

Gaining Control Through Democracy: The New Strategy of Muslim Brotherhood

As the whole world breathlessly watches events unfolding in the Middle East and North Africa, everyone is wondering whether these revolutions will usher in democracy and human rights, or just a new type of oppression for the people in the form of Islamic states ruling with the cruel, merciless fist of Islamic law.

The German newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung took the first step toward answering this question by interviewing Hussein Mahmoud, who is the general secretary of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and was imprisoned three times during Mubarak's rule for his Muslim Brotherhood involvement. The Muslim Brotherhood is a key factor in understanding what may happen in Egypt, which is the most influential nation in the region. If Egypt falls into the hands of a government based on Islamist philosophy, the whole region will be influenced in that direction.

What did this interview reveal? On the surface, Mr. Mahmoud's answers implied that Muslim Brotherhood loves democracy and wants to blend in to the new government. However, in this article I want to show you the real meaning behind his words and why Western nations need to be very concerned about the influence of Muslim Brotherhood in the region. At the end of this article, I will describe what could happen in Egypt, based on a similar revolution that occurred in the late 1970s.

Let's look at Mr. Mahmoud's key statements from the interview conducted by Christian Hoffman and published in the German newspaper, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* on Feb. 12, 2011.

Mr. Mahmoud stated that the "Egyptian military is highly respected by the Egyptian people and the Muslim Brotherhood." He went on to express his desire that the military will "hand over power to a civilian government as soon as possible." Remember that Muslim Brotherhood has been persecuted, beaten, imprisoned, and killed by the Egyptian military for the 80 years of their existence. Why is Mr. Mahmoud now willing to say that Muslim Brotherhood respects the military? It's because Mr. Mahmoud wants the military to establish a civilian government in which Muslim Brotherhood would have freedom to participate. The Muslim Brotherhood sees free elections as the way for them to achieve power in Egypt.

If the Muslim Brotherhood manages to achieve influence in the government what will they do? Will they try to create an Islamic state similar to Iran? Mr. Mahmoud said that Muslim Brotherhood does not want to create "a theocratic state" like Iran. Mr. Mahmoud is absolutely telling the truth. Iran has a Shia government, which has a supreme religious leader, the ayatollah, who has the ultimate power. (The role of the ayatollah is a little bit similar to the role of the Pope for the Roman Catholic church, with added political power, of course.) Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is Sunni, not Shia, so they do not recognize a supreme spiritual leader and therefore would not establish a theocratic state like Iran.

Does this mean that Muslim Brotherhood would be satisfied with a secular democracy? On the one hand, Mr. Mahmoud stated, "We believe that the people are the source of power. They will choose the president themselves." On the other hand, he also stated, "Egypt should not become a secular state—by no means—because in this case Egypt would leave its history and civilization behind." In other words, Muslim Brotherhood believes the people are welcome to choose their government—as long as it is an Islamic state.

Mr. Mahmoud is fully aware of the Constitution of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was established in 1928 and is posted on

the Arabic (but not English) web site of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt ([http://www.brotherhood.org](#)). This Constitution states that one of the primary goals of the organization is “establishing an Islamic state that will apply Islamic law in a practical way, and the Muslim Brotherhood will be the guardian inside the territory of this Muslim state, and the Muslim Brotherhood will work to export this Islamic system internationally” (from section 2, article 2, paragraph F). This is why Mr. Mahmoud had to answer yes when he was asked, “Do you promote the implementation of Sharia law in Egypt?”

In the interview, Mr. Mahmoud painted a pretty picture of Islamic law “guaranteeing the rights and liberties of the individual and the practice of religion, even if people have different religions.” People want to believe this pretty picture, but the reality of Sharia law is something very different, and the people of Iran have been suffering under it.

Here are some examples of the punishments in Sharia law:

- Apostasy (a Muslim who decides to leave Islam): three days to repent; if no repentance, then death
- Sex between single persons (not married to each other): beaten with 100 lashes
- Sex between persons who are married (but not to each other): death by stoning
- Drinking alcohol, using intoxicants: beaten with 80 lashes
- Stealing: right hand cut off at the wrist
- Slander (telling a lie that hurts someone’s reputation): Beaten with 80 lashes
- Murder: for killing a Muslim, the punishment of murder is death; but if a Muslim kills a non-Muslim, the punishment cannot be death
- Rebellion against the Muslim leader: death or exile

These laws are based on the following Quranic verses: 4:88-89,

24:2, 5:90-91, 2:219, 5:38, 24:13, 2:178, 5:33 and the following hadith references: book of Muslim, book 17, no. 4206 and 4226.

This is the Sharia law that Mr. Mahmoud and the Muslim Brotherhood want to enforce in Egypt. Iran is the only country in the world that is coming close to practicing all of Sharia law. An example of sharia justice was the public hanging of a 16-year-old girl in a public square of the Iranian city of Neka in 2004. The girl was executed for “crimes against chastity” (reported by the BBC News July 27, 2006).

How would Christians be affected in the Islamic state envisioned by Muslim Brotherhood? Christians would have to follow Sharia law just the same as Muslims. Mr. Mahmoud stated, “Islam is a crucial component concerning values, culture and way of life and concerns both Muslims and Christians the same way.”

In 2009, Muslim Brotherhood demonstrated their position toward Christians practicing Christian beliefs within Egypt. Two Christian couples from the U.S. wanted to adopt Christian children from an Egyptian Christian orphanage. According to Islamic teaching, adoption is not allowed, and Muslim Brotherhood along with Al-Azhar scholars strongly opposed the adoptions. The Egyptian courts gave two-year prison sentences to the Christian parents and five-year prison sentences to several Egyptian employees of the orphanage, according to a BBC News report. This is just one example of the way Islamic law is imposed on Christians today, with the support of Muslim Brotherhood, under a relatively secular regime. Imagine what could happen to Christians with the Muslim Brotherhood in control!

Finally, the interview concluded with Mr. Mahmoud commenting on whether the “new Egypt should respect Egypt’s peace treaty with Israel.” Mr. Mahmoud said the agreements should be respected, but—and this is a very key—but “the exact wording

of these contracts has to be reviewed and the Egyptian people have to decide on it." It is no secret that the majority of Egyptian people (including most secular Egyptians) don't like this peace treaty, so Mr. Mahmoud was basically saying that the treaty will be changed because the people will vote to change it.

As you can see, Mr. Mahmoud's words are not what they seem on the surface. Muslim Brotherhood's methods have changed from the past when they focused on assassinating top leaders, but their goals have not changed. Their objective is still to establish their version of an Islamic state that can be exported around the globe. So the next question to ask is this: What might happen to the Egyptian people if the Muslim Brotherhood gain control of the government?

We can look to the Revolution in Iran for one possible scenario. As in Egypt today, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 had broad support from all levels of society, both secular and religious. They welcomed the Islamic state and the return of the supreme Shia leader, the ayatollah. But when the Iranian government established sharia law, the people saw political opponents hanged in public squares and women were beaten or arrested if they refused to wear Islamic coverings. Now the Iranian people struggle to throw off the yoke of Islamic law, but the Islamic government has the strength to keep them under control. If Muslim Brotherhood gains control in Egypt, the same thing could happen to the Egyptian people.

Muslim Brotherhood won eight seats in the Egyptian parliament elections of November 2005, which brought their total to 42 seats, up from 15, according to M & G News. However, in the elections of 2009, which were racked by allegations of vote rigging and opposition intimidation, the Brotherhood were nearly swept from Parliament, according to the Christian Science Monitor.

If free elections occur, the world will watch carefully to see

whether the Egyptian people will turn their country over to the Muslim Brotherhood or present young, secular representatives to lead Egypt into a free democratic nation that respects human rights and establishes justices for all members of society.

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