.

¹⁰⁹ Interview of Hamas' representative Isam Abu Hamdan in Teheran: "We have decided that the founding of a political party inside does not mean the recognition of Israel and confirms the right to resist," *al-Hayat*, 30 October 1995.

¹¹⁰ "Expectation that document of mutual understanding will be signed between Hamas and PNA," *al-Hayat*, 14 December 1995; "Dialogue in Cairo (between PNA and Hamas): positive results, but what afterwards?" *al-Hayat*, 4 January 1996.

¹¹¹ "Hamas will present proposals to the PNA concerning the future of Palestine," *al-Hayat*, 18 December 1995.

¹¹² "Hamas promises not to harm PNA and not to force anyone to boycott elections," *al-Hayat*, 23 December 1995.

results were that both parties agreed that internal conflicts in future would be resolved "peacefully", "national unity" would be upheld and "pluralism" would be recognized. Perhaps more significantly, Hamas acknowledged in principle that "it would do nothing to harm the interests of the PNA." It promised to refrain from armed attacks on Israeli targets for the duration of the coming elections.¹¹³

That an accommodation had been reached was indeed borne out by the elections of 20 January. Although several candidates of Hamas who had registered themselves - such as the three mediators mentioned previously - were pressured to withdraw, on the whole Hamas did not obstruct the elections. From all appearances it was divided in its attitude towards the elections. In the districts where the moderates predominated, the following of Hamas was advised to vote for independent Islamist candidates who were sympathetic towards Hamas. In these districts, such as Nablus, Gaza, Gaza City, and North Gaza, the turnout of voters was relatively high. In total, sympathizers with Hamas won seven out of the 88 seats of the Palestinian parliament.¹¹⁴ Opinion polls indicated that half of the supporters of Hamas went to the polls.¹¹⁵ Arafat was therefore justified to state triumphantly that Hamas had in fact participated in the elections.¹¹⁶ In acknowledgement of its good behavior the PNA allowed Hamas to open an official party bureau in Gaza City on 28 of January.¹¹⁷

The subsequent bomb attacks on 25 February and 3 and 4 March reversed this process drastically. The moderate leadership - the 'insiders' - condemned these assaults explicitly as senseless and as opposed to the interests of the Palestinian people. Abu Masamih stated that "we have a clear position that the killing of civilians is prohibited."¹¹⁸ Moderate leaders called for an end to violent attacks on several occasions.¹¹⁹

113 "Dialogue in Cairo (between PNA and Hamas): positive results, but what afterwards?" *al-Hayat*, 4 January 1996.

114 "Palestinian elections, the passing of the democratic test," *al-Wasat*, No. 209, 29 January 1996 : 28-31. See for the end results *al-Hayat*, 24 January 1996.

115 "Majority of Palestinians does not give mandate to Arafat without restrictions," *al-Hayat*, 24 January 1996.

116 Interview with Arafat: "Hamas has not boycotted the elections," *al-Hayat*, 6 February 1996.

117 "Arafat agrees to the opening of the party office of Hamas in Gaza and the PNA releases 12 members of Hamas," *al-Hayat*, 29 January 1996.

118 "Arafat warns semi-military organisations," *al-Hayat*, 4 March 1996; "Assault in Jerusalem confirms divisions within Hamas," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 4 March 1996.

119 Arafat: "Israeli measures are breachment of the Oslo Accords," *al-Hayat*, 6 March 1996.

Repression

Although the reason given for the bomb attacks was the assassination of Yahya Ayyash, the leader of the Izz al-Din Qassam brigades, in Gaza on 5 January by the Israelis, it is clear that the attacks also had the purpose to undermine the integration of the moderate wing of Hamas into the PNA state structure. The attack in Jerusalem and Ashkelon had been executed by Muhyi al-Din al-Sharif a 28 year old electrician from Hebron who had played an intermediary role between al-Ayyash and perpetrators of two attacks on 21 August in Jerusalem (four dead) and in the Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Gan on 24 July (six dead).¹²⁰ The attack on 3 March had been executed by Isam Muhammad Abduh, a student from Bir Zeit university. Both members came from Hebron and were members of the "cell of Yahya Ayyash", which was a continuation of Yahya Ayyash wing of the Izz al-Din Qassam brigades. This organisation had split off from the Gaza military wing of the Izz al-Din Qassam brigades which abided by the cease fire and followed the more moderate line of the Hamas leadership in Gaza.

The unilateral action of this splinter group made it clear that the radicals were able to use the divisions within Hamas for their purposes. According to Shaikh Taisir al-Tamimi, "it is known that the military arm of Hamas does not take its orders from the political wing."¹²¹ In an interview with *al-Quds al-Arabi* the Speaker of the Palestinian parliament Salim Za'nun, said that there was not one but many Hamas organisations (Hamasât). He was convinced that the Hamas leadership in Gaza under Mahmud al-Zahhar did not have any control over the "cell of Yahya al-Ayyash" and that it had been set up and run by the 'outsiders'. The fact that it had its base in the refugee camp al-Fawwar at Hebron confirms this.¹²²

The bomb attacks severely damaged and weakened Hamas. After the bomb attacks the PNA and the Israelis clamped down on Hamas. The full force of repression could now be used, as Arafat was at the height of his popularity after the evacuation of Israeli troops from the major cities on the West Bank and the success of the elections for the Legislative Council. The PNA's purpose was not to fully repress Hamas, an unattainable goal, but merely to suppress its radical wing and to set up Hamas stooges.

¹²⁰ "Israel announces plan for bomb attacks; PNA arrests tens of members of Hamas in Gaza," *al-Hayat*, 27 February 1996.

¹²¹ "The assault in Jerusalem confirms the existence of divisions inside Hamas," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 4 March 1996.

¹²² Interview with Salim Za'nun: "Leadership of Hamas has issued *fatwa* to kill members of the PNA," *al-Hayat*, 18 May 1996.

As part of this strategy Arafat declared the "underground organisation of Hamas" outside the law. Many institutions of Hamas were closed. PNA arrested 60 members of Hamas in Gaza after the first attack only to arrest another 140 after the March assault, among whom most of its leaders. In total 1,200 members of Hamas were arrested. The Islamic University of Gaza was raided, and the Ministry of Awqaf extended its control over mosques which had formerly been run by Hamas. Close associates of the attack in Ashkelon and Jerusalem on 25 February were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Those leaders who were not imprisoned and allowed to talk freely, were staunch moderates such as Mahmud al-Zahhar (Gaza) and shaikh Jumail Hamami (West Bank).¹²³ Their claim to speak for Hamas, could easily be denied by more radical outsiders such as Ibrahim Ghausha in Jordan who stated that al-Zahhar spoke only for himself.¹²⁴ In this light the foundation, finally, of the political party of Hamas, Hizb al-Khallas al-Watani, at the end of March 1996, was somewhat artificial, especially since Arafat was willing to let a few of its members enter the cabinet if they foreswore the use of violence.¹²⁵ From later pronouncements it appeared that the party's relations with Hamas were still unclear and that it "hoped" to be the political wing of Hamas.¹²⁶ Other leaders denied that Hamas had established a party.¹²⁷

Hamas on the rebound

Despite repressive measures to make Hamas innocuous, it has not been eliminated, neither has it been intimidated into falling in line and been integrated. As long as the Israeli intransigence continues and Hamas has not reneged on its basic ideological point that Israel will never give Palestinians their rights, the star of Hamas will be on the horizon. The election of Netanyahu in May 1996 has improved the prospects of Hamas. Temporary rises in Arafat's popularity at the end of September 1996, during the mini intifada of the 'tunnel crisis', do not seem to have made any difference. The prolonged negotiations over Hebron and the announcement of the building of settlements at Har Homa in Jerusalem made his popularity plummet again and led to deep disillusionment with the Oslo Accords.

¹²³ "Leadership of Hamas recognizes limited splits," *al-Hayat*, 31 May 1996.

¹²⁴ "Shaikh Yassin will make a statement on Israeli television to stop military actions," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 24 May 1996.

¹²⁵ "Leadership of Hamas recognizes limited splits," *al-Hayat*, 31 May 1996.

¹²⁶ "PNA releases a few leaders of Hamas," *al-Hayat*, 3 December 1996.

¹²⁷ "Leaders of Hamas distance themselves from the foundation of a political party in Gaza," *al-Hayat*, 20 January 1996.

The popularity of Hamas is especially conspicuous in the election results of student unions and professional organisations. As recently after the bombings in May 1996, Hamas won 23 of the 51 seats of the student union at Bir Zeit, while Fatah won only 17 seats.¹²⁸ On 11 December Hamas staged a massive rally in Khan Yunis in Gaza to mark the first anniversary of the death of Yahya Ayyash which 40,000 people attended. Hamas leader Abd al-Fattah Dukhkhani reiterated that "peace has not realized our minimum rights, and we do not agree with Oslo because a peace that is not based on justice will not be a success."¹²⁹ On 31 March the pro-Hamas Islamic Bloc won the student election at the Polytechnic Institute, winning 19 of the 31 seats, on the same day it won 5 out of 9 seats of the Employees Union election at Najah University in Nablus, while on 29 March it won 9 out of 12 seats in the Engineers Association in the Gaza Strip.¹³⁰

Besides banking on the failure of the peace process, Hamas seems to have learned its lesson and has become more disciplined. At the rally in Khan Yunis it hung Arafat's portrait alongside those of leaders of Hamas. Also Hamas has been able to rebuild its organisation after the PNA was forced to release most of the detainees as a sign of goodwill because no further bombings had taken place. It was announced that it would elect an executive committee to assert the unity of the organisation.¹³¹ The bomb attack in Tel Aviv on 21 March 1997 was not claimed by 'insiders' as well as 'outsiders' of Hamas.¹³² It appears that Hamas has successfully evaded the trap of the elections and has not closed its options which were restricted by *hizbiyya*.

Conclusion

From the above it is clear that the strategic choice of the 'moderate' Islamic movement to adopt *hizbiyya* as opposed to its classic stance of *da'wa* is based on the estimations of its chances of gaining power. As has been shown, taking the step to a more open form of political participation entails serious risks. In Egypt the transition of the Brotherhood from *da'wa* to *hizbiyya* was made in the 1980s when the state and the Brotherhood struck a *modus vivendi* with the state. Despite this working relationship the Brotherhood expanded its activities much faster and more

¹²⁸ "The Islamic list wins the Palestinian student elections at Bir Zeit," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 10 May 1996.

¹²⁹ "Hamas gains ground," *Middle East International*, 20 December 1996.

¹³⁰ "Hamas revived," *Middle East International*, 4 April 1997.

¹³¹ "Hamas announces the election of its Executive Committee in Gaza," *al-Hayat*, 12 December 1996.

¹³² "The death of the Oslo process?" *Middle East International*, 4 April 1997.

determined than the ruling elite would tolerate. Especially the following it acquired among the younger generation of the Islamic movement and the role this generation acquired within the professional organisations posed a threat to the authority of the state. Ironically this new generation also threatened the hegemony of the older generation of the Brotherhood. Eventually the conflict led to a split in the Brotherhood and the foundation of the party Hizb al-Wasat early 1996. The younger generation showed with Hizb al-Wasat the limits of democracy within the moderate Islamic movement, while it at same time it experienced the full force of the repression of the state which tried to set this generation as an example. In the end *hizbiyya* did not pay off.

In Jordan the relationship between state and Islamic movement evolved into the complete opposite of Egypt. The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood had always been part of the 'loyal opposition' and until the 1980s was one of the main political supports of the monarchy. Although the excellent relationship turned sour at the end of the 1980s, the Brotherhood was still able to take advantage of the democratisation process which was initiated in 1989. It was only when the peace process started in earnest after the Oslo Accords in 1993 that relations between the monarchy and the Muslim Brotherhood deteriorated rapidly. Hamstrung by its commitment to *hizbiyya*, the political wing of the Brotherhood, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), lost much of its credibility. In contrast, the more flexible Islamist independents were able to gain adherents by their more oppositional role.

In Palestine integration also centred around the issue of peace. However, Hamas has so far succeeded in not becoming coopted into the system. Since it was established in May 1994, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has tried its utmost to integrate Hamas into the political system and force it to accept 'Oslo' through participation in the elections for the Legislative Council in January 1996. The extreme tension this dilemma posed for Hamas - between influencing events from inside the system or standing aloof and retaining purity - almost tore Hamas apart between outsiders and insiders, moderates and radicals. After the almost total repression which followed the suicide bombings in February/March 1996, Hamas seems to have regained its former strength and can profit from the contempt with which Israeli prime minister Netanyahu has treated the peace process. Not having accepted *hizbiyya*, Hamas kept its options open by retaining its independence and not letting itself be trapped by 'democratization' and incorporation.

Developments in the future are difficult to fathom. Two preconditions must be met for a democratic transition to take place. Firstly the political circumstances in which Islamic movements operate must be more

conducive for an adoption of democratic principles. Secondly, the Islamic movement itself must be committed to *hizbiyya*. Pious intellectual treatises on democracy are not enough. Reform of the internal structures of moderate Islamic movements is necessary.