Selective Moderation of the Muslim Brotherhood under Mubarak – The Role of the Egyptian Regime's Discourse and of Islamist Political Inclusion[1]

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Abstract: This paper aims to contribute to the literature on the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. It seeks to identify factors that – in addition to political inclusion – might hinder or further a group's ideological moderation. Specifically, this study analyses the effect of a regime's discourse and of political inclusion on the ideological development of an Islamist group. The paper draws on the case of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) under Mubarak. It finds that moderation only takes hold when inclusion is coupled with a negative regime discourse towards the Brotherhood. It further finds that the moderating effect of such discourse is also sustained when inclusion is reduced to a minimum. Further, this study argues that the content of the regime's discourse was a key determinant in shaping the only *selective* moderation the Brotherhood underwent.

Keywords: Islamism, ideological moderation, political inclusion, Muslim Brotherhood

Schlagwörter: Islamismus, ideologische Mäßigung, politische Inklusion, Muslimbruderschaft

1. Introduction

Studies on democratic transition often consider the moderation of radical opposition groups and parties to be conducive to democratic transition or consolidation. Influential in this body of literature is the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, which argues that the inclusion of radical groups and parties into formal political processes leads to their moderation. While the inclusion-moderation hypothesis has its roots in studies on the historic de-radicalization of socialist parties in Europe (e. g. Michels [1915] 1962; Schumpeter [1950] 2010), the hypothesis has also been taken up by the literature dealing with the third wave of democratization (e. g. Huntington 1993; Share 1985).

Over the past decade, the hypothesis has also found its way into studies on Islamist groups (e. g. Clark 2006; Schwedler 2011). As numerous Islamist groups and parties entered into electoral politics during the 1980s and 1990s, a question that figured prominently in the literature was whether Islamist political inclusion was leading, or had already led, to Islamist ideological moderation – ideological moderation being largely understood as the increasing adoption of liberal demo-

cratic principles into ideology. Because inclusion, however, has not led to ideological moderation in all cases, scholars have set out to refine the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. They have examined what other factors – in addition to political inclusion – can impinge on the ideological development of Islamist groups and might, thus, hinder or enhance ideological moderation. So far the literature has mainly identified learning processes of individuals or groups (Wickham 2004) as well as intra-party debates (Schwedler 2006) as such factors. Tezcur introduces a novel factor with his finding that a regime's discourse may also impinge on Islamist ideological development (Tezcur 2010). Regimes, so he argues, may set ideological red lines which Islamist opposition groups may not cross and around which they, thus, tailor their self-presentation and ideology. In that sense, he argues that Islamist opposition had to pose as more Islamist than it was in the Islamic Republic of Iran, but as more secular than it actually was in secular Turkey. While Tezcur's finding is clearly interesting, his analysis of regime discourse and its impact does not go into much detail, as he focuses on other aspects such as questioning whether Islamist behavioural change (i. e. participation in formal politics) necessarily precedes ideological moderation or vice versa (Tezcur 2010).

This article builds on the notion that a regime's discourse can impinge on Islamist ideological development. The paper expands knowledge on the causal effect that such discourse has – in addition to political inclusion – on an Islamist group. To this end, the article draws on the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) under Mubarak from 1981 to 2011. This case lends itself well to the endeavour at hand as, in the period studied, there is both a variation in the level of inclusion as well as a variation in the regime's discourse, that is marked by a decisive shift in the regime's depiction of the MB first as 'noble' and then as a 'criminal' actor. However, leaps in the level of the group's political inclusion have not necessarily led to comparable leaps in the organization's level of ideological moderation.

This paper uses process tracing to analyse the impact of inclusion and regime discourse on the ideological development of the MB. This is done in four phases that vary in their degree of inclusion and the nature of regime discourse. The analysis is based on a dense set of primary sources. Concerning the regime's discourse, the study drew on Egyptian print media. Concerning the MB, its key programmatic writings during the period studied were analysed.

The paper argues that the MB has (generally speaking over the 30 years studied) seen moderation in the sense of an increasing adoption of a number of liberal democratic concepts – though this moderation has been limited and selective. The paper further argues that the trajectory of the group's ideological development shows that leaps in the level of inclusion have not, as suggested by the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, necessarily led to comparable rises in the level of moderation (i. e. in the number of adopted liberal democratic concepts). Instead, moderation only began to pick up speed when inclusion was coupled with negative regime discourse on the MB. The moderating effect of the negative discourse was also sustained in moments where inclusion was driven to a minimum: the negative discourse provided a strong incentive for the group to refute the charges articulated by the regime and thus led the group to moderate itself in the respective issues

raised by the regime so as not to lose popular appeal. As a result, however, the group only moderated itself with regards to those specific issues and not others.

This article sets out with a review of the literature on the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. It then proceeds to lay out the conceptualization of inclusion and moderation, as well as the approach and the sources chosen. The paper then traces the impact of inclusion and regime discourse on the ideological development of the MB in four phases. Finally, the paper concludes with the results drawn from the Egyptian example and what can be drawn from them for the more general debate on inclusion and moderation.

2.   The Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis

The inclusion-moderation hypothesis originated in the literature on the historic de-radicalization of post-revolutionary socialist parties in Europe. These parties' entry into electoral politics and the vote-maximization strategies this entailed were argued to have resulted in the parties' moderation. This moderation was conceived of as a moderation of behaviour (i. e. participation in democratic procedures) and ideology (i. e. a liberal democratic perspective was adopted as radical convictions – which, it was claimed, alienated large segments of voters – were abandoned) (e. g. Michels [1915] 1962; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Schumpeter [1950] 2010). The inclusion-moderation hypothesis has also been taken on board in more recent studies dealing with the moderation of radical groups and parties in the context of the third wave of democratization (e. g. Share 1985). Huntington has here stressed the trade-off between participation and radicalism in contexts of democratic transition (Huntington 1993). And the moderation of opposition groups was also often viewed as facilitating democratization processes, as it was understood to make incumbent elites more prone to opt for compromise and toleration of the opposition and its demands (Przeworski [1986] 1991; for an opposite view see Bermeo 1997).

Kalyvas (1996) was the first to apply the moderation-inclusion hypothesis to religious parties. While he, however, drew on Christian cases, over the past decade the hypothesis has also found its way into studies referring to Islamist groups. This was propelled by the entrance of numerous Islamist groups into electoral politics during the 1980s and 1990s. This prompted a debate in the literature over whether the political inclusion of Islamists was leading or had already led to their moderation (e. g. Brown et al. 2006; Clark and Schwedler 2003; Gurses 2012). Some scholars pointed to the moderating effects inclusion was having on Islamists even in the authoritarian contexts of the Middle East. Institutional openings in the political landscape were thus argued to have generated, first, a moderation of behaviour – in the sense of the abandonment of violence and engagement in electoral processes, and second, to have resulted in the moderation of ideology (El-Gobashy 2005; Krämer 1996). The moderation of ideology in this context is largely viewed as a move away from radical positions (i. e. uncompromising Islamist views that reject liberal democratic values as contravening Islam) towards an increasing acceptance of liberal democratic principles (Schwedler 2011).

Other scholars, however, drew attention to the fact that inclusion does not in all cases lead to ideological moderation – or to the fact that the same kind or

level of political inclusion does not always lead to the same kind of moderation (Schwedler 2006, p. 193; Clark 2006). Scholars accordingly set out to refine the inclusion-moderation hypothesis by searching for factors that – in addition to political inclusion – might propel or hinder Islamist ideological moderation. So far, the literature has largely proposed three factors. The first is intra-party debates, which, according to a prominent study on Islamists in Yemen and Jordan (Schwedler 2006) are considered to be decisive. While the Islamic Action Front in Jordan and the Islah party in Yemen have both experienced similar forms of inclusion, Schwedler argues that only the former moderated its ideology. This, she argues, was due to its practice of intra-party debates, which allowed the group to establish ideological foundations to justify its behavioural moderation. Thus, the moderation of behaviour (i. e. taking part in pluralist elections) was in this case followed by a moderation in ideology. Similarly, Tepe (2012) argues that crucial for whether political participation of Islamists can translate into ideological moderation is whether ideology can be reformulated convincingly and coherently to support the group's newly embraced political participation. The second factor put forward in the literature is learning processes. In a study dealing with Egypt's al-Wasat Party (an offshoot of the MB), Wickham (2004) shows that as Islamists participate in formal politics, they engage with political actors with other leanings (e. g. seculars or leftists) in the process – through which they broaden their horizons. Clark (2006), however, questions to what extent such cross-ideological interaction and cooperation moderates Islamists. The third factor, offered by Tezcur (2010), is the nature of regime discourse. Comparing Iran's and Turkey's Islamists, he found that the former had to present itself as more religious than it was and the latter as more secular than it was according to regime discourse and the discursive red lines set by it.[2] Also, in her study on Egypt's al-Wasat Party, Browers (2009) has argued that ideological and discursive context does play a role in shaping the ideological evolvement of an Islamist group.

This paper takes on Tezcur's idea. However, unlike Tezcur, who focuses mainly on other aspects such as questioning the assumed sequencing in the inclusion-moderation hypothesis that moderation of behaviour preceded ideological moderation, it looks in depth at the regime's discourse and its effect. It analyses how not only the structural institutional factors set by the regime force Islamists to tailor their behaviour and ideology around them, but also the discursive factors and red lines set by the regime. In drawing on the case of the Egyptian MB from 1981 to 2011, this paper asks three questions: (1) What role do regime discourse and political inclusion play with respect to the development of the ideology of Islamist groups? (2) Can the regime's discourse on its own hinder or propel ideological moderation? (3) Can the regime's discourse explain the specific trajectory of the ideological moderation of an Islamist group – for example, why groups may moderate their stances concerning certain issues but not others?

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2   While Schwedler brought up the notion that the opportunity structures in which Islamists operate are not merely of an institutional, but also of a discursive nature, she has not analysed how change in discourse affects Islamist development, i. e. what its causal effect is (Schwedler 2006).

3. Conceptualizations and Approach

3.1 Ideological Moderation

'Ideological moderation' is not understood here as based on a 'moderate'-'radical' dichotomy in which 'moderate' is understood as the fully fledged embrace of liberal democracy and 'radical' as consisting of uncompromising Islamist views that outright reject Western political thought. Rather, ideological moderation is here, in line with Schwedler, conceived of as a 'movement along a continuum from radical to moderate' (2011, p. 352). Thus, moderation need not entail a fully fledged acceptance of liberal democracy and its norms and principles as a whole, but rather a gradual increase in adopted liberal democratic concepts. In that sense, ideological moderation can be selective: a group integrates such principles and values regarding some issues, but not others (e. g. Clarke and Schwedler 2003, Tepe 2012; Brown et al. 2006). Accordingly, this paper – quite simply – understands ideological moderation as a (relative) increase in the number of adopted liberal democratic principles. The degree of ideological moderation is identified through the analysis of the MB's major programmatic writings in the period studied. These comprised five extensive programmatic treatises (1984, 1985, 1994 [two], and 1996), four electoral programmes (1995, 2005, 2007, 2010) and two drafts of a party programme (2007). The MB's 1984 and 1987 electoral programmes were not included, as they were joint products of the MB with allied political parties.

3.2 Liberal Democracy

Liberal Democracy is here understood as a combination of Dahl's concept of 'polyarchy' – as 'contestation open to participation' (Dahl cited in Merkel and Croissant 2000, p. 5) – with a liberal constitutional dimension. Inspired by the concept of 'embedded democracy' (e. g. Croissant and Thiery 2000/2001, p. 22; Merkel 2004, p. 37), this paper conceives of liberal democracy as consisting of the following elements: sovereignty of the people as expressed in the rotation of power through regular free and fair elections; equal political rights (i.e. the active and passive right to vote); equal rights to political communication and organization (e.g. freedom of press, opinion and association and the right to form political parties); the separation of powers; equal civil liberties.[3]

3.3 The Regime's Discourse

The regime's discourse was conceptualized as consisting of two layers.[4] The first is represented in statements of regime figures on the MB in public. This layer of discourse can be described as 'political-pragmatic' or 'political-professional' in tone (Interview Expert 1 2009), and it is well accessed via the print media, as these

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3   'Effective power to govern' is not considered here, as this paper analyses the political *thought* of the MB and not an existing state.
4   Interviews with five experts on the Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's media system were conducted for the conceptualization of the regime's discourse in 2009.

featured interviews with or public speeches of regime figures, such as Mubarak himself or the respective interior ministers. Below that, a second layer of discourse unfolded in the print media. It was not attributed directly to regime figures and was accordingly less pragmatic and professional in tone, but instead more heated and tabloid (Interview Expert 1 2009; Interview Expert 2 2009). The key mouth-pieces here were the public-sector owned journal *al-Mussawar*, from 1981 to 1997 (Interview MB 1, 2009; Interview Expert 1 2009), and the journal *Ruz al-Yusuf*, from 1997-2011 (Interview Expert 2 2009; Richter 2011, p. 107).[5]

This study has thus drawn on the following text material: (i) statements of regime figures on the MB as cited in various print media; (ii) articles on the MB in the journals *al-Mussawar* (for the period 1981-1997) and *Ruz al-Yusuf* (for the period 1997-2011). The selection of the specific statements of regime figures and of the specific articles was conducted in the following way: interviewed experts pointed out that media coverage of the MB and public statements of regime figures on the group were especially high before parliamentary elections as well as in moments of crises in MB-regime relations.[6] The dates of elections and of various crises were determined via yearbooks, secondary literature and interviews with MB members,[7] members of the regime,[8] and with experts on the group.[9] Then the issues of *al-Mussawar* and *Ruz al-Yusuf* respectively were scrutinized issue by issue during elections or the respective MB-regime crises. Those articles that were most graphic in their depiction of the MB – usually these were the lead stories of the respective journal issues – were selected. With regard to the statements of regime figures, the consulted yearbooks as well as the interview partners already named famous speeches or interviews of regime figures as well as the specific print media in which these speeches or interviews had appeared. These were the state-run *al-Ahram* and *al-Ahram al-Masa'i*, the ruling party's press *al-*

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5   Officially, *Ruz al-Yusuf* is privately owned. While traditionally it was more independent from the regime in its outlook, a switch of editor-in-chief drew the journal towards a pro-government line in the late 1990s. This tendency was further increased in the early 2000s, when the journal developed into the key mouthpiece for a group of businessmen and politicians around Gamal Mubarak (Richter 2011, p. 108). Not only was a new editor-in-chief installed, Abdallah Kamal – a member of the ruling party's (NDP) policies committee, headed by the President's son – but also the over-whelming majority of the shareholders of the 'Ruz al-Yusuf Corporation', now NDP-businessmen loyal to Gamal (Interview Expert 3 2010). In 2005 also the daily *Ruz al-Yusuf* was founded. A major financier was steel magnate and prominent NDP businessman Ahmad Ezz.

6   Interviews with five experts on the MB and the Egyptian media system, conducted in 2009. Examples of such crises were the death of Islamist-leaning lawyer al-Madani in 1994, who died in police custody, purportedly as a consequence of police mistreatment, or the famous 'al-Azhar milita incident' in 2006 when MB students conducted a martial arts performance during a political demonstration of students on the premises of al-Azhar university.

7   Interviews with four top leaders of the MB, conducted in 2010.

8   Interviews with two top regime figures, conducted in 2009.

9   Interviews with three experts on the MB, conducted in 2009 and 2010.

Mayo, but also the independent *al-Masry al-Youm* and the opposition party press *al-Ahrar*.[10]

3.4 Method of Text Analysis

Concerning the regime's discourse the sources were analysed through '*summarizing* qualitative content analysis' as proposed by Mayring (2008, pp. 59-76). The compiled text material was brought into chronological order and was addressed with the question 'how is the MB portrayed?'. Each relevant proposition was extracted from the material and paraphrased. Paraphrases were then brought onto the same level of abstraction so that they formed a set of categories that can be said to be structuring the regime's discourse on the MB. These categories were then rechecked with the original text material in a feedback loop to make sure that they adequately represented the text material's content. Finally, the results were interpreted in two ways: first, the chronological order of the analysed text material made it possible to search for frequencies of categories over time as well as to trace when new categories appeared and others vanished, e. g. when the category 'the MB is peaceful' was replaced with the category 'the MB commits violence'. Change and continuity in the regime's discourse were thus revealed. Second, the underlying meaning of the categories was then formulated into overarching narratives – each consisting of several themes – such as the narrative of the early and mid-1980s of the MB being 'a noble social and religious actor'. This narrative was later replaced by the narrative of the MB being 'an enemy of the nation'.

The method chosen for scrutinizing the programmatic writings of the MB was '*structuring* qualitative content analysis' (Mayring 2008, pp. 82-99). Here, the text material was examined in terms of categories derived from theory, in this case from the chosen concept of liberal democracy. They comprised: 'popular sovereignty'; 'power rotation through free and fair elections'; 'equal active and passive right to vote'; 'freedom of press, opinion, association'; 'freedom to form parties'; 'separation of powers'; 'equal civil liberties'. The set of categories was then checked against the corpus of MB texts in a first viewing and then refined to also comprise the overarching categories 'democracy' and 'constitutionalism/constitutions', as well as the categories 'parliamentarism' and 'party pluralism' as linked to the category 'freedom to form political parties'. The text material – that had been put into chronological order – was then processed and text passages relating to the respective categories were marked. These passages were then interpreted in four steps. First, the way in which the MB dealt with the liberal democratic con-

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10 It is important to note that the Egyptian media system under Mubarak can largely be divided into three types of press: the national (state-run) press, the 'independent' or privately owned press and the opposition party press. The regime, however, also managed to establish a considerable degree of control over the privately owned and opposition party press through various measures. For example, the opposition party press is printed and distributed only through the state-owned publishing houses. Concerning the privately owned press, a glance at the shareholders' register reveals the existence of regime figures and loyalists amongst them. Other indirect subsidies, for example through advertisements, bind these media further to the regime. In addition, restrictive laws have generally severely limited the journalists' freedom in coverage (Richter 2011, pp. 107-112).

cepts was examined: did it reject or adopt them, did it remain ambivalent? Or did the group try to attach new meanings to them (for example, when it began to construct a link between the notion of 'sovereignty of the people' and the state's protection of conservative Islamic morality)? Second, and more specifically, an analysis was made of the way in which the MB invoked Islamic concepts such as 'shura', 'musawa' or 'the role of the *shari'a'* whilst engaging with liberal democratic concepts. Third, it was analysed what vision of an ideal state could be derived from this. Finally, the chronological order of the text material made it possible to detect changes regarding these issues over time.

3.5 Political Inclusion

'Political inclusion' here refers to a regime's institutional openings towards specific opposition groups or parties. In the case of Egypt's MB, this specifically comprised granting the organization the opportunity to participate in pluralist elections for both parliament and civil society institutions – primarily Egypt's long-standing professional unions (Wickham 2004; El-Gobashy 2005). The level of political inclusion was thus derived from the access the regime granted the MB to these institutions.

3.6 Process Tracing

Process tracing is used as a method to study the causal effect of one or several factors in small-*n* research or single case studies, which provide an in-depth analysis of how a causal mechanism – over time – connects the respective factors with a specific outcome (Hall 2006; Bennett 2010). As such, process tracing is used to test, develop or refine theory. Depending on the specific inquiry at hand, process tracing has been argued to take different forms, and studies thus may follow different designs (George and Bennett 2005, p. 212). The aim of this paper is to assess the impact of political inclusion and regime discourse on the ideological development of the MB. Inspired by Wuhs' (2013) usage of process tracing, the article proceeds as follows: The period of study (1981 to 2011) is divided into four phases each of which is initiated by a key moment of change either in the level of political inclusion or in the nature of regime discourse, or in both. The article then traces the impact of that change on the MB's ideological development in each phase and examines whether the findings match the predictions of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis (i. e. whether increases in the level of inclusion have led to a rise in ideological moderation), and finally seeks to elucidate the effect of regime discourse (whether it has hindered or propelled moderation) with a view to refining the inclusion-moderation hypothesis.

4. Phase 1 (1981-1987): Leap in Inclusion and Benevolent Regime Discourse

When Mubarak ascended to power in 1981, the MB was offered inclusion, having formerly been politically excluded. Though the 1954 official ban on the group was not lifted, the MB was now allowed to contest pluralist elections for civil

society institutions (most prominently the professional syndicates) and parliament (where the group gained 8 seats in the elections of 1984). On a discursive level, the regime was relatively tolerant towards the MB after 1981. The regime's discourse was based on the narrative that the MB was a noble social and religious actor. The narrative comprised two themes: first, that the MB was set apart from the violent Islamist groups, the 'radicals', as it was designated to be non-violent and its activities in the social and religious realm were commended for being in the service of the Egyptian people – i. e. through the MB's strengthening of Islamic values in society and the group's provision of welfare services.[11] The second theme of the narrative, however, depicted the MB – while deemed a noble *social* and *religious* actor – as not being a professional *political* actor. This belittled the MB's ambitions in parliament, for example, by questioning the professionalism of the group's electoral alliance with the Wafd party, with which it had successfully contested the 1984 elections. It was, for example, argued that an electoral alliance was usually based upon a programme genuinely shared by two parties, but that in case of the MB-Wafd alliance, the programme was simply that of the Wafd, while the MB had not been able to provide a political vision of its own.[12] The regime thus ascribed a positive role to the MB, but also sought to limit that role to the social and religious realm. This relative benevolence of the regime at the beginning of Mubarak's rule was geared towards bolstering the MB as a counterweight to violent Islamists, who sought to overthrow the regime and had assassinated Sadat in 1981. As a prerequisite for that benevolence and political inclusion at the time, the regime expected the MB to distance itself publicly from the violent Islamists by vowing that it would not work against but within the formal state structures (Fürtig 1995, p. 266).

Though in 1981 the group had seen a change from exclusion to inclusion, this leap in inclusion was not followed by a comparable leap in ideological moderation. Instead, the MB's ideology remained deeply sceptical towards liberal democratic concepts.

The group's scepticism towards liberal democratic concepts was only at times interspersed with more tolerant stances. For example, the concept of parliamentarianism was consistently adopted into the group's ideology and declared compatible with the Islamic *shura* (consultation) principle (al-Talmasani 1985, p. 11). There were also sporadic avowals of commitment to democracy and to party pluralism in interviews given by MB leaders to the press (e. g. Abu al-Nasr 1986). However, these assertions conflicted with the negative approach to these concepts expressed in the group's more comprehensive programmatic writings. With such public avowals in the media, the MB complied with the regime's expectation that the group – in exchange for political inclusion – would not tune in with the violent Islamists' calls to overthrow the state. Accordingly, the MB – at least in the media – paid lip service to Egypt's political order, which was at least formally claimed to be built on party pluralism and democracy.

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11 E. g. al-Ahrar, 'al-Hukuma … Tuʿakkid: Hadaf al-Jamaʿa…Nabil', May 30, 1985.
12 E. g. al-Mussawar, 'al-Intikhabat wa-l-Muʿaraʿa', April 13, 1984.

In the group's programmatic writings, however, a deep scepticism towards liberal democratic concepts prevailed. On a theoretical level this is reflected in the fact that the group's thought drew more on the intellectual legacy of Sayyid Qutb – the intellectual godfather of the violent Islamist groups – than on the MB's founding father Hassan al-Banna. Qutb had rigorously rejected all western forms of statehood and juxtaposed them to his own vision of a decidedly Islamic state. His hallmark was the concept of *hakimiya,* conceived of as sovereignty belonging to God alone. A dichotomization of concepts into Islamic and un-Islamic marked his thought – with *all* western political concepts deemed to contravene Islam and thus rejected (Qutb 1964). The second legacy of thought was that of al-Banna, the MB's founder. In terms of political concepts he was more tolerant of western notions than Qutb and even explicitly included some of them, e. g. parliamentarianism, into his thought (al-Banna [1947] 2006, p. 659; Lübben 2004, p. 139). For him – unlike Qutb – the specific Muslim nature of the state was not the central concern: As Mitchell has put it, his 'immediate concern […] was not the organization of a 'Muslim state' but rather the more profound issue of the nature and destiny of Muslim society' (Mitchell [1969] 1993, p. 236), which he claimed was in dire need of an Islamic reform. Thus, it was only in the social and moral realm that al-Banna sought to purge Egypt of western influences and therefore strongly rejected western concepts and practices.

The MB's political thought, from 1981 to 1987, now oscillated between these two legacies of thought, though Qutb's influence clearly predominated. This is reflected in the group's conception of the envisioned state. The main purpose of this state was to be the implementation of the *shari'a*. This was constructed as being the ruler's – and by extension the state's – duty before God (al-Talmasani, 1984, pp. 11-12). Out of respect for this duty the people were required to bow to the ruler's will (al-Talmasani, 1985, p. 19). However, the ruler was not portrayed as bestowed with a divine mandate to execute God's will, rendering him infallible and securing him the right to the people's obedience in all instances. Rather, the people were understood to owe the ruler obedience only as long as he moved within the confines of the *shari'a* (al-Talmasani 1984, pp. 36-39). That the ruler was, thus, understood to be bound – in all his actions – to the teachings of Islam (the *shari'a*) was portrayed as the hallmark of the envisioned 'Muslim state' (al-Talmasani 1985). This state was often juxtaposed to all western notions of statehood, reverberating Qutb's scepticism towards them. Concepts such as democracy or constitutionalism were thus viewed with deep scepticism and at times outright rejected. Democracy, for example, was denounced as the tyranny of the majority over the minority (al-Talmasani 1985, p. 25), and all man-made constitutions were decried as 'false Gods' (al-Talmasani, 1985 p. 37), with only the *shari'a* being deemed a valid basis for government.

The phase from 1981 to 1987 accordingly did not see a notable increase in the MB's ideological moderation. The sporadic avowals of commitment to democracy given by MB leaders in the media conflicted with the group's stances as expressed in its programmatic writings. These avowals can certainly be interpreted as lip service. They complied with the regime's expectation that the organization – as quid pro quo for political inclusion – would not tune in with the violent Islamists'

calls to overthrow the political order. As the regime, however, was intent on using the MB as a counterweight to the violent Islamists, which were the strongest opposition when Mubarak came to power, the group's half-hearted – but public – lip service in the media sufficed to guarantee them political inclusion. Regime incentives to instigate any deeper ideological changes within the MB were absent.

5. Phase 2 (1987-1995): Leap in Inclusion and Negative Regime Discourse

Because the 1987 parliamentary elections were much more open than the previous ones of 1984, there was a leap in the inclusion of the MB. The group's unexpected success in gaining 37 seats saw it become the largest opposition force in parliament. At the same time, the MB expanded its presence in the professional syndicates and won majorities in the most influential ones. The growing success of the MB, however, prompted a shift in the regime's discourse. A negative portrayal of the group was disseminated in order to undermine the organization's growing popular support. The new discourse was based on the narrative of the MB being the enemy of the Egyptian nation. This narrative was based on two themes. The first was that there was no distinction between the 'radical' Islamists and the MB in terms of the use of violence. The MB, it was argued, had turned the syndicates into platforms through which it collaborated with al-Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya and al-Jihad to incite violent acts in order to throw Egypt into a wave of terrorism.[13] The MB was in this way depicted not as a legitimate political but as a criminal actor.[14] The second theme of the narrative was that there was no distinction between the MB and radical Islamists, as both opposed democracy as a political system and, hence, Egypt's legal-political framework, which – at least formally – was claimed to be based on several democratic principles. The MB was now strongly criticized for not consistently embracing notions such as democracy, rule of the people or pluralist elections in its ideology.[15] The MB's rejection of democracy was also argued to be evidenced by the group's failure to abide by democratic procedures. It was claimed that the group had won its seats in the syndicates and parliament only through bribery, coercion and deception, and that whenever the group was at the head of 'democratic' institutions, as was the case with the syndicates, the MB had neither respected the will of the people nor the rule of law, but instead had sought to autocratically impose its will on the people.[16]

Confronted with these stark allegations, the MB refuted them in order to maintain its growing popular support. The group asserted that – quite contrary to the regime's claims – it was not a criminal force, but a 'regular' political one in line with the country's legal-political framework. Consequently, there was a big incentive for the group to engage with and start to adopt several liberal democratic

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13 E. g. al-Mussawar, 'Kayfa Tasarraf Majlis al-Ikhwan fi Masir Niqabat al-Muhamin?!', May 27, 1994. e.g. al-Mussawar, 'Jamy'at Shabab al-Muhamin', May 27, 1994.

14 E. g. al-Ahram al-Masa'i, 'Wazir al-Dakhiliya fi Mu'tamar Sahafi', December, 1992.

15 E. g. al-Mayu, 'Turat [sic] al-Ikhwan al-Dimuqrati!?', April 27, 1987.

16 E. g. al-Mussawar, 'Kayfa Tasarraf Majlis al-Ikhwan fi Masir Niqabat al-Muhamin?!', May 27, 1994.

concepts in its ideology – concepts that already served as tenets of Egypt's legal-political framework. As a result, there was a leap in ideological moderation.

5.1 Underlying Theoretical Shifts

This increase in moderation was achieved by an empowerment of the people vis-à-vis the ruler in the political thought of the MB. Specifically, this empowerment was realized by a move away from the Qutbi legacy of thought and towards that of al-Banna. It was then followed by a second move that took al-Banna's thought even further.

The empowerment of the people was made possible by a modified interpretation of two Islamic principles, the *shura* principle and that of *al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahi 'an al-munkar*. The group's most prominent programmatic writing in this respect was the 'Treatise on the Shura Principle in Islam and Party Pluralism in Muslim Society' (1994b). Here, *shura* was no longer considered a mere consultation right, as had been the case in the 1980s when the ruler had been viewed as needing to consult with the people before making decisions although the people's will had not been considered binding for him (al-Talmasani 1985) – i. e., the people's obligation to the ruler had been emphasized. The 1994 programmatic writing interpreted *shura* differently, namely, as the concept through which the people were empowered vis-à-vis the ruler. *Shura* was expanded to mean that the people were the source of all power (MB 1994b, p. 31), thereby manifesting the fact that the people's will was now binding for the ruler. This was derived from the Islamic principle of *al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahi 'an al-munkar* – to command the good and forbid the evil (MB 1994b, p. 31). In stark contrast to the violent Islamists' interpretation of this concept – they had used it as a pretext to enforce strict Islamic norms of conduct such as forcing women to wear the veil – the MB now interpreted this principle as follows: Man was responsible before God to implement on earth what God had ordained (as expressed in the *shari'a*). The decision regarding how the *shari'a* was to be translated into specific policies and legislation was conferred to the people, and thus no longer rested with the ruler (MB 1994b, pp. 36-37).

These interpretations of the Islamic principles of *shura* and of *al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf* employed by the MB in the 1990s were, in fact, revamped versions of those held by al-Banna in the 1930s and 1940s (Lübben 2004). The MB had thus moved away from Qutb's and towards al-Banna's thought. However, the group now took al-Banna's interpretation of these two concepts further. He had not equated them with the notion that the people were the source of all power, but had only tentatively likened them to that notion. For him, the ruler still functioned as an intermediary between God's will, as expressed in the *shari'a*, and the people (al-Banna [1947] 2006). Now, however, this intermediary function vanished and the notion of the people as the source of all power became a cornerstone of the MB's thought. With that, an accelerated integration of liberal democratic concepts became possible.

5.2 Integrating Liberal Democratic Concepts

The empowerment of the people was, thus, flanked by an increased integration of several liberal democratic concepts. Although the group's elaborations on the political order lacked detail in many regards, the following can be surmised: It was argued that the principle of popular sovereignty could be practised through the rotation of power resulting from free, fair, and regular elections (MB 1994b, p. 39), through the limitation of the ruler's tenure (MB 1994b, p. 37), as well as through parliamentarianism. The functions of parliament were laid out as the true reflection of the will of the people (guaranteed through free, fair and regular elections) and control over the ruler, whom the people could depose (MB 1994b, pp. 36-37). It was further stated that a written constitution was needed to stipulate the separation of powers, in order to prevent one state institution from dominating the others. Further, party pluralism was accepted (MB 1994b, p. 39). Traditionally the MB had rejected political parties, arguing that they were detrimental to the community because they spread 'discord' and prioritized particular interests over shared community interests. In the 1990s, the MB deduced the acceptance of party pluralism – and political pluralism in a wider sense – from the concept of *al-amr bi-l-ma'aruf wa-l-nahi 'an al-munkar*: Consensus over what was in accordance with what God has ordained should be reached through the people's diversity of opinion and constructive discussion. Thus, plurality of opinion was considered favourable, as it helped to access wisdom and truth, and was therefore viewed as beneficial for the community. It was claimed to be sanctioned by God, and to have already been practised under the Prophet Muhammad (MB 1994b, pp. 37-38).

5.3 Ambiguities

However, a closer look at the group's ideology reveals that a great deal of ambiguity surrounded the integration of liberal democratic principles, for example with regard to the issue of the constitution. While the group's writings argued that a written, 'man-made' constitution was needed, the documents in other instances argued that the *shari'a* was 'the paramount constitution' (MB 1994b, p. 36). And although party pluralism was accepted, it was left unclear whether this also applied to parties that did not view the *shari'a* as the highest legal source (MB 1994b, pp. 38-39). Furthermore, limits to the notion of pluralism were established using the Islamic notion of consensus (*ijma'*).[17] Through the latter a 'tyranny of the majority over the minority' was to be avoided and it was to be ensured that the interests of the community would always supersede the particular interests of any specific individual or groups (MB 1994b).

Such engagement with liberal democratic concepts while at the same time ascribing 'Islamic' limits to them was especially prominent in the group's thought on women. In a historic move, the MB in 1994 accepted the participation of women in political life. On a theoretical level this was made possible as the MB now restricted the 'superiority of the man' laid down in classical Islamic law to

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17 In Sunni Islam *Ijma'* is considered one of the four sources of Islamic jurisprudence.

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the *marital* realm (MB 1994a, p. 16). In this way, the group was able to introduce new views on the rights of women into the *political* realm. The group now supported women's active and passive right to vote in elections of representative bodies and women's right to run for public office, apart from that of the head of state. It also granted women the right to work (MB 1994a). However, the group explicitly distanced itself from the western concept of womanhood and argued that women differ in nature from men, first, because a woman was attributed the important duty of rearing future generations and was considered the nucleus of a stable family and the core of society (MB 1994a, pp. 20-21), and second, because her sense of 'shame' was argued to be much more vulnerable than that of a man, as her entire body, it was claimed, belonged to her realm of shame (MB 1994a, p. 19). Accordingly, a woman's demeanour in public and in her job – as well as the nature of her job – should follow certain rules; thus it was not deemed acceptable for her to travel alone (MB 1994a, p. 26), or to show more of her body than her face and her hands (MB 1994a, pp. 19-20).

5.4 At the Core of Ambiguity: An Unclear Conception of the Shari'a

Many of the ambiguities that surrounded the integration of liberal democratic principles stemmed from inherent conceptual flaws in the MB's empowerment of the people and from the group's failure to provide a clear conception of the *shari'a*. The two Islamic concepts *shura* and *al-amr bi-l-ma'aruf wa-l-nahi 'an al-munkar* were actually constructed to empower the people vis-à-vis the ruler and to designate the people as the source of all power. However, this conflicted with the earlier MB position that God was the paramount sovereign on earth (MB 1994b, p. 34). Some of the tension this implied was diffused by the fact that the MB conceived of the *shari'a* (which is considered the materialization of God's will) to be of a principally flexible nature – meaning that it not only held prescriptions that were to be followed literally but also granted men, on several issues, some freedom to regulate their own affairs; however, the group did not specify how far this freedom extended. It merely outlined that in cases where the will of the people contradicted an explicit rule (*nass qat'i*) found in the religious sources *Qur'an* or *Sunna*, the explicit rule would override the people's will. However, it was left unclear what qualified as an explicit rule in the first place – an issue that is generally highly contested in Islamic law and amongst Muslims.

Ultimately, the MB's reluctance to provide a more refined conception of the *shari'a* reflected the group's struggle to keep Islam relevant while increasingly adopting several liberal democratic principles that had formerly been deemed un-Islamic. This acceleration of ideological moderation – that the group underwent from 1987 to 1995 – kicked off when the regime's negative discourse regarding the MB began in 1987. This discourse provided a strong incentive for the group to seriously engage with and incorporate several of the basic liberal democratic concepts that served as tenets of Egypt's legal-political framework. In doing so, it sought to demonstrate that it was indeed a political actor within the realms of Egypt's legal-political framework and was not – as insinuated by the regime – comparable to terrorist Islamist groups.

6. Phase 3 (1995-2000): Reversal of Inclusion and Negative Regime Discourse

Despite the dissemination of a negative regime discourse concerning the MB, the group's popular support could not be contained and the group continued to win syndicate elections from 1987 to 1995. As a result, the regime's willingness to politically include the group saw a dramatic reversal in 1995. The parliamentary elections of that year were highly restrictive as the regime resorted to repression and electoral fraud to a much larger extent than in the previous elections. Only one member of the MB out of the 170 candidates fielded made it into parliament. Simultaneously, many of the syndicates' boards were frozen or placed under sequestration. Furthermore, state repression was levelled against the group. In 1995, over 70 leading members of the group were imprisoned and several of the group's top leaders were tried in military tribunals (Wickham 2002). The trials were widely covered by the media and underpinned by the regime's discourse, which continued to be based on the narrative of the MB as an enemy of the nation. In the following years the regime's discourse persisted in that vein, contending that (a) the MB was not a political but a criminal actor that had intimate ties with the groups Al-Gama'a and al-Jihad and had even brought them into being,[18] and (b) that the MB opposed democracy and had instrumentalized democratic institutions such as the syndicates for its own, undemocratic goals.[19]

Even though inclusion was now at an absolute minimum, there was neither a reverse in the MB's ideological changes nor a decrease in the level of its ideological moderation. The group's programmatic writings in that period were few in number, due to repression, but they followed the same lines as the writings of the 1987-1995 period (e. g. al-Hudaybi 1995, 1996; MB 1999). Interviews with both experts and the MB leadership further confirmed that the group invested many efforts during the late 1990s in composing the 2000 parliamentary election programmes,[20] which did not show a decrease in moderation. The criminal convictions of the MB in military tribunals and the regime's depiction of the group as a criminal group that sought to destroy Egypt's legal-political framework impelled the MB to continue to prove otherwise. Accordingly, the group re-asserted its acceptance of several basic tenets of Egypt's political order (e. g. party pluralism, power rotation through regular elections), thus upholding its level of moderation of the 1987-1995 period.

7. Phase 4 (2000-2011): Leap in Inclusion & Leap in Negative Regime Discourse

The 2000 parliamentary elections marked an important change in the MB's level of political inclusion. As the regime loosened restrictions, 17 of the group's candidates made it into parliament. Shortly afterwards, the organization was allowed to re-enter the professional syndicates. Inclusion then gradually increased, and the 2005 parliamentary elections were the least restrictive ones under Mubarak. This

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18 E. g. Ruz al-Yusuf, 'al-Murshid Sadeq', April 28, 1997.
19 E. g. Ruz al-Yusuf, 'Murshid ... Iahtaj ila Irshad', April 28, 1997.
20 Interviews with two top MB members and one former MB member, conducted in 2010.

was, to quite an extent, due to US pressure on the Egyptian regime to democratize. The MB was the group that managed to profit most from this opening. After winning a stunning 88 seats (20 per cent of the total seats), it became not only the biggest opposition group in parliament but also the regime's most potent political rival. While external pressure to democratize now hindered Mubarak from clamping down on the group, the regime's negative discourse on the MB now took a quantitative leap. The most vocal mouthpiece of the anti-MB discourse at the time, *Ruz al-Yusuf*, at times filled more than half of its issues with articles on the MB. The group was no longer referred to by its name, but simply referred to as *al-mahthura* (the forbidden). Content-wise, the regime's discourse continued the narrative of the MB as an enemy of the nation and its two themes were kept in place: (i) that the group was not a political but a criminal actor and (ii) that it positioned itself outside of Egypt's legal-political framework, i. e. in opposition to the (averred) democratic character of that order. It was again argued that the MB was not interested in democracy, but that once in power, the group would reveal its true criminal nature and was intent on spreading chaos and violence, ultimately destroying Egypt's current political order.[21] The narrative, however, was now transposed into the context of the 2000s. As Al-Gama'a and al-Jihad were no longer committing violent acts in Egypt, as had been the case in the 1990s, it was now claimed that the MB was plotting with hostile external actors, especially the terrorist groups Hamas and Hizbollah, but also with Iran, to create terrorist cells within Egypt.[22] In a similar logic, it was claimed that the MB's spectacular political success in the parliamentary elections of 2005 was not representative of the group's respect for the democratic institutions or procedures of the state, but of the group's collaboration with an external enemy. The US and the MB were alleged to have conspired in these elections to install MB rule in Egypt, destroy democracy and destabilize the country in order to make it perceptive to Western interests in the Middle Eastern region.[23]

While the regime with its discourse sought to discredit the MB in the public eye, the group – in response – sought to reassert its conformity with several democratic principles in its endeavour to maintain and widen its popular support. The organization now vocally aligned itself with the many voices – both abroad (the US) and within Egypt – demanding that the Mubarak regime instigate democratic reforms that would allow free and fair elections as well as the rotation of power, thus preventing Mubarak from handing power down to his son. While the MB's adoption of liberal democratic concepts had in the previous two periods been marred by ambiguities, they now became much more outspoken. As many of the ambiguities were resolved and more liberal democratic principles were integrated into its ideology, the MB's ideological moderation now took a leap forward. However, it became overtly evident that this was only a selective modera-

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21 E. g. Ruz al-Yusuf, 'Min Qalb al-Ikhwan', April 9, 2005.
22 E. g. Al-Ahram, 'al-Qabd 'ala Isam al-Iryan', August 18, 2007; al-Masry al-Youm, 'Dabit 'Amn al-Dawla fi al-Tahqiqat', December 21, 2006. For an elaboration on the regime's discourse that linked the MB to Hamas, Hizbollah and Iran as well as for an elaboration on the MBs counterdiscourse see Monier andRanko (2013).
23 E. g. Ruz al-Yusuf, 'Amrika Nawiya' Ta'amal eh fi Masr?', April 16, 2005.

tion and that the group's adoption of liberal democratic principles was not geared towards emulating a liberal democracy. Rather, the group envisioned a political order that was clearly set apart from a liberal democracy: a 'civil state with an Islamic frame of reference' (MB 2007b, 2007c).

7.1   Selective Moderation in the Context of the Envisioned Civil State with an Islamic Frame of Reference

While the MB's political thought in the periods 1987-1995 and 1995-2000 reflected the group's struggle to keep 'Islam' relevant and at the same time increasingly adopt liberal democratic concepts that had formerly been deemed un-Islamic, this tension was now solved. The MB reconciled the group's avowal to popular sovereignty (made since the 1987-1995 period) with the group's concern that the *shari'a* be attributed key importance in the political order. This was realized through a new, clarified *shari'a* conception that the group now offered. This conception made it possible that

(i)   the major goal of the newly envisioned state was to realize popular sovereignty through democratic procedures (i. e. with regard to the set-up of state institutions, and mechanisms of political decision-making and power rotation). Ideological moderation in the realm of political procedures thus reached a peak at this point.

(ii)   At the same time, however, this newly clarified *shari'a* conception did not construct these democratic procedures as the *true* bringer of popular sovereignty, but instead constructed the state's protection of a highly conservative Muslim morality in society to be the true bringer of popular sovereignty. As this morality is often at odds with liberal democratic concepts, the group did not adopt liberal democratic principles and values in the realm of morality and culture.

7.2   A Refined Conception of the Shari'a

The *shari'a* was attributed a key role in the MB's 'civil state with an Islamic frame of reference', as this 'frame' was defined as follows: the principles of the *shari'a* were to be the main source of legislation and should serve as the foundation for the outlook, strategies, policies, and actions of the state (e. g. MB 2007b).

The following newly clarified conception of the *shari'a* was now provided by the MB: The *shari'a's* principles were classified into three groups: (1) Those that are inflexible, here the religious sources have to be followed literally – this refers only to principles that deal with dogma ('*aqida*) and rites ('*ibada*).[24] (2) Those that are only slightly flexible; here, religious sources would have to be followed literally in the vast majority of instances. This refers to principles that regulate the dealings and interactions between individuals in the realm of (public as well as private) morality and culture. (3) Those principles that are flexible. Here, the

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24   This group of teachings does not demonstrate any impact on the MB's *political* thought.

shari'a is not viewed as a fixed legal text but as consisting of several overarching ethical values that are to be realized in different ways according to the respective time and circumstances, thus necessitating a significant degree of human interpretation (*ijtihad*). This refers to such dealings and interactions between people in the political, social and economic realm (*mu'amalat*) that have no bearing on the realm of culture and morality (MB 2007c, p. 10). These include, for example, the set-up of state institutions and political decision-making processes.

From this categorization of *shari'a* principles, two linchpins of the MB's ideology emerged. In the realm of *mu'amalat*, the high degree of human interpretation allowed the (largely unambiguous) integration of liberal democratic concepts. This marked a new high point in the MB's efforts toward integration. However, true popular sovereignty, it was argued, was not achieved within the realm of *mu'amalat*. Rather, the (highly) conservative Muslim nature of the realm of culture and morality – and its protection by the state – was now elevated to specific importance and was stylized as the key indicator for popular sovereignty.

7.3 Moderation Peaks in the Realm of Mu'amalat

In the realm of *mu'amalat* the overarching principles of the *shari'a* were to be achieved by the state and were portrayed as compatible with liberal democratic concepts (Akif 2004, pp. 184-187; MB 2007b, pp. 5-6). These principles were specified as *'adala* (justice), *hurriya* (freedom), *shura* (consultation) and *musawa* (equality). How they were to be translated into specific policies was to be decided by the people – through elected representatives in parliament as well as through an elected head of state.[25]

'Adala was understood in the sense of social justice, meaning the fair distribution of wealth and the provision of basic living standards through ensuring access to basic needs such as food, housing or health care (MB 2007b, p. 6). *Hurriya* referred to political rights – e. g., the right to form political parties, the active and passive right to vote, and the right to run for public office. Here, however, the right of women and members of religious minorities to run for presidency was called into question (as discussed in the next section). *Hurriya* also referred to those civil liberties that were considered by the MB to be linked to the right to political participation, such as freedom of thought and speech, the freedom to congregate and to demonstrate, and the freedom to found non-governmental organizations (MB 2007a, p. 9, 2010). *Shura* referred to decision-making through consultation and consensus rather than through domination of one person or party over the other, thus preventing tyranny. *Shura* applied to any relationship between people. At the state level, this was to be practised through the technique of democracy (MB 2007b, pp. 9-10). Democratic government was envisaged as follows: Rule was to be organized in a democratic, representative parliamentary system which would ensure the rotation of power through free, fair, competitive

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25 The first version of the 2007 draft party platform conceived of a council of religious scholars that was to review laws for their compatibility with the *shari'a* (MB 2007b, p. 7). This was reversed shortly afterwards.

and regular elections, allow party pluralism, implement the separation of powers and the rule of law, and – as mentioned above – would guarantee several political rights and civil liberties (Akif 2004, pp. 184-187). The fourth Islamic ethical principle, *musawa*, referred to the fact that *hurriya*, *'adala* and *shura* were applicable to all individuals in society without discrimination on the basis of gender, race, confession or conviction (MB 2007b, p.6) – the only exception being the issue of the presidency (MB 2007b, pp. 10-11).

7.4 No Moderation in the Realm of Morality and Culture – The Untouchable Core of Muslim Society

While in the realm of *mu'amalat* freedoms and rights that were granted in liberal democracies were viewed as compatible with the teachings of the *shari'a*, this was not the case in the realm of morality and culture. Here the MB understood the *shari'a* as only slightly flexible and adhered to an overtly literalist reading of the Islamic sources, and thus to conservative Islamic standards of morality (MB 2007c, p. 10). This affected, for example, cultural productions (such as movies, literature or fashion), familial relations (such as those between children and parents or between husband and wife) and the ordering of public space. A special focus was given here to public morality, and particularly relations between the sexes and the role of women (MB 2007b, pp. 70-77). As in the 1990s, the MB still attributed to women a different role in society than it did to men – laid out in section 5.3 – and there ensued specific rules of public conduct, dress and morality for women: modest dress and ideally the hijab, which covers the hair, were envisioned; travelling alone was considered unsuitable for a woman; and the kind of work she practised should match her nature and not expose her to unbecoming contact with men (MB 2007b, pp. 70-73). While conservative Muslim standards in the realm of morality and culture impinge particularly on the civil liberties of women, they also limit those of men. For example, the right to self-determination is curtailed as homosexuality is deemed intolerable, and men's freedom of expression can be restricted as cultural productions need to conform to conservative Islamic standards.

The MB has self-assertively set itself apart from Western liberal democratic values in the realm of morality and culture (Akif 2004 pp. 196-197). The state's protection of this realm's conservative Muslim nature is constructed to be part and parcel of popular sovereignty. As the state is, thus, attributed a central religious duty, i. e. to ensure *shari'a* norms be applied in the realm of morality and culture, the office of president is reserved for male Muslims (e. g. MB 2007b, pp. 10-11). Thus, the 'civil state with an Islamic frame of reference' to which the MB aspired impinges not only on civil liberties, but also on the political rights granted in liberal democracies. It should be noted, however, that apart from the issue of the presidency, women as well as Christians have had the active and passive right to vote in elections for representative bodies and the right to run for public office since the 1990s (al-Hudaybi 1995, 1996).

Parallel to the leap in political inclusion as well as the negative regime discourse on the MB in the 2000-2011 period, the group's ideological moderation

reached an unprecedented peak. As the regime's tarnishing portrayal of the MB threatened to curb the organization's popular support, the group sought to refute the regime's charges by further moderating its stances. However, it now also became evident that this moderation was only of a selective nature.

8. Selective Moderation

While the number of liberal democratic principles adopted into the group's ideology reached an unprecedented level in the period 2000-2011, liberal democratic concepts were only adopted in the realm of political procedures – the realm of *mu'amalat*. Here, principles such as the separation of powers or power rotation through free and fair elections were accepted. In the realm of morality and culture, however, liberal democratic principles such as several personal liberties of women were deliberately curtailed as this realm's highly conservative Muslim identity was now upheld as the untouchable core of Egypt's society.

This selective moderation had been shaped by the specific content of the negative discourse that the regime disseminated from 1987 until the fall of Mubarak in 2011. The MB was portrayed as a criminal force and placed on a par with violent Islamists. As evidence the regime cited that the MB rejected Egypt's legal-political order and was ultimately – like the violent Islamist groups – seeking to destroy it. The MB's lack of commitment to democratic institutions and procedures – which at least formally served as lynchpins for Egypt's legal-political framework – was criticized repeatedly and vehemently. This pushed the group to increasingly assert its compatibility with these issues in order to maintain its popular support, which seemed threatened by the harsh depiction of the MB in the regime's discourse. At the same time, however, the regime's discourse did not dwell on criticizing the MB's conservative Islamic views in the realm of morality. In fact, the regime itself had fostered the increasing Islamization of Egyptian society by actively encouraging a conservative Muslim morality in Egyptian society since the mid-1990s, especially through expanding al-Azhar's religious censorship rights over cultural productions such as movies, literature or theatre (e. g. Ismail 2006). The MB therefore had no incentive to adopt moderate stances in the realm of morality, and the more moderate the group became in the realm of political procedures, the more it reasserted its Islamic conservatism in the realm of morality.

9. Conclusion: The Effect of the Regime's Discourse and Political Inclusion

This paper has sought to contribute to the literature on the ideological moderation of opposition groups and parties in contexts of political inclusion in authoritarian settings. In its endeavour to identify factors that – in addition to political inclusion – might hinder or propel a group's ideological moderation, the study has sought to clarify the effect of a 'novel' factor – raised by Tezcur – namely 'regime discourse'. To that end it has drawn on the case of the Egyptian MB under Mubarak.

The article finds that although there was a dramatic leap in inclusion in period 1 (1981-1987) – when at the beginning of Mubarak's rule the regime switched

from excluding the group to offering it political inclusion – ideological moderation of the MB only began to take hold when the regime's negative discourse on the group kicked in in period 2 (1987-1995). The charges levelled against the organization and the subsequent threat of losing its popular support were strong incentives for the MB to refute these allegations by moderating its stances on those issues raised by the regime's discourse. This 'moderating effect' of the regime's negative discourse was not only witnessed when it was met with leaps in inclusion – as was the case in period 2 (1987-1995) as well as in period 4 (2000-2011) – but also when the negative discourse was coupled with the dramatic reversal of its inclusion policy in period 3 (1995-2000). Though according to the inclusion-moderation hypothesis this setback should have led to a marked decrease in ideological moderation, the incentive for the MB to uphold moderate stances in certain issues was still high enough.

Furthermore, this study finds that the content of the regime's discourse has shaped the kind of ideological moderation the MB has undergone. The charges articulated against the group, from 1987 onwards, provided strong incentives for the organization to moderate its stances *only* in respect of the specific issues mentioned in the regime's discourse. As a result, moderation was highly selective and only occurred in the realm of political procedures (the set-up of state institutions, the mechanisms of political decision making), but not in the realm of morality and culture (which for example involved the personal freedom of women).

On a theoretical level, the selective moderation of the MB was underlined by a change in the group's notion of the state and *shari'a*. In period 1 (1981-1987), the key component of the group's envisioned state was the ruler's duty to apply *shari'a*. The implementation of *shari'a* was constructed as the ruler's – and by extension the state's – duty before God. The people were expected to bow to the ruler's will out of respect for his 'extraordinary' duty before God. In period 4 (2000-2011), however, the main purpose of the state was still the implementation of *shari'a*, but *shari'a* had now morphed into a vehicle through which popular sovereignty was to be realized. Popular sovereignty was to be exercised – only on a procedural level – through democratic principles such as power rotation through pluralist elections and the separation of powers. The true bringer of popular sovereignty, however, was constructed to be the state's protection of a highly conservative Muslim morality, which was mostly at odds with liberal democratic principles.

This shift in the MB's conception of state and *shari'a*, on the one hand, enabled the group to increasingly adopt liberal democratic principles into its ideology – at least in the realm of political procedures – and to increasingly project itself as a pro-democratic force. On the other hand, however, the MB's shift in the notion of state and *shari'a* also enabled the group to retain several immoderate positions and to ultimately increase their survivability. The MB's construction of an intimate link between popular sovereignty and the state's protection of Muslim morality was able to render several of the MB's positions that are irreconcilable with liberal democratic values viable even in the context of post-Arab spring calls for democratic transition.

There are other cases, beyond Egypt, which also suggest that a negative regime discourse can have a moderating effect on politically included opposition groups

in authoritarian contexts. In the case of the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development (PJD), a shift in regime discourse after the Casablanca attacks of 2003 – the discourse now likened the PJD to violent Islamists – was followed by an increase in the party's moderation. Wegner and Pellicer (2009, p. 166) have noted that the PJD was now especially intent to set itself clearly apart from the violent Islamists and to bolster its credentials as a 'non-rejectionist', pro-democratic force. This suggests that the findings of this article apply not only to the Egyptian case and that the political science literature dealing with the inclusion-moderation hypothesis – and thus with moderation processes of politically included opposition groups and parties – would benefit from including the 'regime discourse' factor into analysis.

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