Revitalization of Political Thought
Through Democracy and Human Rights
Islamism, Marxism and Pan Arabism

Introduction
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Revitalization of Political Thought Through Democracy and Human Rights

CAIRO INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES
CIHRS

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Introduction

I think that the five seminars of Ibn Rushd Salon, which are the subject matter of this book, are of great importance. They broach the major problems and issues that prevail in our contemporary Egyptian society. I mean these issues which could guarantee a more authentic political life in our country. Those seminars are the building blocks for more thorough studies that would actually lay the foundations for a Charter of National Consensus, based on well-entrenched scientific and academic pillars.

The first issue raised in those seminars was democracy, specifically in Egyptian society, and in Arab societies in general. It is considered the major guarantee of consensus. This question was the most important, particularly in the first salon, which dealt with the issue of human rights within the framework of the latest elections in Egypt. The central question was: is there a real and genuine belief in democracy in Egyptian political life, or is democracy a mere "tactic", some kind of "truce" between political movements which are totalitarian in essence, or which are still controlled by residues of despotic or autocratic thought in one form or another?

It seems that the frame of reference of those movements is still totalitarian, where no room is left for opposition, albeit using different justifications. In other words, if there is a need for democracy, it is only because those movements do not possess the material or political power to control others. Acknowledging the right of others to exist (this totalitarian phenomenon is not confined to the ruling party only, but extends to opposition parties and movements) stems only from the belief that it is "a better evil"! It is also a justification for the very existence of those parties. Hence, democracy is not projected as an absolute right for all, nor as a strategic option. For instance, the frame of reference for Islamists is Islam, which should, in their opinion, take precedence over all others; it is even "the" absolute reference. They require other movements and forces, including Copts who are not Muslims, to endorse this postulate without any reservations.

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Nationalists are steadfast about the precedence of the Pan Arabist frame of reference, on the basis that the Arab nation is an inseparable unit, and Arabs are one nation that extends from the Gulf to the Ocean (in space) and from ancient times till doomsday (in time). This identity by itself is sufficient to produce Arab rejuvenation and social progress. To acknowledge opposition and counter opinion - whatever its origin - is an impediment to the achievement of the anticipated progress.

Furthermore, progressive and leftist movements also project the idea that only their ideologies are on the right scientific track. Hence, all those movements are generally totalitarian. They recognize democracy only reluctantly, due to their incapacity to control the political arena single-handedly.

In fact, I do not visualize a way out of this predicament except through more stable and thorough democratic traditions. This will never come true with a political system that itself does not believe in democracy, and uses it only as a facade to persuade the Western world that it is an inherent part of it. Hence, democracy, in the final analysis, becomes a cover- up for our ills.

It is important here to assert that so long as the regime does not acknowledge pluralism in the true sense, and does not provide an equal opportunity for various forces, does not believe in genuine democratic mechanisms for rotation of power and the right of people to change rulers through direct and free elections, and does not open the door for nomination to the post of head of state... so long as this state of affairs prevails, our society will remain hierarchical. The ruling party would be irreplaceable, probably because it mainly relies, for historical reasons, on a legitimacy that endows the military establishment, even in a concealed way, with hegemony and influence. Naturally, it would be difficult to visualize a radical change, so long as confrontation with Israel has not been settled through a peace process that could actually lead to permanent and just peace in the region.

In fact, opposition parties in the "structure" of Egyptian political life at present are a reproduction of the hierarchical pattern at the top of the pyramid. They resemble small provinces that are linked to a central state within a single society. This implies that, instead of being the antithesis of authority, opposition is a mirror image, yet on a smaller scale, of the regime.

It should be noted that there is a fundamental contradiction between genuine democracy based on the transfer of power through direct and free elections, and sham democracy. Within the former paradigm, the regime itself guarantees, through transfer of power, prosperity and autonomy for all those working in the field of politics. Political actors would not blindly follow the head of state, nor would they be one of the state's subservient "personnel"; they would be "partners" in a multi-polar political structure, even if those poles have different jurisdictions and specialization. By contrast, if a single individual, be it the head of state, appropriates an absolutely "untouchable" position, political actors around him would be mere puppets who follow his orders and directives. They would have no independence whatsoever, and would become "employees". Accordingly, democracy as a political system would be blurred. This is not only applicable at leadership levels, but could be generalized to the entire society. This is probably the first problem that we can draw from the discussions included in this book.

Those discussions provided an opportunity for a thorough and more elaborate study of the prominent intellectual schools in Egypt. It was not unusual that the five seminars focused especially on the Islamic movement. The second and third seminars were totally devoted to this topic. It is worth noting here the confrontation in the second and third salon between one of the most prominent representatives of the liberal movement, Said El Naggar, and Selim El Awa, one of the most brilliant and enlightened representatives of the Islamic movement. Their debate was quite interesting, frank, and focused. It actually revealed a possible convergence between the two movements provided that representatives of both schools exhibit a

great deal of openness, enlightenment, and intellectual endeavor in the search for a way out of the impasse.

However, we should bear in mind that Said El Naggar is one amongst liberals, and Selim El Awa is not the official mouthpiece of all Islamists. As was evident in the third debate, not all ideas championed by Selim El Awa are necessarily advocated by all Islamists, including official spokespersons of the Muslim Brothers. We should admit that totalitarian systems that are still exercising their hegemony on different political movements, are giving birth to great modalities of opinions and viewpoints, and to a great disparity and heterogeneity in organizational structures, each political line being separated from all others. Hence, totalitarian thought is not preoccupied with cohesion and discipline, which are necessary for organizational purposes; it might even lead in many cases to the opposite, viz., chaos and discord.

The Islamic movement is also facing other dilemmas, mainly its being the only movement which, in our present circumstances, surpasses elitism. It represents the pulse of the "streets", and consequently enjoys de facto political power, even with the regime's intransigence and its refusal to endow it with legitimacy. The state is constantly exposing Islamic activists to endless police hunts and judicial harassment.

The second predicament is the relationship between the Islamic movement and Copts. Actually, the fact that Copts - "one of the two components of the nation" - represent a minority, albeit one with a considerable weight in society, and the presence itself of a religious minority - enjoy a prominent and authentic rank - is a serious and fundamental problem, especially since Egypt's problems with the Hebrew state have not yet been resolved. Undoubtedly, Jews in the region should not be compared with Copts in Egypt by any means, but it is possible that the most extremist lines within the Islamic movement might visualize that the presence of Jews as a religious minority enjoying a distinguished status in the Middle East region (given Israel's regional power, thanks to the United States'

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unconditional support) would ultimately create sensitivities in the relations between Muslims and any other religious minority, including Copts.

It was not by mere coincidence that Sadat's abrupt visit to Jerusalem in 1977 flared up civil strife between Muslims and Copts in Egypt. This visit launched a "time bomb", which had serious repercussions that were not confined to the past.

The fourth debate discussed Pan Arabist thought, and its relationship with democracy. We can venture to say that, based on those discussions, it is difficult to perceive a compatibility between Pan Arabist thought and democracy. The idea of Pan Arabism itself gives priority to mobilizing society within the bounds of the Pan Arabist identity. Hence, it tends to contain disagreements within the ranks of its adherents, while democracy reinforces difference of opinion, and stems from pluralism and contention among various points of views. Therefore, the two paradigms are, whether we like it or not, contradictory in essence. This inevitable contradiction will remain with us endlessly.

Evidently, the major justification of the legitimacy of Pan Arabist thought is that it is primarily mobilization, especially in confronting problems related to the current world order, such as social injustice, suppression, the need to achieve social justice etc. Those problems also preoccupy progressive thought. However, we should wonder: to what extent can the absence of democracy be a means to establish mobilization action on strong bases? Acknowledging the right of others to disagree is the best means to overcome disagreement. This is a philosophical discussion that does not concern Pan Arabism Pan Arabism alone, but surpasses it to encompass progressive logic in general. This problem specifically was a major topic in the last debate.

We should also mention for the record that "progressive" ideas are themselves problematic. It was not surprising that a newspaper like the French "Le Monde" published, during July and August of

last year, a collection of studies including prolonged discussions of the concept of "progress", that involved prominent French thinkers belonging to various trends and specialization, and whether or not this idea still exists or, according to a headline of a series of articles, became "defunct."?

Nevertheless, the idea of "progress" is crucial for underdeveloped societies, described as "the less progressing". Any violation of the right of those societies to achieve their "progress" entails a revival of imperialist and racist perceptions, and propels the premise that some actors have an inherent "right" in the continuity of dependency and decadence of others. The last debate raised a number of issues pertaining to this topic. They are worthy of thorough study.

The issues raised here might seem absolutely academic. However, they could not be overlooked or marginalized. The world is "progressing", i.e., it is penetrating new fields of knowledge, and is devising new forms of subjugation and influence, whether to control people or the natural surroundings, on Earth or within the great universe.

Finally, I would like to say that we can draw several conclusions from the five debates. Certainly, those discussions gathered together prominent representatives of different lines and schools of thought, and hence opened the door for raising real problems and discussing them at length. I claim that all the issues broached in those debates are indispensable for resolving our predicaments and leading Egypt toward rejuvenation. The problems our country is facing cannot be overcome unless they are confronted, through collective, creative and bold intellectual endeavor.

Mohammed Sid Ahmed

October 1996.

Chapter One

Renovating Islamic Political Thought Within The Framework Of Democracy And Human Rights

Introduction

The debate with Islamic political movements stirs up quite a controversy. The majority of forces and political movements are quite reserved about the intellectual theses put forth by Islamic groups and consider them to be incompatible with democratic discourse and values (such as multi-parties, peaceful transfer of power among various political trends, people being the source of power, etc.) or human rights discourse (such as equality between men and women, and freedom of belief, expression and conscience).

Those reservations and general criticisms of political Islamic thought are reinforced by the fact that, when Islamic forces in some countries reached power, they exhibited totalitarian trends in political practices, while those contending for power in other countries lacked specific views toward democracy and human rights.

On the other hand, sympathizers with Islamic political thought and its offshoots think that this thought has the prerequisites to embrace all dimensions of democracy and human rights. They also see that protest against political Islam stems from an incorrect reading of history and explanations which are not necessarily binding to others. Furthermore figures of this movement have recently suggested progressive ideas concerning democracy and human rights.

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights (CIHRS) saw that a discussion of these perceptions and their multiple dimensions based

on understanding and enlightened debate would be considered a major contribution to resolving this problem, which preoccupies the Arab political and intellectual arena. Moreover, this discussion could spare the region further violations of human rights which take place as part of the ongoing clash between advocates of opposing trends and viewpoints.

Accordingly, CIHRS organized a cultural evening within the Ibn Rushd Salon on the sixth of May 1995 to debate the reconstruction of Islamic political thought within the framework of democracy and human rights. CIHRS invited the following contributors as main speakers:

1- Tawfik El Shawi — Professor of Law and renowned Islamic thinker.

2- Haidar Ibrahim Ali (Sudan) — Director of the Center of Sudanese Studies.

3- Maamoun El Hudeibi — Spokesman of the Muslim Brothers.

4- Nabil Abdel Fattah — Chairman of the Social Unit at Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies.

Abdel Moneim Said, Director of Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies and member of CIHRS Board of Trustees, guided the debate.

Abdel Moneim Said

Allow me first to thank the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies for inviting me and my colleagues to this meeting. To be frank, many people warned me over the phone and on my way here against attending this meeting. However, I had confidence in myself, my colleagues, and those attending the meeting. I also believed we

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could have a genuinely democratic debate on the topic of rebuilding Islamic political thought within the bounds of democracy and human rights. This topic is part of an academic effort undertaken by CIHRS for more than a year to urge all Egyptian and Arab intellectual movements, whether liberal, nationalist, or Islamic, to discuss several fundamental issues pertaining to the evolution of our societies or to local, regional and international changes that cannot possibly be ignored. I needn't reiterate that CIHRS is a scientific and academic institute based mainly on research, studies and objective scholarship dealing with one of the most intricate and delicate topics, namely, human rights.

In this meeting, we will allow contributors to speak for twenty minutes. I will try to be strict about the time because our aim is to create a greater opportunity for comments from the floor. We will have an academic introduction by Nabil Abdel Fattah, then we will hear from Tawfik El Shawi, followed by Maamoun El Hudeibi, and we will end with Haider Ibrahim Ali.

The great Illusions about Renovation

of Islamic Jurisprudence

Nabil Abdel Fattah

In fact, my presentation is not meant to be a sermon, nor a political or ideological argument. It stems from my position as a researcher who probes phenomena and attempts to analyze them, raise questions and propose answers. The major question is: can Islamic political thought be renovated within the framework of democracy and human rights? In my attempt to answer this question, I will also discuss what we might call " a collection of fantasies and widespread legends" about the question of renovation and the stagnation of Islamic jurisprudence. In my opinion, those legends prevent a thorough and objective discussion of the question of renewal or stagnation. We are living in an environment of intellectual cold and hot political wars, both in Egypt and Algeria, and this in fact is due to a number of political loopholes. There is a gap between the local and international contexts, and another one related to the crisis of political assessment - in Egypt as well as in Algeria - of what is happening internally and externally. There is also the lack of creative political imagination in both countries. We also have the crisis of the intellectual "self" of each intellectual movement and their inter-relationship, and finally a shortage of information available to each political line about the origins and developments of its counterparts. Each political faction summarizes the political thought of other factions into a collection of general premises. Each side remains captive of those perceptions insofar as its relationship and conflict with the others is concerned. Through the process of generalization, division, reproduction and dissemination of perceptions, each side portrays the others through a pattern of carefully knitted subjective images about itself and others.

Consequently, the supremacy of patterned images propels political, religious, and ideological forces in Egypt to produce several "illusions" - and convey several "legends" - they strongly believe and spread among people. With repetition and emphatic discourse, the illusion becomes a reality that we have to submit to and believe without further discussion. The most prominent of those illusions are:

1) "The Single Islamic Movement": This is the illusion that the Islamic political movement - whether in Egypt or Algeria - is one uniform entity, and that the differences within it are quite minor. Hence, their features are one and the same. This illusion is based on the exigencies of political and intellectual conflict, which require simple "short-hand" images about the other or the opponent and his characteristics in such a way as to facilitate intellectual and ideological victory over this opponent.

In fact, there are numerous Islamic political groups, and they have diverse and even contradictory features. They do not form a homogenous group, but we can rather say that each single group, even though it might appear as homogenous, flares up with internal disagreement and turmoil that does not appear on the surface, due to the desire of the group itself or involuntarily. The first of these reasons is that large factions of the radical Islamic political movement are by nature clandestine and operate underground, hence their ideological production is not circulated publicly. All that is published about those groups is a function of security, judicial or mass media channels, which often criticize those groups, and portray them as "terrorists", or those who commit "terrorist" acts.

The second factor is that the legalist and ideological production of those groups is restricted mainly to criticizing the state and other political forces and deeming them heretical. This serves to mobilize internal ideological cohesion within small groups, and to exacerbate political distinctions between different groups and between them and larger groups. All this leads to stagnation, extremism and severe conservatism resulting from the context in which ideological formulation takes place.

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The third factor is the nature of political conflict with the regime and other political forces, which imposes internal cohesion on those groups, while producing extremist ideas and interpretations. Those groups prohibit internal debate and controversy over scholarly exercise and interpretation. Mostly, disagreement within those groups stems from a difference of legal or juridical schools. The most prominent example is conflict over the appointment of a blind ruler, or the issue of disagreement between the Islamic Group (Al Jama'a Al Islamiya) and Al Jihad.

The fourth factor is that the widespread image of political Islam deals with the phenomenon as if it came from outer space or from another planet, while in fact it is only the political expression of a social movement having its own dimensions, evolution and independent status.

To sum up, there is a prevailing fallacy that tends to perceive the Islamic political movement as a single entity characterized by general features. This is not true. Lack of knowledge about the variations, contradictions and conflicts of opinion within those groups leads to an immature perception of the "other". It also entails over-simplification and absolutism in evaluating this "other", which is actually far removed from reality and from society. This accentuates stagnation and causes Salafi (fundamentalist) works to pervade the production of all activist political factions in Egypt.

2) "The Illusion of Intellectual Stagnation and Violent Actions": This is one of the illusions that stems from the tendency to place all Islamic groups in one basket. The origin of this illusion is the desire to overcome the opponent, which is a psychological tendency to satisfy and please the self. Hence, others are denounced as heretics or as having imperfect faith. This perception stipulates that the Islamic political movement - the thought and the groups - is inflexible and stern. The fact that the groups represent a political, intellectual and social

movement, and that in this capacity, they collide, interact, ask questions and provide answers, is completely overlooked.

Hence, one cannot yield to those illusions, and consider people like Omar Abdel Rahman, Ali Belhaj, Hassan El Turabi, Abbas Medani, Rashed EL Ghanoushi, Abdallah El Alaili, Tarek El Bishri, and Selim El Awa as belonging to one and the same group. In my estimation, combining those different figures is a confusion of opinion and perception.

An empirical-analytical observation reveals an intellectual and legalist stiffness about the status of the Islamic movement in Egypt, while the offshoots of the movement are actually vital and dynamic. The Islamic movement in Tunisia, for instance, is a case in point.

3) Illusions about the "Self": The most prominent component of this illusion for some Islamic political groups is the expropriation, monopolization and exploitation of sacred religious texts. This illusion maintains that some leaders of and adherents to the Islamic movement believe that Islam is their private property. The illusion of monopolization of knowledge about Islam and the erroneous evaluation of others bolsters criticism addressed to this movement, namely, that it represents a religious authority, aims only to wield power, and provides specific narrow-minded interpretations of the dimensions and fundamentals of Islam in order to control the state and society. This resembles the myth of the divine religious figures who transcend mundane interests and utility. The claim or attempt to speak in absolute terms for the holy text or the Sunna reinforces this illusion. I think this is an attempt to usurp the text, God forbid!. Furthermore, it is an attempt to mix human and absolute interpretations of the religious text. This phenomenon intoxicates prevalent interpretations in the sphere of scholarly religious production in our country. It almost coincides with the results of Agnis Goldheir's studies, namely that the interpretation of the Qur'an, which is considered sacred by contemporary scholars, took more from the Qur'anic text than it added to its meanings. It was an attempt to impose enclosures and

barriers on the magnitude and broadness of the religious text and the flexibility and possibility of integrating human intellectualism. Consequently, it is an attempt to obscure the meanings of Islamic mercy and tolerance. Islam as a rule does not adopt the concept of clergy or a sacred ecclesiastic class that monopolizes interpretations and texts. Despite the fact that some studies emphasized that the social and scholarly evolution of Islamic societies produced such a class, the fundamental rule is that there is no sacred clergy in Islam, be it a group of people, sheikhs, or leaders of Islamic groups, because they are human beings and capable of making mistakes. The precepts of Shari'a cannot be expropriated, nor can Allah's mercy be hindered, no matter how hard people try. All this is beyond the tolerance, mercy and open-mindedness of the Islamic religion.

Among the other illusions about the self is the weakness of others and the ability to achieve victory and wield power. The Islamic juridical text perceives the "other" as politically, socially, intellectually and religiously weaker. Consequently, reaching the seat of power or government is a matter of time, and will occur in the forseeable future. This illusion reflects an overestimation of the power of the collective "self" of Islamic political leaders. It is also based on an immature reading of the realities of life and political authority in Egypt, and a misleading interpretation of the weight of political opponents. This reading perceives society through the belief system of the rank-and-file, the weakness of symbols and expressions of other political forces. This illusion pervades many social strata. However, the development of circumstances and the suppressive struggle between the state and some radical Islamic movements clearly indicate that it still exists.

Other illusions about the self include the belief that the secularist is an apostate and an outcast. This illusion perceives the "other" in the "absolute" image of secularism in order to transfer the struggle from the sphere of politics, culture, social and political interests to the sphere of

pure religion, so to speak. This process delimits the debate in such a way that this movement would be able to impose its agenda a priori, and consequently its answers and judgments, and hence achieve quick and decisive victory. But this is incompatible with reality. Others might be secularists, but it is not that simple: there are secular Marxists, secular liberals, Nasserists, Copts and non-Copts, a quite complex configuration. Those secular classifications are not based on religion, nor are they a denunciation or insult. We can say that many secularists are pious, they worship, practice religious rituals and shun that which is prohibited, but do not perform those acts to put on a show orchestrated by some Islamic groups which deem others as atheists. Those secularists perceive the state as a hypothetical entity that neither adopts a specific religion nor is hostile to any religion. It guarantees freedom of religious worship in peace and security, and prevents the predominance by some groups of people's civil and religious freedoms in the name of religion.

However, some people would like to give the impression that the modern civil state is atheistic, despises religion and might even wage war against it. Those attempts have failed in history, and advocating them to conceal the realities is deceptive.

The current predicament of Islamic political thought has several aspects. Violence and counter-violence between Islamic splinter groups and the state prevent the formulation of ideas and values derived from Islamic perceptions to resolve contemporary problems. The tribal-oil jurisprudence exerts pressures which affect Al Azhar's juridical institution and some circles of the Islamic movement.

We should not overlook the fact that Islamic thought for many revolves in closed (vicious) circles to reproduce existing interpretations and Fatwas (religious opinion) of major Islamic schools. There is a constant fear of innovation in the sphere of interpretation.. Hence, there is a crisis in the relationship with reality, and a gap in the relation with the sacred doctrine.

Furthermore, the line of thought adopted by some politicized Islamic groups abandoned the historical Egyptian tradition of re-interpreting texts to deal with contemporary problems, the link between religion and life and socializing individuals through advocacy and preaching. On the contrary, those groups attempted to secede from society, deemed all opponents heretics, and modernized the curriculum in faculties of law to establish comparative studies between Shari'a and modern law. The end result was ceremonial practices that produced no impressive studies, except those undertaken by our esteemed professor Abdel Razaq Al Sanhouri. I think that most of the studies on the Islamic state undertaken by some jurists were mere re-formulations of ceremonial legal articles in Latin and French jurisprudence. We might find a collection of writings, but without authentication or intellectualism.

In my opinion, we cannot offer an absolute solution to the problem of renovation of Islamic thought. We should probe the contradictions in the attitudes of some political and radical groups in particular, reflected in perceptions about people and their rights and freedoms. Those groups focus on a special understanding of a set of commitments and regulations - if not restrictions - which ultimately negate individual privacy. This perception philosophically contradicts the system of human rights. Nonetheless, those Islamic political groups are concerned with human rights activities and declarations that denounce state violation of the rights of their adherents. On the other hand, some of them actually violate the rights of writers and citizens. This contradiction has not yet been resolved. Furthermore, we can examine a parallel contradiction within the ranks of liberal and secular forces, represented in their apathy toward violations committed against Islamists by the state, either in Egypt or Algeria.

No social or political thought can evolve or recede - in my opinion - separately from the social and political context. Hence, "militarization" of politics in a country like Algeria produces counterpart opponents. We can

also say that we have the military politician, the military intellectual (to borrow Adonis' words), and the military preacher and jurist. The latter, like his disciples, deals with orders and prohibitions without "opening the doors of mercy" before Muslims.

On the other hand, the system of human rights is philosophically based on an absolute respect of human beings. Herein stems the claim of the application of human rights and civil liberties. This is the duty and social challenge of advocates of this project. Rejecting human rights violations committed by members of the Islamic movement does not imply withdrawing support of the movement in cases where it should be provided with all guarantees. Meanwhile, there should be a minimum punishment.

An important question remains: renew whose thought ? Not all people are equal. We can safely argue that there are landmarks on the road that should be thoroughly contemplated in order to answer questions. The first examples of these are Rashed El Ghanoushi's intellectual works in Tunisia specifically, works by Fathi Yakan, Aboul Qassem Haj Hamad, Abdallah Fahd Al Nafissi, Selim El Awa and Tarek Al Bishri. The Muslim Brothers' most recent declarations are, I think, an attempt to authenticate content and interpretations, but they are still tentative works. Nevertheless, we can argue - as I have already suggested - that the most active faction of the Islamic movement in the sphere of intellectual production is the Ikhwan in Egypt.

Furthermore, to sanction the idea of parliamentary democracy and transfer of power means to introduce moderate elements into the Islamic political movement and endow them with a legitimate status as political entities. It also unambiguously means revoking violence in political action and social movement, endorsing civil democracy and its philosophic underpinnings, and removing the aura of holiness from the movement that espouses political Islam as a project and considers it a civil-political movement according to civil rules and regulations. Abandoning the

sanctity and undermining the monopoly of the religion of the majority are elementary issues of civil-political interaction.

The normalization - allow me to use this badly reputed term - of moderate forces and their integration into the legitimate framework will reflect on those groups and their interaction. It also leads to the emergence of new trends that can express themselves openly rather than underground.

Several contradictions still persist in the process of accepting human rights as a social system and democracy as a foundation of the political system. However, we can claim that there is common ground in the sphere of civil and political rights between Islam and mainstream human rights. Points of disagreement can be resolved through intellectual endeavor, but this process calls for dynamism and a genuine feeling of challenge on the part of enlightened elements within the Islamic political movement.

Finally, I would like to indicate that several challenges impose themselves on the Islamic political movement and other forces as well within an international environment that we cannot afford to overlook. Among those challenges are the crisis of the national state, problems of linguistic, racial, and religious minorities, and the development of complex modern legal systems. Those problems, and their attendant intellectual and philosophical predicaments, are taken into account in the Islamic juridical and political process, even though there are general and simplified basics; those were insufficient in the past and are now purely and simply inadequate.

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Emancipation Before Renovation

Tawfik El Shawi

I will discuss a few points which I suggest speakers should contemplate to reach a sound evaluation of what is called the problem of Islamic movements.

FIRST: The Islamic movement is characterized by remoteness of the source and reference. We always begin with the Islamic message and its divine sources: The Qur'an and the Sunna. The aim is to emancipate all territories of the Islamic World, and restore full freedom to our nations.

Hence, those movements are and will be - until this long-term aim is achieved - liberation movements. Suffice it to watch what is happening now in Palestine. Who is struggling, dying to free the occupied territories, and why? This duty stems from an Islamic rule, namely the duty of "Jihad" (holy war) until every inch of Islamic territory is emancipated. They sacrifice, die in martyrdom for this cause, not only until Palestine but all Islamic territories are liberated. We are still living through the liberation period. You surpassed us because you already achieved independence and gained authority forty of fifty years ago. The trial that our brother is simulating here should instead call those who ascended to the seats of power and have been there since independence to evaluate what they have done and are still doing. However, we are liberation movements and will remain so until all Islamic nations are free and the Islamic state established according to the Qur'an and the Sunna as you or we understand them. If you advocate renovation, go ahead. We will not resent your supremacy and precedence in innovation, but we should first undertake the liberation process.

SECOND, I disagree with the topic of the seminar: reconstructing Islamic political thought from the perspective of human rights and democracy. Real democracy is an institutional framework that selects its governments through public trust. Democracy is an institutional system: it projects the establishment of governing institutions. I think that Islam dealt with this issue upside down, namely: How would the ruler rule, and with what was the first issue, and then the ruler would be selected. But to choose a leader like Hitler who was chosen by 80% of the people! Nonetheless, how did he manipulate the trust that people had endowed him with? To what pitfall did he lead his people ? Hitler is but one example. There are others who actually gained "people's trust" but were not faithful to the fundamentals of the Qur'an and the Sunna concerning who should govern and how should he be accountable. Hence, democracy is institutionalization, but human rights should not be placed in the same category with democracy. Human rights are the core of Islam and Sharia. Islam is an innate religion, meaning that God exalted man and endowed him with freedom and natural rights, which no one ought to violate or restrict.

Therefore, human rights should not be the framework, but rather Islamic Shari'a. I will presume that those who started one thousand years ago are different from those who will reach the end of the path a thousand years from now. The former began with the Qur'an, and the latter will conclude with comprehensive Islamic unity and full emancipation, including Palestine and other areas (it is clear by now that not only Palestine is under foreign dominion, the aggression is sweeping and far-reaching). I leave you to decide if any of us lives in a country that is fully liberated. Hence, full liberation has priority over anything else. While Nabil denounces violence and counter-violence between the authorities and those who raise the Islamic banner, he doesn't know that the latter do not engage in violence to oppose the national state or government, but because they consider the former to

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be agents of a foreign power. Consequently, those groups are waging war against a foreign enemy, or those considered to be a tool in the hands of a foreign power which imposes economic, cultural, military and financial dependency. This situation pervades all our countries. Whoever resorts to violence claims - and we can discuss this issue with him - that it is used against an alien enemy or those who help this enemy.

In democracy, we agree that the people rule. Why don't we let the people actually rule? Let's agree while we sit here that the first step should be to provide this people with the right to elect their representatives freely. Later on, those representatives can debate among themselves. We are not claiming to be the people's representatives, but let the people choose those who represent them. We belong to different schools of thought, but I do not doubt that we unanimously agree that the main goal is to give the people the right to decide their own fate through free elections. Once we reach this point, we can debate, discuss, and convince the personalities you have mentioned. They are all human beings and susceptible to error. However, their mistakes are confined to their parties and their boundaries. As for those who occupy the seats of power now, they are committing crimes, not mere mistakes.

You are discussing human rights. Where are those rights? Who is violating them? Islamic movements? You say that when they wield power they will do so and I say take a look at those members in action now, those who hold the knife and stick. Take a look at the streets. I am ashamed when I go to the university every day; I do not consider myself in a civilized city: soldiers holding rifles in cars are scattered everywhere. Why? To suppress whom? The Islamic groups (Jama'at) ? No, no, not to crush the Jama'at, they can be easily finished. The fear is that these people might restore the right to decide their own fate through free elections.

I am ready to sit with you for days and even months to discuss what you have said, but I cannot refute it at the moment. You have said too many things, but I will discuss only one thing: I still do not consider myself free, and all Islamic movements have the same feeling. They believe they are fighting a foreign opponent. The model, as you said, is Algeria. Did you ask the Algerians who die every day why they commit violence ? Not against the Algerian government or the Algerian army; they strongly believe that a foreign power is supporting this coup, and that it was imposed on the people by force, especially since it came to power after the people voted for Islamists in free elections with a sweeping majority. In France, the president is elected now with a margin of one hundred or one thousand votes, while in Algeria, a party, agency or movement was elected with an 80% majority. Hence, the coup-d'etat was orchestrated. Did this come from nowhere ? If you do not know, please come with me to Algeria, and let us ask the Algerians, who led the coup, who planned it, who has financed it ? These are the reasons offered by people who die. They do not address speeches or write articles. They die and write this with their own blood, not in an academic study. They say, "We are dying because foreign forces are imposing this on us."

Islamist Discourse Is Different With Power Than Without It

Haidar Ibrahim Ali

I would like to speak first as a social academic. This is why I often resort to references and citations. Meanwhile, my presence here is a living proof of the attitude of Islamic movements toward democracy. Hence, my presentation will focus on both the theoretical aspect and concepts as well as practice because, in fact, we do not want to discuss only ideas. I am interested in what Islam said and what Muslims did. Therefore, I will deal with Islam here insofar as it concerns the presence of social actors carrying the banner of Islam and applying it in a specific context. I am interested in this topic only from this aspect.

I begin with the first question, namely, revival or reform. I wonder why a specific thought would renew or reform itself. This is a very important question. I think that the thought would reform itself when it discovers that its premises and ideas no longer cope with reality. The text or doctrine would attempt to expand its scope to catch up with reality; this is the model of reform. Hence, when we speak about reform or renovation in religion, it is no longer religion, because religion has specific rules. The question is: does the re-examination process reach the fundamental texts, or does it stop at the branches and offshoots? The renovation process should specify what is renewed. Furthermore, did the renovation take place due to the ability of the thought or religion itself to be dynamic and constantly revise itself, or as a result of historical factors, or the attempt to catch up with the outside world? Here, we should sharply specify what is renewed in Islamic political thought then the question of methodology or means of renovation comes next. It is noteworthy that, in many cases, attempts to overhaul religious thought resort to syllogism, which for jurists - I am not one of them - is an attempt to measure a specific case or event with no textual reference against a

similar case or event within the text or doctrine. In such a case, we, as social workers, are interested in a fundamental point: can syllogism be introduced in historical context, and can ideas and concepts "migrate", so to speak ? The text or doctrine appeared in a specific historical period; an attempt to compare events with texts that appeared early in history is a difficult task. I will return to this point later on.

We reach the central question: the attitude of Islamic movements toward democracy. Here, I tend to disagree with Nabil Abdel Fattah that there are several Islamic movements and not a single one. However, we face a predicament: Islamic movements defend any Islamic form irrespective of its source, and, from this perspective, Islamic movements become only one entity. However, when criticism is addressed to an Islamic movement in a certain country, the idea that the Islamic movement is not one but several unified movements emerges. I haven't yet read a criticism from within an Islamic movement of another Islamic movement, hence, I have the right to put them all in one basket. When a certain regime applies some Islamic practices, Islamic movements insist on supporting it whether it is fair or unjust. Hence, I can call those movements one and the same. When all movements insist on calling themselves "Islamic", they should share a common denominator. Hence, to search for a common denominator among, for instance, Tarek El Bishri, Rashed El Ghanoushi, Abdel Majid Al Zandani, etc., is some kind of illusion.

There should be a common feature among those movements. They are one and not many Islamic movements, but I classify them as Islamic movements in power or outside it. But this is not the only difference. There are two Islamic movements: when it ascends to power it has a particular discourse. When it is in opposition, it has another discourse and different practices.

Concerning concepts, there are several attempts to impose non-Islamic concepts on the Islamic framework itself. I think this stirs up a

real problem, because it creates some kind of comparison between two qualitatively different things. When I say Shura (Consultation) and democracy, I am dealing with specific ideas, with specific features. I think it is a logical error to consider them as two faces of the same coin. I say Shura is one thing and democracy is another. The two concepts appeared in specific circumstances and have their meanings and intellectual evolution as well as pragmatic aspects. Therefore, we notice that many Islamists find themselves caught up in a dilemma as a result of this mixture. Some of them - I think they are honest with themselves - reject democracy from the outset, and claim it has nothing to do with Islam. According to their view, it is related to atheism, ancient Greece and degeneration. However, there are attempts to merge the two concepts: the "Shuracracy," as Mahfouz Nahnah suggests for instance, or making democracy part of the process of Shura. I have in mind here Tawfik Al Shawi's book "Shura: The Highest Level of Democracy", where he considers that democracy "qualitatively belongs to Shura, but Shura is a higher level". I disagree with this opinion, because democracy and Shura belong to two qualitatively different intellectual schools. This might be an attempt toward renovation but it is quite difficult to implement; it also portrays Islamists as pragmatic or selective but not innovative, because innovation should occur within the thought itself.

I have two more points - regardless of the concepts - that fellow Islamists cannot resolve. The first is people's sovereignty and the second is arbitration by God. This aspect does not reflect genuine intellectualism and leads us to an important question: Is there a theocracy or religious state in Islam? Here, I disagree with Nabil and with the idea of a religious state. I think the latter requires an ecclesiastical institution. An incorporeal authority could be created and endowed with the power to confiscate books and stifle freedom of thought. There shouldn't necessarily be a specific church with a pope and cardinals, there could be an incorporeal institution that possess such rights. This is a point of disagreement at which we should pause.

In fact, I was quite relieved about what Tawfik El Shawi said, namely that democracy does not have priority in Islamic thought, and that the priority is liberation. Before hearing those words, I had put down in my comments that the attitude of Islamic movements toward democracy changes with circumstances, and is not based on juridical references or specific beliefs. Therefore, we think that Islamists' attitudes toward democracy are not uniform. Consequently, they could have different attitudes according to history and geography The examples of Sudan and Algeria are indicative. In Sudan, the people chose the authority, then Islamists came and usurped power ; other Islamists stood there watching. In Algeria, Islamists were about to wield power but it was taken away from them. Hence, democracy here did not have priority.

I recall here Sudan's experience and quote Amr Abdel Sami's book "Debates Over the Future", where he interviewed Sheikh El Ghazali, Ibrahim Shukri, and Maamoun El Hudeibi. The last said, "When the Pan Arabist front ascends to power, it will achieve many reforms. For the first time, they scored a victory in the south." Here, it is conspicuous that the priority is not democracy, because a non-democratic, dictatorial military power is governing the country, but the fact that it could surmount the non-Islamic south makes it acceptable to them.

On the other hand, the attitude of Islamists toward democracy and human rights in Sudan is clear because we have not heard from Islamists abroad any condemnation of the regime in power since 1989 in Sudan. By contrast, we were in Sudan in 1987-88 collecting signatures when Rashed El Ghanoushi was arrested in Tunisia. We had a fundamental attitude toward human rights, and we were not disturbed with the fact that they considered us secularists or otherwise. Now, all that is said about events in Sudan is considered, according to Islamists, Western propaganda and a conspiracy. We do not want to have double standards. Attitudes toward human rights should be integrated and uniform, be it in Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, or anywhere else.

What goes on in Sudan has a direct relation to the issue of civil society, which is considered one form of democracy and human rights. The existing Islamic state in Sudan is a tangible model of suppression of civil society. There is what is called "popular authority", which in fact is not popular but rather belongs to a single party. Hence, I consider the Islamist attitude vis-à-vis democracy no worse than that adopted by those condemned in the sixties because of their advocacy of democracy. In discussions, they indicate that others have done that, but I say that you have come - or allegedly claim so - as a different alternative with a divine reference and roots. Why then do you compare yourselves with Baathists, Nasserists or Marxists? If you claim you are an alternative and have a civil "option", then you should espouse something different, and you should convince your constituency that this "option" is based on a religious reference.

A final question remains unanswered: Why did some Islamists lag behind in expressing their interest in democracy and human rights ? I think that human rights, as they are now widely perceived, developed in specific historical circumstances. We, as Islamic states and societies, were quite remote from those circumstances. Human rights are related to individualism, an historical legacy dating back to the Enlightenment period, religious reform, and culminating with the French Revolution in the nineteenth century. If we want to be honest, we should perceive human rights from the perspective of individualism, including the right of an individual to change his religion. Furthermore, we note that Islamists started releasing statements or charters concerning human rights quite recently. This is a point that should be taken into consideration while contemplating the question of reform or renovation.

Renovation Is Possible But

Not In Original Texts And Firmly Established Facts

Maamoun El Hudeibi

I would like to extend my thanks to CIHRS and those dear brothers who honored me with the invitation to attend this meeting with these highly esteemed guests. I will start by explaining some points that were mentioned by my honorable colleagues.

Concerning the possibility of renovating Islamic thought, whoever studies Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic texts and doctrines finds that renovation is necessary, but not in the fundamentals. I will give a direct example here. Allah said : " So pardon them (O' Mohammed) and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs....." (Quran 3:159) . Also, " And their (the believers) matters are subject of consultation among themselves" (Quran 42:38). Shura was made part not only of the political system but also of the economic and social system and even the household and conjugal life. Nonetheless , God did not impose one model or mold. He gave us an objective to achieve, a goal we should attain, but did not confine us to a specific model while the world changes and evolves around us. If a certain line of thought based on an Islamic principle, namely Shura, was creative in devising the means to achieve and implement this end according to the exigencies of circumstances, space, culture, etc., renovation in this case is imperative. This process can emanate from individuals' feeling that the existing system is no longer adequate; for instance, if they enact a new traffic or construction law, and people feel that this law is no longer adequate for urban motion, then people should not be dogmatic or frozen in time and space. Stagnation contravenes the essence of religion because there is no legislation in Islam that specifies a certain system for Shura. We can recall what

happened in Thaqifat Bani Sai'da, when the leaders of tribes from Muhajirin and Ansar had the first and last word, and their word was irrevocable. When they agreed to elect Abu Bakr as Commander of the Faithful - evidently there was no army leader, admiral or huge military force to terrorize people - people accepted and ratified this choice, because the real representatives of this people were there and selected Abu Bakr for the caliphate. At first, discussion focused on whether the Muslim state should have a "head", and whether this "head" or president should be chosen after the Prophet's death. They reached the resolution that the state should have a leader, one that binds it together and unifies its people, defends its premises and organizes its affairs. They also decided that there should be one and only one leader, then they selected Abu Bakr. Can what happened in Bani Sa'ida be considered part of the core of religion (Shura), or do its form and application not belong to religion ? We cannot repeat the same process today, with Egypt's population having reached 60 million, with 15 million in Cairo alone. Hence, we should project a new system to implement Shura and know people's genuine opinion. This is an intellectual endeavor that would continue until doomsday. We have doctrines with specific objectives, as Allah says "Against them make ready your strength as hard as you could and from the tethered horses so that you will strike terror into the hearts of Allah's enemy and yours" (Quran ,8:60) . How can we do this today ? No one can claim that the method of organization, training and the quality of armaments etc. are part of religion because this is impossible. These are subject to constant scientific and technological innovation. We cannot assert that what was adequate in the past was religious, pure and simple. The aim is to reach optimum power to protect our religion, our nation and the dignity of individuals living therein. This is the assumption put forth by religion. Some doctrines cannot and would not be altered, such as "the male would get twice as much as the female (in inheritance)"(Quran 4:11). Some concepts are

not arguable, and they were as binding to a simple-minded Arabian in early Islam as to any Islamic jurist. We wouldn't want to deem religious thought static and dogmatic. This is not true, because as much as there are well-established principles in Shari'a, there are also variables. We should always differentiate between the constant and the variable. There can be no innovation of unalterable principles which all Muslim scholars and jurists unanimously endorse.They came directly from Allah and will live forever. Whoever attempts innovation them would be contravening Islamic principles and would be considered a dissident. Other principles are subject to individual intellectual exercise, because the interpretation of the documents differ over time, according to the development of social, economic and technological conditions. This leads to a new understanding and thought that did not exist before. Moreover, the Prophet said, "You know better about your worldly affairs." This includes about 90-95% of government action. While adopting technology in medicine, agriculture, etc., we should avoid the prohibited (haram) zone and should not rebuke what is legitimate and tolerable (halal). Innovation is hence acceptable, because it conforms with human nature, and does not contradict Allah's religion. God knows what is best for his creatures, because, with His own superior Wisdom, he knew that those constant principles would be the fundamental pillars of human life in all time and space. What is suitable to reform human self and thought now will remain so irrespective of time and space. These are the fundamentals that God gave to man to spare him the repercussions of experimentation, and traumas that befall generations. Whoever wants to adopt those principles will be happy in this life and the hereafter, and whoever desires can reject them and bear the consequences. This is the perception of Islamic thought.

As for the issue of a single Islamic political movement, it is not enough to maintain that factions of the movement agreed on a single

principle to claim that they represent a unified or single political movement. Can we say that we are like Jihad, who used to murder us, yet we remained one single political movement? Our books exist and have been available in book shops since 1967. Our thought and writings are recognized. The differences between us and others are quite central and detectable. Suffice it to mention the difference in method and style of implementation, because the latter serves the creed itself. If I assert the necessity of protecting people's lives and privacy, yet kill people, I would have then wasted and destroyed the thoughts and principles I proclaim. This is different than those militants who committed crimes, then searched for analyses and religious opinion (Fatwa) to justify those deeds. These are core and fundamental differences, and any student or observer of what goes on in the world and in Egypt, particularly what concerns Islamic movements, would discern the huge differences between those movements, and the gap between the thought of the Muslim Brothers and their counterpart Islamic groups.

Some speakers dealt with underground political movements. I would like to clarify that we do not have a clandestine movement, thank God. As for the question of apostasy, I remember that, in 1968, we were in the Tora prison and wrote the book "Advocates and Not Judges". We spelled out in this book that we, Muslim Brothers, since Hassan El Banna (May Peace Be on Him) established the movement, have had no predisposition or intention to accuse anyone of apostasy. I will give you a simple example. At a certain point, El Nahas Pasha spoke about Kemal Ataturk and hoped that Egypt would follow in his footsteps. Ataturk's attitude and animosity toward Islam are well known. When Hassan El Banna talked to Nahas, he did not denounce him as an apostate, but told him, "You are a Muslim man. You pray and worship every Friday in the mosque. I tell you this is not right, because this man did this and that....".

Many members deserted the Ikhwan group. Two of the deputies of the Muslim Brothers went out and wrote that this group was sinking low. El Banna never replied, and all his critics walked freely and safely in the streets. No one claimed they were apostates. Those actions and behavior patterns are real and are more potent than any comment. Hassan El Hudeibi was in detention. He used to say to the youth that some people outside the ranks of the Muslim Brothers are more Muslim, they act better than you do. Those are well established facts, and whoever wants to refute them is free to do so.

I would like to speak about the sacredness of the text. This is different than the sanctity of the group, because the group is not Islam and its opinion is not Islam. Whoever disagrees with the group would be right. No one professed the holiness of the group's intellectual thought and opinion, even if it were based on fundamental religious texts or interpretations. We have Al Shafi and Al Malki schools, which have different opinions and attitudes, yet no one claimed that either of them was an apostate; on the contrary, they respected each other. Our Islamic religion is based on pluralism. During the Prophet's life, there was pluralism.

Discussion

A STEP FORWARD, BUT...

Abdel Moneim Said opened up the discussion, indicating that there were numerous problems that needed research and examination. For instance, some claimed that Arab states are not prepared at present to adopt democracy. Another major question concerned the method of application of democracy within a collapsing political environment. Said also pointed to the importance of examining the relationship between local and external environments, and the network of interactions and mutual impact pertaining to the application of democratic regulations. All those points require scrutiny and objective evaluation.

Then, some esteemed contributors shared their thoughts, which are summarized here.

Ahmed Ossmani (Tunisia)

He first emphasized that he believes in democracy and respect of individual and collective rights. He indicated that the Tunisian arena witnessed a violent struggle in the eighties over the right to pluralism. Islamic political groups were involved in a confrontation with authorities. The human rights movement in Tunisia stood in defense of the right to pluralism, freedom of opinion and expression. The innovation of Islamic political thought raises several problems:

- The unilateral concept of the religious state;

- The existing models of Islamists in power who indulged in violence against other forces;

- The right of opposition to freedom of opinion, expression and organization.

Then, Ossmani argued that the attitude of various Islamic movements toward democracy and human rights was rather selective. They uphold democracy when they are in opposition, and advocate human rights only when they are discriminated against. He called upon all to answer honestly whether they support pluralism and opposition or not.

Abdel Hamid El Ghazali

He contended that our nation is living through a very hard time. There are tyrannical governments, and the Islamic identity is obscured. He stressed his disagreement with Haidar, and that the latter wanted to deprive a genuine movement of participation in pluralism.

Omar El Qarai (Sudan)

He noted that the Qur'anic doctrine concerning Shura had clear-cut indications: " So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs. And when thou are resolved , then put thy trust in Allah" (Quran , 3:159) Therefore, the ruler should consult, while retaining the right to oppose. Hence, there is a great difference between Shura and democracy. The essence of the problem in Islamic thought is the application of the principle that "there is no intellectual exercise (syllogism) in what the text states". He indicated that this principle contravenes sound logic.

Mostafa Abdel Aal

He contended that the background paper presented by CIHRS was not totally objective. The attitude of the Islamic movement toward democracy and human rights was not the only skeptical and

problematic attitude: the same goes for all political movements in Egypt.

He expressed reservations about what Nabil Abdel Fattah indicated concerning the Islamic movement's illusion of the weakness of the "other". Abdel Aal argued that this was not merely an illusion, but a fact. He indicated that this is a common practice of all political forces and not just Islamists. Haidar mentioned in his presentation that he has not read a single criticism by one Islamic movement of its counterpart movements, and this reflects the predicament. Islamists here did not evoke anything different because they are the core of the crisis.

Concerning what Tawfik El Shawi mentioned in his presentation about the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, Abdel Aal indicated that this front was very cruel toward the rank-and file following its success in local elections. As for what Maamoun El Hudeibi suggested about the Islamic sense, he wondered why this sense did not prevent people in the fifties and sixties from committing acts they perceive today as inimical to Islam, such as men and women bathing in the sea together.

Alaa Qa'oud

He expressed concerns about El Hudeibi's presentation, in which he mentioned the historical record of the Muslim Brothers. Qa'ud pointed out that there are several historical facts which cast doubts about this group's attitude toward issues like pluralism and democracy. To say that there are Qur'anic verses that are unanimously interpreted, he contended, is generalized to impose the prevalence of specific schools, or at least hinder any innovative interpretation of those issues. There are different schools of interpretation of the Qur'an, which suggests that objective research leads to different interpretation of all Qur'anic verses. Qa'ud

considered what El Shawi emphasized about the Islamic movement being primarily a liberation movement as a mirror image of the perception of political Islam vis-à-vis the "other", especially that it emanates from a dual Islamic versus non-Islamic classification. Hence, the latter qualification is applied to any perception that contravenes the trend of political Islamic opinion, i.e., the other is not only religiously but intellectually "negated".

Omran El Shafei

He asserted that there are several international documents specifying rights and their practice. We as Muslims should not segregate ourselves from this context, since the nature of the era is international cooperation. Democracy is a human heritage, he contended, and it is imperative to undertake the process of "modernizing" Islamic thought, provided we admit there are several points of controversy where we should defend our Islamic attitude.

Ahmed El Gammal

He indicated that the source of all Islamic political movements is one and the same. He emphasized that it was high time to initiate a new jurisprudence, because the problem lies in the duality of the text and intellectual exercise. About the "other" in religious terms, he noted that the last third of Surat Al Baqara stresses that Christians are believers. He also asserted that the condition that the Head of State be a Muslim contradicts the rights of citizenship.

Mamdouh El Sheikh

He stressed the importance of allaying Western fears and negative perceptions of Islamic objectives. The state in Islam, he argued, specifies the institutional framework for the protection of values. He considered that CIHRS actions conform to Western concept of democracy and human rights, and drew attention to the fact that it

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was the second time that the Institute dedicated a seminar to discussion of the political Islamic movement.

Mohammed El Sayed Said

He stressed the acceptance and respect of the "other". He pointed out that the latest Muslim Brothers' statement* concerning democracy and human rights was considered a step toward enlightenment and respect for democracy and human rights on the part of a powerful political movement in the country. He indicated that democratic achievements and social modernization are issues that propelled the movement of juridical reform led by prominent scholars, especially Imam Mohammed Abdou, who is considered one of the vanguards of renaissance in Egypt and the Arab World. He emphasized that we still need the valuable intellectual endeavor undertaken by Sheikh Mohammed Abdou and the prominent jurists who followed him, particularly Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltout, in the sphere of democracy, human rights, and the rights of women.

He added that the attitude toward the rights of women represents one of the pillars of the renaissance and enlightenment movement. Great jurists responded to our need to evaluate classical Islamic jurisprudence concerning this issue. However, it still represents a domain of thorough disagreement between the enlightenment movement, which advocates rationalism, modernization, and the culture of scientific research on the one hand, and the political movement with religious underpinnings on the other. He indicated that pluralism itself is a key to a perpetual debate between the two sides. He affirmed the importance of mutual respect, which can

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* *See the statement in RWAQ ARABI Journal, No.1, January 1996, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.*

facilitate further additional steps toward a historical treatment of the differences between the two lines of thought in Egyptian and Arab culture, the civil-rational line and the Islamic-religious one. Furthermore, when the first movement pays homage to our Arab and Islamic legacy, and the religious movement exhibits greater capacity to integrate and grasp the contemporary civil-rational culture, this helps considerably to fill the gap that persisted for about two centuries. For instance, it is no longer acceptable that women represent half a man in legal eligibility, i.e., testifying before courts. Many jurists asserted that education of women in the spheres of knowledge, pragmatic experience, etc., proves that the idea of equality between men and women is acceptable.

Said maintained that the declaration of the Muslim Brothers concerning women did not make much progress in objectively and primarily reconciling with international principles of women's and human rights. He called for further flexibility in this domain. He also urged prominent jurists to exercise more intellectual effort to achieve the basic interests of society, and women in particular.

Final Comments

Democracy: A Culture or Process?

Maamoun El Hudeibi

Much has been said about religion, both in absolute and relative terms, but there is no syllogism with the clear-cut text. We go back to language, because what we mean by text is not a particular verse or saying of the Prophet (Hadith). In Arabic, text (Nass) means something conspicuous and clear cut. A derivative of this word is panel (manassa), which is usually high, clearly showing who is sitting on it. Hence, when we say, No intellectualism (Ijtihad) with the text, this means that the issue has been mentioned in the text in clear Arabic which leaves room for neither interpretation nor change or controversy. Other verses that stir up controversy are not considered (Nass) in Arabic.

It was said that Caliph Omar was innovative on two issues: non-Muslims and land tax. This is not true. The first issue concerns a group of people who have been tempted with money to refrain from hurting Muslims or to be a Muslim. This state of affairs might change over time.

Omar did not cancel a text. This is also applicable to what is said about theft and amputation as a punishment for thieves, because this punishment has specific conditions. The rule in Islam is that if Muslims are hungry, money belongs to no one. ?

As for land, he was guided by the Qur'anic verse: "Those who succeeded them say Allah forgives us and our brothers who preceded us in faith." (Quran 59:10). He also interpreted the verse that the

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army that conquered does not remain as army but takes the land and cultivates it. He gave them their right in other forms.

This is an intellectual endeavor in the application of the text. However, this does not mean that those concerned clear-cut text, but text where some intellectualism could be applied alongside the original text. As for fundamentals, or when there is a text that cannot be interpreted, this is another issue that needs a prolonged discussion.

To those who claim that the Qur'an should not be classified into verses that can be interpreted and others that cannot, I ask them, What is to be done? There are some principles in the Qur'an and the Sunna that cannot be open for intellectual endeavor, while others can be. God wanted it to be so; can I therefore say all or none? There are "om al kittab", " main verses " (Quran 3:7) verses and others "mutashabihat", " allegorical verses"(Quran 3:7). Can you tell me what they mean? Jurists have spent one thousand four hundred years reaching their meaning. For instance, if the Qur'an states eighty lashes, will you make them seventy-five? Such issues are not subject to controversy between the greatest scholars and the most ignorant persons ; they will all agree about the eighty lashes.

The Qur'an spells out several issues clearly and specifically. Some texts can be interpreted while others cannot be. Herein, human faculties differ, and people differ in their capacity to deduce the rule from different verses. We know this from the history of the esteemed close disciples of the Prophet. Take, for instance, one of the disciples who married a woman: after six months, she gave birth. Some people suggested that the lawful penalty be applied, but another disciple quoted the verses " pregnancy and weaning in thirty months" (Quran, 46:15), and "Mothers shall breast feed their children for two whole years for whoever wants to accomplish nursing" (Quran 2:233). Subtract 24 from 30, we have six months. People were going to

do her an injustice and stone her. This is what is meant by deduction from several verses.

It was claimed that I advocated a theocracy. I emphasize that I am against the religious state. We actually reject such a state, and we have never been advocates of a religious state. We want a normal government We do not accept that any person be above the law or accountability. We only claim a civil government, to be elected by the constituency and replaced later on through legitimate means.

One of my fellow contributors indicated that we should not be secluded from the world, but meanwhile we should not forget our identity or overlook all literature and philosophies laid down by the United Nations or other agencies. They are outside the framework of Islam, yet we can take from them whatever does not collide with our main beliefs. We should participate with the world community in everything. We should encourage Muslims to become a bloc that would be accounted for. The Muslim Brothers' latest declaration broached this issue.

Haidar Ibrahim Ali

I start by clarifying the point that there is no intellectualism in religion but rather in religious practices. Hence, we should differentiate between two things here: the divine on the

one hand and the human anthropological on the other. Speeches given by fellow contributors reveal that there are well-established principles in religion where no intellectual endeavor takes place, because religion is superhuman. Intellectual endeavor can hardly be called religion, but

rather Islamic thought. This point needs clarification. On the other hand, intellectual exercise itself makes a certain interpretation prevalent, not because it is more religious, but because a specific

religious group can make it predominant. We should perceive issues in this perspective and deal with them pragmatically as they happened in life and history.

As for conceiving democracy as a mechanism, I think that this is a very serious point for one reason: we have considered democracy like technology. We take the machines but do not adopt the intellectual process behind the machines. Democracy is not merely mechanisms and institutions ; it is primarily the culture of tolerating the "other" and accepting differences.

Some people consider democracy to be permissiveness and liberty. This is the source of confusion: you tell them democracy and freedom and they tell you freedom of nudity! Democracy is both culture and process; we have to perceive it in this dimension, otherwise we would be dealing with it the same way we do with computers and technology. I am always keen about words and deeds. It is possible to have beautiful words but shameful deeds. The latter are often justified through noble acts. Therefore, we should look at both facets: How can an individual transform his words into deeds? Hence, I think that Islamic movements - and I am generalizing here - are a good opposition but a bad authority because they do not have detailed and elaborate platforms. It is imperative on those movements to transform noble words and values into tangible acts. This huge disparity (between words and deeds) occurs because humans are applying a divine religion, viz., Islam.

Furthermore, I did not claim that Shura is the antithesis of democracy, but I said they were different in terms of culture, institutions and everything.

I think that human rights have a general, humanitarian aspect and a private and specific aspect. We often tend to mix the two up. We seek human rights, but in which form ? We disagree over this

matter with the world. In other words, we agree with the world that there are fundamental human rights, but we differ over the procedures, mechanisms and other details.

The final point is rather secondary but has been recurrent. It concerns Arab discourse. I indicate here that interpretation is the last priority in philosophic and social theories now. Hence, there is always a personal or human aspect of interpretation. In order to have Arab discourse, there should be some form of human intervention. In fact, experimental sciences or objectivity, according to the traditional system, do not provide the opportunity to espouse a specific discourse, We can start off by criticizing human intervention in the process of interpretation, i.e., examining objective reality and dealing with it through individual and personal viewpoints.

Tawfik El Shawi

I wanted to speak at the end of the session, because I need to answer the question concerning a common denominator. The opinions we have heard reinforce our belief that people tend to think they are right and others are wrong. Some people, however, are willing to accept the possibility that they might be wrong and others might be right. Consequently, we will assume that all our views are correct and bear the possibility of error. But who would rectify the error? Our colleague says culture: what does this mean ? Who is eligible? Where ? In periodicals, books, journals... Those who manipulate the judgment of right and wrong are the opinion leaders and supreme commanders, namely, the people who endow power with supremacy, select the culture, legislation and government, and also can impeach and even overthrow it.

I am glad that one of the attendees asked me what the guarantees of human rights are there if Islamists ascend to power ? In my opinion, they are the same guarantees we expect from other

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governments. Why would we ask Islamists to provide more guarantees than their counterparts, Nasserists and Baathists for instance? Guarantees should be absolute and binding for all. Guarantees are the people's sovereignty and their right to choose. You say culture, but culture for you is in schools, and for me in books, which is totally different. People have the right to make mistakes. Let them make mistakes and rectify them, overthrow Islamists if found ineligible and appoint others. Why the haste ?

The guarantees required for human rights are the same, whether from Islamists or non-Islamists. These are the right of people to be free. No coup-d'etat instigated by France or financed by the World Bank should be imposed on the nation; if loans and assistance are withdrawn today the entire people will starve. This people should be free and should be emancipated. We are primarily a liberation movement. However, I cannot ask people to choose while bread and butter are not available to them, why? What created the need for food? What made the nation a slave of American wheat? Those rulers should be deposed. The people reject them. Nonetheless, they can bring to power worse rulers. It is up to the people to appoint and change them. However, to be in power and say: come Islamists, I'll put you to the test: if you pass it you will continue, but if you fail I will put you in jail, confine you and torture you. I personally have been whipped because I am an Islamist. There are better colleagues than myself who are being tortured now because they are seeking power. Is this forbidden? Essam El Erian wants power, so he goes to prison. Why? We should give an opportunity for every opinion to be expressed freely, and the nation should choose freely. Freely chosen rulers should be accountable to people. You are advocating culture. Culture is people's knowledge. I thank you all.

Political Fundamentalism (Salafiya)

Nabil Abdel Fattah

I think that the debate has been fruitful. The general contributions that inspired this debate concerning political conflict in Egypt stem from a fundamental value which I personally thoroughly uphold, namely, that upon the establishment of the modern state in Egypt, we found structural contradictions within the Egyptian polity, and the common denominator that could build up the minimum level of national consensus could not be laid down. Hence, my main idea is to build bridges between currents of thought and action in this country, so that we can face the crisis either at the regional or international level. I also visualize this country as having a mission in the surrounding region and the world community. Consequently, the search for common factors is my main concern. I try to offer answers by examining the nature of problems faced by all intellectual political movements in Egypt. I offered an analytical observation, based on basic data that were classified for the sake of analysis. The analytical approach attempts to opt out of the vicious circles of illusions, if we can use this expression, and break the stereotypes adopted by each political movement about the others. Hence, I warmly welcomed attempts exerted by some fellows and friends in the Muslim Brotherhood to suggest answers to some problems and issues preoccupying the intellectual and political arena in Egypt. I greet them, even though I disagree with some of what they proposed. I think that the power of any political movement, irrespective of its estimation of the degree of its strength or weakness, is a function of its reaction to its internal problems and dilemmas, or those stirred up by other forces or actors on the political and intellectual stage.

I hope we would perceive that the question of intellectualism in religion provided Islamic jurisprudence with a vital dimension. The main schools of interpretation, as well as other less prominent ones,

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were responses of great jurists to a series of problems that imposed themselves during a particular era. Hence, I should deal with them as human beings, having their own personal interests and whims. Consequently, the production of institutions of interpretation -if we can call them such - should be perceived as a human endeavor that might be right or wrong, but which is not binding. The only commitment is that I should study them carefully insofar as they reacted to problems of their era. However, they are not obligatory, because I and others possess the tools that can allow us to offer other interpretations, or reject those interpretations in form and content.

We should study the history of Islamic jurisprudence and even Islamic history in general from this perspective. For instance, the Imam Shafei in Egypt: there are two Imams and not just one. Isn't this a lesson that all of us should contemplate and study thoroughly?

We should also grasp the legal systems applicable in Egypt prior to the Arab conquest. Islam was introduced in Egypt differently than it was in Sudan. In the latter case, it was introduced through Sufi *tariqas*, and had a totally different impact than in Egypt or other countries.

As for the question of *Ijtihad*, interpretations and their application, I believe that it is important for the Islamic movement to cultivate juridical innovation. The fact that some Islamic forces overlooked human rights in several experiences in Arab countries is considered a great mistake. Why? Because when the experience in Sudan is closely examined, we will find several violations of human rights. I do not think that refraining from criticizing them benefits the Islamic movement. The same is true in the Algerian experience.

On the other hand, I think that perceiving all experiences as a unified whole, and judging them accordingly, might not be accurate. In Algeria, following the first round of elections, the idea of casting

ballots in a series of voting rounds was shattered because it was feared that the Islamists might ascend to power through peaceful elections.

I believe that part of the problem concerning the debate between different intellectual movements has to do with the examination of the scope of the crisis in more detail, which gives us an opportunity to provide sound judgments. I point out here that Abdallah Al-Nafissi and other prominent leaders of the Islamic movement participated in self-criticism of the movement in Egypt and the Arab World. They criticized the practices and history of the movement as well as the renaissance and Islamic movements in the East. There are several studies in this domain.

Furthermore, the absence of intellectualism is related, in my opinion, to information. There are attempts to interpret the status of non-Muslims by Selim El Awa, Fathi Yakan, and Tarek El Bishri. However, they are ignored in the debate. Hence, they have become marginal trends: i.e., they do not have any impact on decision-making within the Muslim Brothers or other groups.

Finally, I did not present angels or demons in my discussion of political movements. The unusual thing is what we talked about concerning the presence of a general fundamentalist (salafi) trend since the seventies. There is a general salafi attitude in all schools of thought and action in this country. There is real stagnation on the part of the Islamist who has not read the fundamental texts of Islam, the secularist or liberal who has not read Adam Smith, and the Marxist who has not read Marx, etc. This hinders a genuine and constructive debate in our country. If we really want to move forward, we should look for common ground and build bridges first. As for the human rights movement - and I am one of the believers of human rights - I think there is common ground to discuss aspects of

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disagreement between currents of thought and political action in Egypt.

Abdel Moneim Said

I will give the floor to Hudeibi in order to straighten a historical point.

Ma'moun El Hudeibi

This debate made me feel that there is a confusion of topics. Some aspects are worthy of a more prolonged debate in order to reach a conclusion. I point to the year 1938, when Hassan El Banna, God bless him, addressed a message about constitutional rule to the summit meeting of the Muslim Brothers. He said that the nation is the source of authority, and that the constitution organized this and that matter on the basis of the nation's sovereignty. He stated that the Brothers would not accept any alternative to the constitutional system. This was an answer to Saleh Ashmawi.

The other point is that in September 1952 after the Revolution, when the government canceled the 1923 Constitution, the founding board of the Muslim Brothers ratified a provisional constitution and presented it as a gesture of cooperation. This constitution did not propose that the president should be Muslim, but rather that he should be Egyptian. It even spelled out that "there should be no discrimination between citizens on the basis of origin, color, belief, religion or sex," which they are mumbling about now.

Abdel Moneim Said

I would like to assert that we are not here for a mere debate. We are dealing with a collective attempt, sponsored by this institute, for innovation. There is no doubt that the Islamic movement is one of the genuine and pragmatic movements in the political arena. Hence,

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debate with this authentic movement is not a duel or a contest to score extra points, and it is definitely not a trial. What is happening today in this meeting is similar to the meetings with the liberal, Pan Arabist and leftist forces before. The fact that no one has tailored answers for everything testifies to the fact that our nation is facing many challenges. There have been serious violations of human rights committed by leftist, Pan Arabist and Islamist forces, and this is the real problem we are trying to resolve. The Arab human rights movement in general has an honorable attitude toward all forces contravening human rights, committing corporal torture, or terrorizing people's lives or livelihood. CIHRS focuses on studying the reasons that make our nation suffer from this disgraceful phenomenon, which is a blasphemy to all of us, whether those violations were committed in Egypt, Algeria, or Sudan, and whether they were concealed under nationalist, Islamist or other rubrics. Our objective in this meeting is to debate this issue.

Finally, I would like to thank you all, and extend my gratitude to all fellow colleagues and esteemed personalities. Of course, I should thank CIHRS, and I call upon it to propel this debate and thoroughly study all the points raised therein. Thank you very much.

Chapter Two

Renovating The Marxist/Progressive Thought Within The Framework Of Democracy And Human Rights

The progressive Marxist thought has occupied a prominent position in Egyptian and Arab intellectual circles. The Second World War in particular was a fundamental factor in the prosperity of an Egyptian progressive movement. This intellectual trend played a crucial role in the general Pan Arabist revival in Egypt, and enabled the Egyptian nation to withstand great external challenges. Furthermore, this thought, and the movement that promoted it, made important achievements at the local level.

Progressive/Marxist thought and the progressive/leftist movement in general have experienced many traumas since the mid-seventies. Extensive criticism has been launched against its postulates, particularly those dealing with democracy and human rights. As a result of several interactions, the progressive movement and its intellectual line receded, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They (the movement and the thought) lost - according to some views - their attractiveness and power during recent years. Hence, advocates of progressive thought began to search for the causes and effects of this trauma, and to review the fundamental concepts of progressive thought (and all its factions) in light of internal and external variables.

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) considered the study by Abdel Ghaffar Shukr, "Toward A New Progressive Movement in Egypt" - published by AL AHALI newspaper between 20 July and 17 August 1994 - a pioneering effort

in the renovation of progressive thought and the introduction of democracy and human rights to this thought. It was considered a good starting point to identify attempts to infuse new blood into progressive thought, and to understand how the progressive movement approaches democracy and human rights, especially since many observers think that the opportunity is still ripe for progressive thought to offer an intellectual and political alternative to achieve Egypt's growth and prosperity.

Accordingly, CIHRS organized a cultural evening - through the Ibn Rushd Salon - on 26 November 1994 to discuss this important question.

CIHRS invited five main speakers for this seminar

1) Abdel Ghaffar Shukr	Member of the General Secretariat of the National Progressive Unionist Bloc (Tagamu' Party)
2) Mohammed Sid Ahmed	Thinker and Journalist at AL AHRAM
3) Ahmed Nabil El Hilali	Lawyer
4) Said El Naggar	President of the New Call (Al Nida' Al Jadid) Association
5) Wahid Abdel Meguid	Chairman of the Arab Unit at Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies.

Bahey Eldin Hassan, Director of CIHRS, presided over the discussions.

Bahey El Din Hassan

This evening is one in a series of discussions of new developments of Arab political thought from the human rights perspective. This is perfectly in line with the strategic objective of the Cairo Institute for

Human Rights Studies, namely, "Contribute to the formation of a genuine Arab intellectual line on human rights." The major idea here is to reinforce the plea for renovation of progressive thought, enhance sympathy with the human rights cause, and remove the obstacles that hinder the implementation of the superior goals for which this thought emerged, namely, emancipation of people from all forms of injustice.

It would not have been so easy to organize this seminar, had it not been for the distinguished study undertaken by Abdel Ghaffar Shukr, which focused on pluralism and democracy as the major pillars for renewing the Egyptian Progressive movement. Hence, it was important that he attend the seminar as a major speaker, along with Mohammed Sid Ahmed, advocate of renovation, Nabil El Hilali, a prominent Marxian advocate who is highly esteemed by progressivists in Egypt, and two prominent intellectuals who have been involved in debates with advocates of progressive thought: Said El Naggar and Wahid Abdel Meguid.

Before I give the floor to Abdel Ghaffar Shukr, I think it is important to provide the contributors with a quick summary of his pioneering study on the fundamentals of renewing the progressive movement. This study stems from the assumption that democracy is a fundamental guide in the human struggle for progress. Moreover, renovation of the progressive movement in Egypt requires that it be restructured as a democratic movement that strives to achieve its goals through peaceful means, and through reliance on organized popular efforts of the lower classes instead of acting on their behalf.

This attitude is reflected in several parts of the study at hand:

1- Socialism, which is the theoretical foundation of the progressive movement, should be established through persuasion and democratic choice and not coercion. Commitment to socialism

should be democratically reinforced on the basis of its tangible achievements, within the bounds of political pluralism that allow room for all social and political forces to organize, meet, and express their opinions freely, while suggesting alternative programs, and establishing the peaceful transfer of power.

2- The major factor that the progressive movement should take into consideration while re-structuring itself is to integrate democracy, either in the means of reaching power, or in internal relations. Relations among parties, trade unions, social organizations, and associations should be based on parity. The idea of a leading party, or popular organizations being linked with the political party as collateral groups is anachronistic.

3- The Egyptian progressive movement should genuinely be a pluralist movement. Its organizations should acknowledge each other; no faction should consider itself the sole revolutionary side, while denouncing others as opportunists or Rightists, especially since in society, there are numerous and varied social interests. The decisive point - concerning the soundness of ideas and platforms - is the result of political practice.

4- A progressive party seeking further efficacy should reconsider its internal structure in such a way as to become a real democratic melting pot. This requires a review of the rules of democratic centralism and the hierarchy of organization.

Abdel Ghaffar Shukr considers that this suggestion for renewing the progressive movement in Egypt in light of democracy provides further opportunity for respecting human rights in Egyptian political life.

Challenges Of Renewing

The Progressive Movement

Abdel Ghaffar Shukr

First of all, I think that it is extremely important to renew progressive thought, which inspired Egypt during the forties, fifties and sixties. We all recall that the flourishment of the progressive movement after the Second World War was a major factor in the progress of the Egyptian Pan Arabist movement. I think that the period of stagnation that this line of thought is experiencing is not the end of the road; it is rather a manifestation of the causes of an intellectual crisis. Removing those causes is the real approach to the development and renovation of progressive thought.

In fact, new international changes prop up the idea of rejuvenating progressive thought. Internationalization of the economy, the revolution of information and communication, and changing conditions of production call for the contributions of socialist thought to preserve human rights and the rights of developing societies to assist them to grow and prosper. Progressive thought cannot possibly contribute to the reform of international development except by means of key changes in the essence of progressive thought.

At the national level, we notice that Egypt is undergoing a serious dilemma at all levels. We should devise an integrated project to resolve the crisis. Experience has proved that capitalism is not only incapable of getting Egypt out of this crisis, but is also the main factor responsible for this crisis. The way out is the establishment of an alternative to capitalism that is more competent, just and democratic. The proof of this is our direct experience in Egypt in recent years. With further economic liberalism, as a response to recommendations of debtor countries and to execute the programme of stabilization and

structural adaptation, wealth became more concentrated in few hands. New monopolies have been accentuated, the wage gap widened, the living standards of the majority of people lowered so that they became unable to fulfill their basic needs, the unemployment and poverty rates increased, and a large segment of the human force in society was marginalized. This state of affairs sharpened social tensions and political instability.

To sum up, we are living - thanks to capitalism - through a comprehensive societal crisis. The only pathway is a full-fledged modification of the production process, the pattern of possession of the means of production, and prevailing social values. This is achieved through the establishment of an alternative system, namely, the socialist system that, which can be more competent, more democratic and more just than the capitalist system.

Therefore, the Egyptian progressive movement should revitalize itself, renovate its thought, reform its organizational structures and methods of struggle, but mainly modify its leadership. The way is long, but begins with a fundamental step and core of the requisite change, namely, restructuring the progressive movement as a democratic movement that venerates human rights. The Egyptian progressive movement exists and possesses many intellectual, human, and organizational denominators. It takes the form of a large-scale social movement encompassing various currents and models of organization. It includes a progressive intellectual and scientific wing, as well as political, cultural, mass media and social movements. This diversification is quite natural given the unbalanced evolution of Egyptian society, the difference in levels of consciousness and cultural components, and the multiplicity of domains of activity for different sections of the popular movement. This diversification can even be a source of wealth for this movement, and can raise its efficacy if it is properly invested.

Nevertheless, the major problem of the Egyptian progressive movement is the absence of coordination among its various components, which prohibits those components from perceiving themselves as part of a comprehensive national movement that can change society. This is mainly due to the fact that the political factions of this movement deny each other and do not acknowledge pluralism among their ranks. Those factions have waged and are waging limited wars against each other, which can sometimes reach a degree of hostility and animosity that greatly surpasses their confrontation of class opponents. This movement will not restore its effectiveness unless everybody recognizes it as a pluralist movement, which incorporates several social interests, intellectual postulates and political perceptions. Instead of considering itself the only beholder of truth, each faction should inevitably acknowledge the others, that each side has part of the truth, and bear the consequences of such recognition, such as sanctioning the premise that we are all equal partners.

The cornerstone of the reform of the Egyptian progressive movement and the formulation of relations between its factions is that it should be democratic, either in the system it strives to establishes, the means of ascending to power, or its internal relations.

1) The socialist system it strives to establish: this system should be established through persuasion of the public, trust should be re-established in light of the movement's achievements, it should be based on pluralism and should provide opportunities for individual initiative. In other words, there is no room in such a system for the idea of a leading party, a more conscious revolutionary minority; the basis of leadership should be the people's choice through democratic mechanisms such as public elections and referendums.

2) The relationship between the progressive movement and other forces: and their struggle to build a socialist system in Egypt, the practice of class conflict: all this should take place through democratic methods, which focus on the transfer of power through public elections and the acknowledgment of the resolution of class conflict through peaceful means. The issue is to persuade citizens to adopt our platforms and support their implementation, through democratic tools and institutions such as political parties, trade unions, professional associations and mass media. Progressive democratic struggle is not confined to parliamentary action only, but comprises all democratic means of mobilization and pressure, such as strikes and peaceful demonstrations.

3) The relationship among sections of the progressive movement: The progressive movement will not gain credibility in its new endeavor, and will not be effectively stimulated toward the achievement of its prospective goals, unless it is democratic in its internal relations and internal organizational structure. The relationship of parties, trade unions, social organizations, and professional associations should be based on parity and equality. The idea of a leading party, or the populations being collateral organizations of the political party to be mobilized according to its directives is no longer applicable. On the contrary, popular activity should be geared toward planned objectives serving the interests of its members.

Within the democratic framework of the progressive social movement and its political, cultural and social components, the following fundamental points should govern the internal relations of the movement:

- Political pluralism within the progressive movement, equality among various political factions, acknowledgment of the other and that no

political splinter group should have supremacy over another one except through the tangible results of practical experience.

- Overcoming elitism, and relying on wide popular support.

- Establish a political party on a democratic basis, avoiding the monopoly of the few in party decision-making; review the rules of centralization and hierarchy as being obstacles to internal democratic action of the progressive political party.

- Renew the leadership and transfer it to younger generations.

Hence, democracy within the progressive movement will be the basis of the democratic orientation of this movement in society, in the establishment of civil society institutions, of reconciliation between social justice and the legacy of bourgeois democracy, and the evolution of forms of direct popular participation. In this way, shortcomings in the efficacy of political liberalism for the poor will be avoided.

The renovation of the Egyptian progressive movement within the bounds of democracy and human rights will not be an easy task. It calls for a ferocious war against the ideas that pervade the ranks of this movement, and against the static conditions that benefit some key leaders who control the movement's sub-structural organizations. This process can begin with realistic steps in order to regulate dialogue within the movement and synthesize the bases of required renovation. Democracy in this context takes the form of intellectual forums, where opinions are exchanged. I suggest we call it the progressive popular forum where participation is open to all. It should meet every six months to discuss the issues and problems of the progressive movement. This interaction within a democratic framework would create a popular political intellectual nucleus capable of propelling efforts toward the requisite renovation.

Reviewing Concepts Is
Imperative to Renovation

Wahid Abdel Meguid

I praise Abdel Ghaffar Shukr's effort to develop the progressive movement in Egypt. Such an effort revitalizes the Egyptian political movement. I express an external vision, aiming to strengthen and not weaken the progressive movement in Egypt. Anyone who thinks that democracy is a path toward the future has a genuine interest in effecting a wide-scale pluralism, where no single team manipulates the political stage. This is a major prerequisite for the success of democratic transformation in the Arab World. No success can be achieved where there is the hegemony of one force over the others, and no balance of political powers. My presentation emanates from this principle. It is summarized in the principle that "political development should parallel intellectual evolution", since political renovation is complemented with parallel and coherent intellectual review. Bermalo Touliati warned several decades ago that, "the mission of drawing up democratic principles for socialism requires, apart from pragmatic efforts, other efforts in the sphere of theoretical research." Since then, some renovation has been undertaken by Leftist-European vanguards, but it is still limited to the intellectual domain.

Renovation of leftist movements mostly focuses on the political rather than the intellectual aspect. Not much has been developed since the emergence of the first work in the seventies, namely Sentiago Kario's important book on "European Communism and the State" which shied away from intellectual review. However, the atmosphere is different now; now, it is possible to couple political renovation with intellectual rejuvenation.

The importance of intellectual renovation is that democracy has intellectual foundations. In order to create an affinity between democracy and leftist thought, a harmonious intellectual body should be established.

I speak here about the pillars of democracy and not of liberalism. I should also clarify that this is not an attempt to impose liberalism on leftist thought. We are dealing here with democracy as a political system and a model of rule, and not with liberalism as a philosophy and collection of values.

Undoubtedly, the foundations of democracy as a system of government are independent from the liberal intellectual line, despite the overlap in some aspects. This overlap is due to the fact that liberalism championed democracy more than any other trend of thought, but what I am dealing with here are the key principles of democracy pertaining to man's freedom and his rights vis-a-vis state authority. This issue was raised long before the birth of liberalism. I will present in brief some elementary key concepts which I think are crucial to discuss in order to proceed with the political renovation of leftist movements within a democratic framework and on intellectual principles of democracy.

The First key Concept is probably human nature and people's relationship to freedom. Some believe that people are the product of social relations. This concept does not take into consideration the innate human tendency toward freedom, freedom as individuals and not as social beings. What I mean here is that there is a space of individual freedom in human nature. This is the origin of natural law, which is considered one of the roots of democratic knowledge. Any theoretical establishment in line with democracy should not overlook the idea of natural law.

The Second key Concept in the intellectual principles of democracy is that of "state authority" and its relationship to exploitation and social justice. I will discuss here the concept of exploitation and its origins. Consider the assumption that state authority itself is the source of oppression and exploitation - and not authority as a tool in the hands of a social group. It is even the major source of coercion and exploitation in human history; it surpasses any exploitation of one class by another. Consequently, exploitation is not inevitably related to private property. The source of exploitation being state authority – which might or might not be linked with a particular social group - leads to the conclusion that exploitations should be confronted through contraction of the limits of this authority. Experience has proved that this limitation is unrealistic so long as the state manipulates large authorities and controls the economic and social spheres. The limitation of state authority would not weaken the state, but might be a tool for enhancing its power. Here, it is necessary to review the attitude toward authority primarily in light of the issue of liberty. Authority should be supervised, accountable, subject to periodic change; its role should be integrated with the preservation of individual freedoms; it should perform its social function in protecting the poor and weak, i.e., achieving social justice.

It is necessary to review those concepts to make democracy compatible with leftist thought, because it is difficult to visualize how democracy can be preserved under a hegemonic authority that tightens its grip over society, and controls the economy and other social institutions. So long as the state manipulates large jurisdictions, it will be brutal with people.

The Third key Concept is that of "determinism" in general and historical determinism in particular. In fact, this concept is not confined to Marxism: we find it in different articulations in the writings of Machiavelli, Shbingler, and Toynbee, as well as the new

Right or the new conservatives in the West. Focayama suggested that history is pre-destined, which contradicts pluralism.

Finally, I think that political revision of leftist progressive movements, and their integration with democracy and human rights, paves the way for intellectual revival, which should go hand in hand with political renovation. The most important point in this intellectual revision is to emancipate the leftist movement from the traces of the radical revolutionary tendency, which would launch an intellectual revival. I think that had it not been for the pervasiveness of the revolutionary tendency in Marxist thought, a great part of his intellectual endeavor would have been modified in favor of democracy. Marx the intellectual was influenced by Marx the revolutionary. His thought - especially concerning state authority - was controlled by revolutionary political considerations, especially after the 1848 Manifesto. If we compare Marx's works before and after 1848, we will find some differences, bearing in mind that when Marx appeared, democracy was not fully mature. We should take this into consideration while reviewing the Marxist perspective of democracy in terms of fundamental intellectual sub-structures. I suggest this line of thought because I am keen on the future of the progressive and democratic movements in Egypt.

Two Democracies:

One Defeated and the Other Fictitious

Nabil El Hilali

I would like to thank CIHRS and Abdel Ghaffar Shukr for his important study on the renovation of the progressive movement in Egypt. I wish to consider the idea that the progressive movement should, in anticipation, sanction democratic struggle and acknowledge peaceful means for reaching power. In my opinion, this commitment is imperative for all political parties within a democratic society, where the state follows the rules of the democratic game and consequently sanctions the rules of the transfer of power. However, if the state expropriates the rules of transfer, this commitment reminds me of the story of Abi Mussa Al Ash'ari. In this case, the people are entitled to use the rights spelled out in human rights documents, including the right to revolt against injustice and oppression as a natural right. I had to clarify this point at the outset.

Furthermore, I would like to say that if we are dealing with an Egyptian progressive movement, I agree with Abdel Ghaffar Shukr that we are not dealing with a political party but a "front". Hence, it is difficult to discuss the renewal of this movement separately from the renewal of each splinter group individually. The point of departure in this process is necessarily to grasp the mistakes of the past, so that history will not repeat itself, then manifestly and boldly to acknowledge the shortcomings of Marxists, nationalists and Tagamu' members concerning democracy and human rights.

The key question is: What is required from the new progressive movement in the spheres of democracy and human rights?

First, the movement should adopt a sound concept of democracy; secondly, it should take a firm attitude toward democracy. We should

acknowledge, as Communists - at the international level - and as Nasserites that we failed to ascertain a workable indigenous formula for democracy, nor could we find an eligible formula for import. The democracy of the "former" Eastern socialist bloc is defeated, and the democracy of the capitalist West is counterfeit. The shortcoming of those two versions of democracy is the separation between the social and political facets of democracy, and obliterating one in favor of the other. The absence of political democracy in the socialist world is the root of the crisis and eventual downfall of socialist systems, in spite of the unprecedented social democracy they provided. A question still imposes itself: what is the point of providing social and economic improvement for an imprisoned individual?

By contrast, despite the fact that Western democracy provides political freedoms, overlooking economic and social rights turns those rights into mere formalities. We should not forget Egyptian history during the liberal era prior to the 1952 Revolution. Did the liberal era project true democracy for Egyptians? I have strong doubts.

This period witnessed constitutional reversals, a suspension of the 1923 Constitution, and forged ballots to remove the Wafd party from power. Throughout this extended period, the Wafd ruled intermittently under bourgeois liberalism. It took forty years of class struggle for Egyptian workers to obtain the right to form trade unions.

I do not want my words to imply that I am categorically renouncing bourgeois democracy. On the contrary, the renewed progressive movement should safeguard the democratic values included in bourgeois democracy, as well as those espoused by progressive political and legal thought during the last centuries, because those values, spelled out in international human rights doctrines, represent enormous historical achievements of all nations. Unfortunately, authoritarian bureaucratic socialist regimes, that fell

one after another, instead of inheriting the legacy of historical evolution that preceded them, rejected bourgeois democracy altogether. Meanwhile, they failed to offer an alternative, which opened the door for the violation of civil and political rights in those countries and put socialism in a sham confrontation with democracy. Democracy seemed to be a twin brother of capitalism in sharp contradiction to socialism.

The new progressive movement should also clarify its standpoint toward democracy and human rights, to deal with freedom as a whole, to respect human rights and to protest any unfair legislation toward people's rights. Any aggression on democracy creates a sub-structure that can jeopardize all political forces. For instance, when Ismail Sidki imported Article 98A and its collaterally from the Fascist penal code and transplanted it in the Egyptian counterpart as a pretext to wage war against Communism, those very same articles were used against all opposition forces in Egypt. Furthermore, the recent laws against terrorism are a sword that threatens the neck of all forces and not only the Islamic movement. Article 86, concerning terrorism, is used in trials against progressive forces as well as religious groups.

I will now discuss key points of democracy advocated by the new progressive movement:

The First is the dialectical link between the political and social facets of democracy. They are two faces of the same coin. Democracy cannot be a political process in a society lacking social justice, which in the final analysis would imply the monopoly of political freedoms by the top of the hierarchy and the upper classes. Democracy means the right of workers to work, their right not to be arbitrarily dismissed from work, their right to strike, and the right of every citizen to shelter and to medical treatment. What kind of freedom can a hungry or poverty-stricken individual feel, what equality can there

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be between the deprived and the wealthy. On the other hand, under political despotism, all affluent classes lose their privileges. The experience of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is a case in point of the consequences of separating between democracy and socialism and reaping socialism of its humanistic aspect.

The Second Point was elaborated by Abdel Ghaffar Shukr, who was namely, commitment to the multi-party system, political pluralism, trade union freedoms, and rejection of the single party or the concept of the leading party.

The Third Point is ratification of the transfer of power, even in progressive or socialist systems. To advocate the transfer of power under bourgeois rule, then to disclaim it under socialism, is a rejected opportunist attitude. Any sound political attitude cannot repudiate the concept of the transfer of power, even if it leads to the downfall of a socialist government, like what happened to the leftist Sandinistas in Nicaragua. The transition of the socialist movement from being the government to being the opposition is a good opportunity to re-shuffle the cards and renew intellectual approaches.

The Fourth Point is to avoid dealing with the people with disdain, as if they were dependent followers of the progressive party. History reveals attempts to impose tutelage and hegemony on trade unions by authoritarian socialist parties and other parties allegedly claiming democracy.

The Fifth Point is to establish relationships between different segments of the progressive movement on a democratic basis that guarantees equity and a realistic estimation of individual potentials. Democratic relations between segments of the democratic movement call for a resolution of a quite crucial problem, namely, leadership of the movement. In any bloc, there is always a struggle to maintain

leading positions, which cannot be done through compulsion or coercion, but is a long and tedious effort.

The Sixth Point is the prevalence of democracy or pluralism within segments of the progressive movement. Hence, we should abandon premises such as "whoever is not in my party is not genuine" or "whoever is outside the Communist Party is not a communist". The party that lacks internal democracy is not eligible to struggle to achieve or adopt democracy. This leads us directly to the central problem of democracy. The traumatic experiences of centralized democracy that we see in the international communist movement created a tendency to abolish centralism altogether. In my opinion, any leftist or rightist party should have a degree of centralism, or else it will be a form devoid of content. In fact, the bitterness of the past stems mainly from the fact that leftist parties are primarily characterized by a centralism, which is seen qualified as democracy. In other words, democracy is a description of centralism. In fact, democratic centralism is based on two equivalent elements: centralism negates democracy, but meanwhile requires its existence. Democracy leads to the extermination of centralism because it creates multiple centers of power. Meanwhile, to abolish centralism is to weaken democracy, because the party would lose its cohesion and essence, and would become a chaotic grouping where democracy could not possibly be practiced.

The right application of democratic centralism requires mainly a democratic relation between the sub-structure and the leadership, whereby the leadership is selected by members of the party who place their trust in them, supervise them and evaluate their performance. For the lower levels to be controlled by the upper levels, the greatest level of democracy available should be provided, because the circumstances of some parties do not allow them to expand democratic concepts. Hence, they should guarantee the following:

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- The right of participation in the formulation and ratification of the party line and platforms.

- The right to debate, dialogue and multiplicity of opinions and ideas.

- Provide organizational channels that allow the party minority to express its opinion within the party without jeopardizing the implementation of majority decisions, in such a way that the minority could turn into the majority. This would fully protect transfer of power within the party.

Democracy and Marxism:

Two Irreconcilable Opposites

Said El Naggar

I would like to thank CIHRS for its useful contributions in the sphere of intellectual debates between political movements in the Arab World. I would also like to thank Abdel Ghaffar Shukr for his distinguished study, and Nabil El Hilali because he broached the subject quite honestly.

First, when we deal with a topic that encompasses concepts like democracy, liberalism and pluralism, we have to start with an accurate definition of those terms. Without this definition, we can speak about the same concepts while having different ideas in our minds. Nabil El Hilali spoke about democracy as I would have liked to do myself. However, liberals desire one kind of democracy, progressives seek another democracy, and the Islamic movement is after a third version of democracy. With what kind of democracy can all identify?

As I already indicated, Nabil El Hilali's approach is quite appropriate, but leaves us hanging. He speaks about bourgeois democracy as a board of directors that manages the interests of the capitalist class. He attacks social democracy because, even though it achieves social justice, it deprives people of their political and civil freedoms.

I was quite disappointed because the inevitable conclusion is that there is only one democracy based on multi-parties and the relativity of the truth (there is no absolute truth): a democracy based on the individual's right to the sanctity of his body, home and correspondence, which have been violated by social democracy, as indicated by Nabil El Hilali himself. There is only one democracy, and it would be a fallacy to contrast democracy and political rights with social and economic rights. The status of the working class in capitalist societies that adopt political democracy is far much better than the status of their counterparts in socialist

societies that adopt social democracy. How did a country like the Soviet Union - which is one of the richest countries in the world - leave the working class after seventy years to starve without lodging or clothing?

Hence, the premise that political democracy repudiates economic and social rights is unfounded, and that claiming there is a social and economic democracy is twisting words. Democracy is the transfer of power, intellectual freedom, pluralism, and the public freedoms of individuals.

Second, in terms of definition, what are the progressive forces? Are they the Tagamu', the Nasserite Party, the Communist party, the Trotskyist or the Workers' Communist Party? What about liberal parties? Are they reactionary forces allied with imperialism and Zionism?

I want to warn against the dictatorship of words. We are also progressive, and progressivism is not identified through its splinter groups. There are different means to achieve progress: liberal, socialist and Islamic. Hence, if you believe in democracy, you should refrain from using the word "progressive" to describe certain groups and parties. I noticed that Abdel Ghaffar Shukr, in his discussion of the intellectual concepts of progressives, pointed to competence of the economic system and political participation. I, as a liberal, suggest the same ideas, but who would achieve economic competence, and what is the definition of social justice and political participation? Here, we tend to disagree. I do not claim to monopolize the truth, and you don't either. This is an important issue because it concerns the totalitarian heritage that still pervades our thought.

Democracy is not merely a word. Islamists and socialists say yes to democracy, pluralism, freedom, and transfer of power. However, the issue is different. If the political platforms of parties include ideas inimical to democracy, we will have parties that only claim democracy.

Democracy is manifested in programs and plans concerning social life and must be applicable in reality.

Hence, I put several questions into the hands of fellow progressives:

1- What is the logical compatibility between democracy and Marxism? Can a Marxist believe in democracy? The first approach to Marxism is the material interpretation of history. Marxism says that history is subject to dialectical determinism in human societies, and that the individual has no control over this process. Accordingly, capitalist feudal systems are inevitably transformed to socialism, then to communism without any human intervention. All this contradicts the core of democracy based on relativism and pluralism.

2- Is democracy compatible with class struggle? Class struggle supposedly takes place between workers and capitalists, and the former would ultimately defeat the latter oppressive class, according to the Communist Manifesto. Freedom is for the nation and not for enemies of the people, in this case the capitalist class. Does this concept conform with democracy?

3- Can democracy live with the concept of state ownership of the means of production? Socialism is based on state ownership of the means of production, because private capital is a tool of exploitation. Can we visualize democracy without private ownership?

I now move to a more specific level. In Egypt, we have a constitution inherited from the past. It lacks the simplest elements of democracy. It endows the head of state with all powers, and deprives all other constitutional institutions of any jurisdiction. Political reform is an important step toward democracy. A number of questions are raised in this context about the fifty percent of the People's Assembly seats being held by workers and peasants. This is a remaining feature of class struggle which completely contradicts the idea of equality before the law. It is claimed that this fifty percent was deprived in the past, but this is

inconsistent with reality. Workers and peasants have the right to form their own parties to aggregate and articulate their interests, and even obtain one hundred percent of the People's Assembly seats if the "people" decide so. The aim is not workers and peasants' representation, but that the legislative council serves the interests of the presidency. What is the attitude toward state ownership of the press, the social prosecutor, and the public sector as pillars of development? Answers to these questions highlight the attitude of progressive forces toward democracy. What is the attitude of leftist political factions in Egypt toward the International Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the individual civil and political rights and freedoms they encompass? What is the concept of social justice adopted by progressive forces? If we consider the socialist legacy, the concept of social justice is based on the abolishment of individual ownership through confiscation, expropriation and political purging!

What is your perception of social justice? Does it mean the right of the individual to the minimum level of subsistence? If so, then it is alright, but if it means the right to work, it is a political issue. The right to work is spelled out in all constitutions, but is it applied? This depends on economic and political circumstances, and is applicable even in socialist countries which in turn face the problem of unemployment. Consequently, we cannot discuss social justice without embellishing it with a meaning compatible with democracy and human rights.

Leftist parties and factions acknowledge Pan Arabist capitalism and struggle against non-Pan Arabist capitalism. What is the non-Pan Arabist capitalism we are supposed to struggle against? The major point in my presentation is that we should agree on the meaning of democracy. If we are dealing with liberal democracy, we should rid ourselves of a large part of the Marxian legacy.

Natural Mechanisms

Or Human Intervention?

Mohammed Sid Ahmed

The first point that we should consider is the definition of progressivism. In fact, it is derived from "progress." The first philosophical question is, what is the nature of progress? This is not an ipso facto question. If progress has a material meaning, this means we have progressed if, for example, we previously used animals for transportation and now we use cars. However, this might not be true, because progress entails ethical, moral and spiritual qualitative aspects, and not quantitative material progress.

The second point is that, in the intellectual world, we know that progress means perpetual improvement. We used to say that with science and technology we could subdue the unknown and achieve progress. Today, by the end of the twentieth century, and with our colossal technological advancement, the more we advance in knowledge, the more we realize what we do not know. Science progresses absolutely and regresses relatively. Backwardness in relative terms is important because politics does not deal with absolute truth but the art of grappling with what we think is the truth. We will never be able to know the absolute truth; what we know is what was made available to us - with some scientific knowledge - as truth. When we realize that what we ignore expands faster than what we know, we see that we are backward. We find ourselves with a history that moves backwards: despite the fact that it absolutely progresses, it relatively degenerates. In other words, the definition of progressiveness today is control over fate.

I think that discussions revolved around two core philosophies: what we call mechanisms that govern themselves and supposedly

balance and redress themselves, and the philosophy of external control. Living creatures have lived throughout history because the fittest could survive, according to Darwin's "democracy" of "survival of the fittest." However, humans have been endowed with a characteristic unknown to animals, namely, intelligence, and the ability to control. Control presupposes that the more I advance in science and knowledge, the better I can command. Or is it the case that the more I dominate, the more I realize that I am lagging behind? This is a serious predicament concerning which is preferable: mechanisms that redress themselves or human interference through our intelligence and ability to plan?

The market, for instance, is among the mechanisms that control themselves. It presupposes that supply balances demand. The market is in disequilibrium if supply exceeds demand or vice versa, but the market restores its balance. One trend of thought says that the market should be left without interference, but this is not orthodox liberal thought, and several liberals do not sanction this suggestion. Lately in the United States, what came to be called "the new Reaganism" gained footing. This concept is the antithesis of the philosophy of the Bolshevik revolution, and advocates freedom of the market and a shrinking state role, because this is the secret behind prosperity and affluence.

Another mechanism is democracy. What is it? In the final analysis, democracy is that no one, either Marxist, liberal, Pan Arabist or Islamist, can claim he/she is the history. Each party should nominate itself, and if it proves eligible it becomes "the" history, and if it fails it would be replaced by another party. This is a self-geared, self-controlled mechanism.

Finally, I raise this question: which philosophy is better, the one proclaiming that self-rectifying mechanisms are better because they represent nature and therefore do not superimpose a state or group

or individual against nature, or the philosophy stating that intelligence and command can make people and societies achieve anything and everything? For example, the nature of human beings themselves can theoretically be controlled through genetics. Can I manipulate genetics and fail to control social production? Can I lose control? Several factors can prohibit me, and I would not be able to venture farther. Among those factors is the environment. We are committing suicide and are destroying the human race and the environment. Formerly, we could tamper with nature on the surface of the earth, but with the atomic bomb, we can modify the living environment. The struggle between the two poles reached the point of the inevitability of extinction of one by the other: this is the rule of survival in this frenzy of armament escalation.

Another point concerns the network of collective intelligence, which is beyond control. Will the world witness artificial intelligence of machines and devices surpassing human faculties, which can destroy humanity itself ? This is progress, but where do human interest and survival stand? People are being crushed between tools of destruction and those of modernization. Shall we leave self-controlled mechanisms on their own, or should people use their intelligence to interfere?

In fact, the solution is neither this nor that, and herein lies the dilemma. How can we combine the two? This actually happened in the discussions. Speakers said that they defend the public sector yet do not attack the private sector. In other words, neither rejected the other in absolute terms. This is the philosophic core. Overlooking natural mechanisms is impossible, because humans cannot be smarter than nature since our perception lies always beyond the objective truth. Furthermore, we cannot overlook the importance of human interference in natural mechanisms. People are the center, and this is the core of human rights.

DISCUSSION

Criticism After The Downfall

Mahmoud Abdel Fadil

Said El Naggar rightly discussed the failure of the Communist experience 70 years after its emergence, and that the Soviet Union collapsed and left behind a population of hunger-stricken citizens. However, he cannot use this example to generalize about history, because positivists resort to the method of historical experimentation. For instance, Communism in China did not make the Chinese starve. On the contrary, China is now an economic and political super-power, regardless of any issues concerning the status of human rights.

As for democracy, we notice that, even in Western countries, there is no ideal case. The sanctity of correspondence and home are violated every day. The West is striving to reach an idealistic perception of democracy. The problem in Egypt is that no one was sincere about democracy, not the leftist, nationalist, liberal nor Islamic movements. I think that if Communism should ever acknowledge - as it was actually spelled out in several economic writings - the failure of central planning in achieving the optimum exploitation of resources, champions of a free market should also admit the failure of the market system. As Mohammed Said Ahmed indicated, the market is not a self-redressing mechanism. This is true only in the absence of monopolies in the market. The downfall of the market is paralleled by the failure of central planning. The best mix will be discussed in the future. I think that political forces in Egypt now, as different as they are, are reviewing their old premises, which have actually become anachronistic. However, I fear that this review will boil down to simply crossing out old words and expressions.

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To say that the communist system invented state intervention is not true. Capitalism did so not only at the level of local society but also in other countries and states.

Ashraf Hussein

I would like to reply to what Wahid Abdel Meguid said about the state and exploitation. I think the link is not sound. Exploitation predates the state. If Wahid meant that economic exploitation of the state was due to its hegemony over the economy, this is equally untrue. In Western capitalist liberal systems, political democracy was frequently aborted, even with the existence of a capitalist system. Often, some reversals or coups were undertaken against political liberalism.

It should be noted that all political movements in the arena attempted to monopolize the idea of human rights. I think that we can agree on specific human rights dimensions and standards congruous with any socio-political system. This is the challenge of the future: that human rights would be compatible with nationalist, Marxist, liberal and Islamic thought.

Hussein Abdel Razeq

I am afraid the questions raised by Said El Naggar over a Marxist ability to adopt political liberalism and other questions can turn Marxism into an integrated "religion" or creed. This is not true, for Marxism is an intellectual theory, and there is great debate over it. To consider it a sacred unalterable "religion" would be an attempt to stifle the possibilities of its evolution in the future.

The second point concerns the link between democracy and liberalism. I think this bond is not valid. The liberalism that emerged in Europe was primarily economic, and lacked political liberalism for a long time. Furthermore, political developments pertaining to

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democratic change were not remote from the emergence of the Soviet Union and socialist ideas. Moreover, democracy is not merely slogans, it is practice. The Tagamu' Party is the only party that advocated the establishment of political parties to represent all lines of thought, and was the only one to open the file on torture in Egypt.

The last, but important, point is the army. The military forces in Egypt have been the major establishment in government since 1952. How can democracy and human rights be instituted under such circumstances?

Moustafa Abdel Aal

I agree with what Nabil El Hilali said about the feasibility of democracy being adopted by political movements and parties in light of the political regime's rebuke of democracy and the transfer of power. This is a real dilemma. Democracy is really desirable, but how can it be achieved under totalitarianism, where opposition parties are confident that they have no hope of ascending to power?

Salah Adly

The material interpretation of history means that there are economic, social and political circumstances leading to historical evolution. However, the role of humans and individual will power should be stressed.

Amer Abdel Moneim

I wonder about the progressive movement's attitude toward the Islamic movement: would it ally itself with authority against Islamists? Can there be a rapprochement between leftists and Islamists?

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Abdel Qader Yassin

Abdel Ghaffar's paper did not mention the Arab dimension that can affect the progressive movement. It also lacked a scope of action including a mechanism to unify the progressive movement. It needed denominators to define progressivists in Egypt. I think those standards are: animosity to imperialism and Zionism; liberation of the Arab nation; social justice; and democracy. I think the definition of progress offered by Mohammed Sid Ahmed as "Control over fate" is rather technological. Finally, I emphasize that a review of progressive thought is very crucial to enriching intellectual pluralism. However, a question remains: why did the criticism of progressive thought in the Arab World lag so far behind, while we had many shortcomings in the internal political structure and communication with society? Why didn't this criticism emerge before the collapse of the socialist bloc?

Nabil Abdel Fattah

There is a difference between liberalism as we are familiar with it in Egypt and contemporary Western liberalism, which some philosophers call "freedom without a choice" (this is the name of a French book that appeared four years ago). The core of freedom is choice among alternative options. However, what happens in Western liberalism is that alternatives are so similar and sometimes identical that it becomes quite difficult to have free choice. The "musts" in our Arab thought is one form of intellectual fundamentalism, and is manifested in liberal, leftist, Pan Arabist and Islamic thought alike. Our thought should be emancipated from those "musts".

Finally, democracy is not only a political platform, it is a mirror image of an intellectual-social movement that reinforces certain concepts and principles. The renovation of the progressive movement will be a sound approach to the intellectual movement in Egypt.

Mohammed El Sayed Said

The Marxism that the past two or three generations grappled with in the Arab World is a Leninist reading of Marxism. There are other readings of Marxism which were not involved with the cruel practices that the Soviet experience produced. Marxism is the mother of Leninism and Stalinism, but is also the origin of the social democratic and socialist movements in Western Europe. Criticism against Leninism and Stalinism contributed a great deal to the democratization of Western capitalist societies. Democracy in Europe today did not evolve very far until after the second World War and the emergence of Socialist thought.

Another point concerns the link between the intellectual and social theory. I think that the idea of practice lies at the heart of Marxism. In this sense, there is an objective intellectual basis within Marxism that establishes a strong communication between Marxism and liberalism, at least at the level of the concept of practice. From the viewpoint of the theory of "practice", the idea of creating a social entity based on what Mohammed Sid Ahmed called large-scale social design to build up a network of artificial and managerial methods called a socialist society similar to the Soviet model, is ridiculous. The issue moves from the theory of "practice" to the theory of Marxist knowledge, from the concept of large-scale artificial managerial intervention to the concept of animated intervention to achieve the progressive transformation of society, i.e., increasing its knowledge, the ability to control its own fate, human prosperity, obliterating poverty, and achieving the optimum level of civil and political freedoms. In this sense , there are important pillars within Marxism that address liberalism. The proof of this is that, from the ranks of liberals, an economist named Rawl produced a Theory of justice that takes into consideration a radical improvement of the distribution of national income and wealth. Furthermore, the French Communist Party called its latest conference "Rawl and Nietszche", which means

a revival of the ideas of social justice within the larger scope of democracy and individual freedoms: social democracy within European Communist parties.

By contrast, there is a strong tendency within Marxism expressed by "Humanistic Marxism", which sought to merge Marxism with liberalism. Marx himself relied on the achievements of great liberal forefathers. Consequently, there is room for affinity between Marxism and liberalism based on controlled intellectual foundations: the idea of transforming the leftist struggle from state coercion and the formation of a huge artificial entity that has nothing to do with real life into an alternative path based on vital human intervention that can effect real changes within the social structure itself. In this sense, there is real potential for a fertile rapprochement between liberalism and Marxism, without necessarily leading to the demise of either.

This can occur in Egypt. In this case, what is necessary is for Arab Marxists to follow in the footsteps of their European counterparts who have actually dropped some intellectual, political and tactical factors to build genuine and logical bridges with democracy. Arab Marxists should follow suit.

Abdel Moneim Said

What is the intellectual foundation of democracy within a society that does not control nature, i.e., suffers from social, economic and technological backwardness? I address this question to Mohammed Sid Ahmed.

Moreover, I think that political movements in Egypt do not represent various classes. They all ascended from the middle class, and although they differ in their intellectual orientations, they have established some sort of congruence. Liberals claim that they contributed greatly to social justice; Marxists say that liberalism is

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not the product of liberals alone, and that Marxism embellished liberalism with its social aspect. This is not the problem: the predicament lies in a democracy within a backward society that does not control nature and has an accumulated political culture. This is the real challenge. The problem is that development starts with the specification of a central point. I think that until now, Egyptian intellectuals have not come to grips with the fact that democracy is the central value that can eliminate backwardness. In Egypt we need to set priorities that contribute to an emancipated national project.

Final Comments

Intellectual Renovation Should
Precede Political Revisionism

Wahid Abdel Meguid stressed that the intellectual foundations of democracy are different from those of liberalism, and that the renovation of the progressive movement in Egypt should be implemented primarily on an intellectual rather than on a political basis.

He also argued that the growth of the new conservative right wing is an alarming indication, because it threatens the social, economic and political achievements that the middle and lower classes have obtained, thanks to the intellectual thesis of European Marxists.

Nabil El Hilali indicated that he differed with Wahid Abdel Meguid who distinguished between state and class exploitation. Hilali argued that the state is class-based, and also advocated the development of internal practices of Marxist forces toward democracy.

In his presentation, Said El Naggar mentioned that a review of progressive thought should not be superfluous, but rather deep and thorough. He also pointed out that liberalism is a human legacy, and in this sense is a common heritage shared by all.

Abdel Ghaffar Shukr indicated that socialist regimes are not alone in suffering

setbacks. Liberal regimes are also undergoing crises of another type. The economic collapse of socialist states took place only in recent years.

Mohammed Sid Ahmed discussed the importance of intellectual renovation of the progressive movement and linking this process to Egypt's problems and predicaments.

Chapter Three

Renovating Pan Arabist Thought Within The Framework Of Democracy And Human Rights

Introduction

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) called for the discussion of "Rejuvenation of Pan Arab Thought Under Democracy and Human Rights". This invitation stemmed from the fact that there was considerable discussion and activity about Pan Arabism in Arab political life for about seven decades. During this period, some Pan Arabist political forces actually managed to reach power in a number of central Arab countries (Egypt, Syria and Iraq). This was an opportunity to test their efficacy in achieving the objectives of this discourse, mainly: how to overcome disunion, detachment and bring the nation state to unity; challenging imperialist and Zionist plots; social and economic progress and general prosperity, etc.

From an evaluative perspective, experience revealed that the call for Pan Arabism either as a trend of thought or action, needs a critical, creative and thorough review, due to its successive failures at different levels. Many concerned intellectuals, who presented various contributions that are worthy of contemplation and debate, sensed this state of affairs.

Amidst those comprehensive views and discussions, the issues of democracy and human rights take precedence, especially since some of those views have a deep-rooted conviction that democracy and human rights have been violated in the course of Pan Arabist political practice and for prolonged periods of time. Furthermore, this

violation was one of the real impediments to the effectiveness and credibility of Pan Pan Arabism .

Whether the shortcomings in the adoption of democracy and human rights were due to a defect in the nature of Pan Arabism itself, or the incompatible practices of nationalists themselves, there is a near consensus over the fact that democracy and human rights should be the core of necessary rules to reform Pan Arabist discourse now and in the future.

In this context, the Ibn Rushd Salon hosted a cultural evening on 28 January 1995. Bahey Eddin Hassan, Director of CIHRS, who presided the evening, invited six main speakers

1) Ahmed Sidki El Dajani	Secretary General of the National Islamic Conference and prominent Palestinian thinker
2) Hossam Issa	Professor of Law and member of the Political Bureau of the Nasserite Party
3) Hassanein Krum	Well-known journalist
4) Abdel Ghaffar Shukr	Director of Central Socialization at the Tagamu' Party
5) Yehia El Gamal	Professor of Constitutional Law
6) Mohammed El Sayed Said	CIHRS Research Consultant and Vice Director of the Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies.

The Status of Democracy

In Pan Arabist Thought

Ahmed Sidki El Dajani

The topic of our seminar is the renovation of Pan Arabism within the bounds of democracy and human rights. We strongly believe in renovation. A contemplation of human life and the evolution of stages of the history of humankind reveal a pressing need for renovation. This concept is genuine, and is imposed by the exigencies of civilized human life. This cannot come about except by means of critical review. Renovation has its factors and denominators and we are constantly propelled to contemplate the steps of its implementation.

I say that the first step toward renovation is to review the current situation of Pan Arabist thought, especially with regard to democracy and human rights. In this instance, we should resort to two sciences: The first is the history of thought, which is quite important and of great interest in scientific and academic circles. It is mainly concerned with the history of thought that spread among people and affected their lives. This science probes the origins of those thoughts, which survived and spread. In fact, our forefathers were greatly preoccupied with this science. For instance, I point to Abi Al Hassan Al Askari's book "Al 'Awa'il" (The Pioneers), where he wrote about intellectual figures whose ideas and thoughts had a leading role in their respective arenas. In our contemporary history, we are much concerned with the work of Crane Printon in this domain. It is high time to restore this science while we study the history of our Pan Arabist thought. The second science is futurology, because we want to shape the future on a scientific basis.

In fact, when we study Arabism, it is important to first define it and identify its different schools. It encompasses various trends of

thought, but they all fall under a general nomenclature: "Pan Arab thought ". Among the various trends of thought in our nation during the twentieth century, one major trend was most prominent. It gave precedence to Pan Arabism over other factors. This trend spread and expanded. Furthermore, it conforms with the fundamental objectives of the nation spelled out by other schools of thought, but it arranges those objectives differently and has different priorities.

Do we agree that Pan Arabism has undergone stages of evolution under specific circumstances, and that those circumstances shaped and affected this thought? In fact, the evolution of Pan Arabist thought was perceived in light of those circumstances.

We can discuss Pan Arabist thought and distinguish several stages of its evolution:

The First Stage is the beginning. It dates from the rule of Mohammed Ali until 1920, and the emergence of nation-states in our Arab World. Before that, we know that the prevailing form was the extended Arab Islamic State, even though Mohammed Ali formed a partially independent state which remained part of a larger state.

The Second Stage is the period between the two World Wars, when national independence emerged as a genuine objective.

The Third Stage is that of the Pan Arabist tide, which sprang up after the Palestinian crisis, the 23rd of July 1952 Revolution, and lasted until 1970.

The Fourth Stage is the post-1967 setback: 1970 to 1991. Since this date, we are witnessing a special situation worthy of a different treatment.

When we contemplate the status of democracy and human rights in Pan Arabism , we find that these topics were a major concern, but differed in the degree of attention from one period to another.

However, this does not imply that this attention was minimal. Suffice it to say here that during the earliest prolonged stage the book "Taba'i Al Istibdad" (The Features of Despotism) was written by Abdel Rahman Al Kawakibi. The question of democracy was strongly in focus then. Arab resurgence at that time advocated Shura (consultation) and democracy (which encompasses human rights) as genuine objectives of the Pan Arab struggle.

In fact, the stages that followed were concerned with this topic, albeit in different degrees as a result of the modification of objectives and changing circumstances. During the stage of national independence, for example, all efforts were geared toward independence. Human rights, democracy, and Shura were all perceived through national independence, that is, that the struggle for independence incorporated them.

During the stage of Pan Arabist tide, we will notice that the nation was preoccupied with independence and the process of build-up during the post-independence period, towards the achievement of a great objective, namely, unity. Hence, priorities were modified in a way that reflected the perception of democracy and human rights. Democracy became social democracy; the conditions of the preparation for war imposed the mobilization of all efforts to establish a strong nation through unity. During the post-1967 setback period, we will notice that democracy and human rights were heavily emphasized due to the change of circumstances. The Pan Arabist experience revealed that the "Arab revolution" achieved many objectives, but ran into difficulties and obstacles. This experience also did not unravel disadvantages and shortcomings that needed to be rectified and remedied, among these that human rights should not be denied, nor should democracy be relinquished. The guarantee of correct action is the supremacy of democracy and human rights.

In fact, we notice a difference in the degree and quality of interest in those rights as well as in the order of priorities. Furthermore, there was the problem of conformity between the circles of identity. There was a local a circle, a national and regional circle. The concept of nationality emerged quite potently and shed light on those rights in particular. Hence, we witnessed how the concept of nation-state led to the denial of rights of the Arab citizen in one part of the Arab World rather than another.

The problems of the relationship between the nation, the state and the "abode", and questions of nationality, citizenship and movement between states were all raised. Several schools gained prominence in Pan Arabist thought. In reviewing all those stages, we notice that in the first stage we faced two challenges: external imperialism and internal despotism. In the second stage, we espoused independence and liberalization, and we strove to mobilize all forces to achieve them. In the third stage, we focused on social and economic freedom to finally achieve political freedom. In the fourth stage, we reached a new evolution, which is mainly concerned with details.

This presentation leads us to what we should do today. We would like to refurbish Pan Arabist thought. Renovation is an authentic human quality, and life is constantly reproducing. Pan Arabism considers renovation to be an effective component. Then, where does the predicament lie? What is eligible for renovation? In which direction? How should this endeavor be pursued? Was there a defect in pan Arab thought itself or were Pan Arabist leaders themselves incompetent? There was a consensus that democracy and human rights should be the core of fundamental rules necessary to reform Pan Arabist discourse now and in the future.

Our intention in presenting different evolutionary stages of Pan Arabism was to refute the idea that the defect lies in the nature of Pan Arabist thought. We meant to trace the evolution of the thought

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and how it was affected by its surroundings. We wanted to say that history is constantly in motion and that under special circumstances, some facts reverse the order of priorities to suit changing goals.

We believe that Pan Arabsim gives priority to democracy and human rights in their true sense. It is insufficient to raise general slogans. We should face the shortcomings and confront foreign allegations and its double standards as well as Zionist racism. Zionism has forced itself into the heart of the Arab World; it challenges all human rights and suggests a racist solution to the Palestinian question.

In any and all cases, Arabism is quite open for renovation within the bounds of democracy and human rights. At this stage, it is preoccupied with the mechanisms: How democracy can be integrated? How to preserve human rights? How to link our deep-rooted heritage in this domain with the exigencies of our present, and how to reform our internal conditions so as to intercept foreign powers that exploit democracy and human rights to interfere in our internal affairs?.

Pan Arabist thought is open to this renovation. This seminar is a preliminary step towards this end. Thank you very much.

Pan Arabists Overlooked

Political Democracy

Hassanein Krum

I will summarize my speech in a number of points and observations:

1) I am against the concept of "Pan Arabist discourse" because I do not know what this means!

2) The restriction of Pan Arabist action to Egypt, Syria and Iraq could have aimed to confine the Pan Arabist movement to Nasserism and Ba'athism only, even though the idea of Arab unity preceded the emergence of the Ba'ath Party and of Nasserism. Many advocated Arab unity, though they did not provide a theoretical or philosophical framework with the same magnitude as Nasserism or Ba'athism.

3) Belief in and advocacy of Arab unity was not restricted to Ba'athists and Nasserites, because the majority of Pan Arabist parties in the Arab World advocate Arab unity, and all constitutions of Arab states spell out that they are part of the Arab nation. Even the seven Arab states that formed the Arab League did not have any Pan Arabist system among them, because they were under direct military occupation.

We can argue that Ba'athists and Nasserites were characterized by a specific perception of Arab unity and nationalism. However, they overlooked political democracy, and did not focus enough on human rights. In my opinion, this is the fundamental error. Renunciation of pluralism, the multi-party system and the transfer of power along the lines of Western democracies and Israel harmed the objective of Arab unity. The second mistake was the restriction of unity to the supremacy of a single party and one social system, namely, socialism, despite the fact that most of the Arab national

capitalist class had no less faith in unity than did the socialists, since its interests required a wide Arab market to disseminate its products.

The Pan Arabist experience in the Arab World lacked democracy. This fundamental defect was easily revealed. The necessary change or renovation is that there should be an absolute belief in democracy, because Arab unity cannot come about except on a democratic basis. I think that despite all the setbacks, Arab unity can be achieved. We, the Arab nation, are split and would unite under Ba'athists, Nasserites, the Arab Right wing, or any other group. The only possible means to achieve unity is democracy based on absolute pluralism.

Absence Of Democracy

Is A Societal Problem

Abdel Ghaffar Shukr

First of all, I think that the problem of democracy in the Arab World does not concern this or that line of thought; it is rather a societal problem. We are witnessing an aborted capitalist development in the Arab World, while we advocate democracy, which is a final outcome of capitalist development in Europe and the United States. The democracy we are talking about is acknowledgment of others, freedom of opinion, organization, the establishment of institutions that can organize and protect those rights, and transfer of power through public elections. In this sense, we are undergoing an aborted capitalism in the Arab World, which makes democracy appear as a strange demand in the Arab environment, or rather portrays the Arab environment as incompatible with democratic evolution. Hence, it is not surprising that all Arab political forces are non-democratic or totalitarian: Baath in Syria and Iraq, Marxists in the former Democratic Yemen, and Islamists in Sudan. Even the liberal experience in pre-civil war Lebanon, which was considered the most progressive model, took place mainly in a sectarian framework. Consequently, the need to renovate Pan Arabist thought within democracy and human rights is part of a general phenomenon in the Arab World.

I will raise three questions and answer them briefly. The first question is: Why wasn't democracy a priority in Arab Pan Arabist thought ? The second question: Does the Arab Pan Arabist movement need democracy to be more effective? In other words, does the current Arab situation require democracy to boost the Pan Arabist movement? The third question: What are the major points of renovation to be introduced into Pan Arabist thought and the

movement within the bounds of democracy and human rights? Can we now put forth a democratic program for the Pan Arabist movement?

Concerning the first question, I think there are three fundamental reasons why democracy should emerge as a priority in Arab Pan Arabist thought:

The first reason is historical. It pertains to the rise of the Arab Pan Arabist movement. Arab Pan Arabist consciousness emerged and evolved as a result of the ascendancy of Arab Pan Arabist movements, which confronted the Ottoman state, foreign imperialism and finally Israel. Consequently, this consciousness was preoccupied with what characterized and distinguished Arabs from others. Pan arabist and unity between parts of the Arab World became the major concern of the Arab Pan Arabist movement. Democracy was not given great attention, especially since armed struggle against Israel was an inspiring model for Arab nationalists. In this context, military coups were a tempting formula because they were more effective than popular struggle, which required certain conditions and prerequisites that were not sufficiently available in the Arab World.

The second reason is objective. We are witnessing an aborted capitalist development. Socio-economic development in the Arab World is a distorted capitalism, which eventually led to a dependent and underdeveloped capitalism. Interests of this version of capitalism are not achieved through the elimination of feudalism and monopoly of the local market, but rather through sharing the national market with foreign capitalism and sharing power with feudalism. Consequently, we are dealing with a different capitalism than that prevailing in Europe, whose interests in its struggle against feudalism required this democratic evolution. The maturity of the workers' movement, as a result of economic development, the tendency toward mass production and the evolution of institutions of mass-production

imposed a continuation of this democratic evolution. This did not occur in the Arab World, which lacked the prerequisites for democratic evolution, because capitalism found its interests with international capitalist centers and feudalism at the local level.

The third reason is intellectual. Arab Pan Arabist thought stemmed from the fact that the Arab nation is an eternal reality, and that the natural situation for it is unity. Whoever rejected this premise was considered dissenter, populist, statist, etc. Consequently, Arab Pan Arabist thought did not pay sufficient attention to the factor of time, nor did it perceive the idea of Arab unity as one that requires enough time to mature and one that is amenable to prosperity or dissolution according to circumstances. Hence, and due to foreign imperialism and Israeli aggression later on, we did not take into account the will of Arab peoples. On the other hand, there was an over-concern with institutions that can produce speedy effects.

The second question: Is there a need in the Arab World today for the Pan Arabist movement to espouse democracy as a major condition for its effectiveness? The answer is yes. We cannot surpass the current Arab situation, primarily the following phenomena:

1- Arab societies evolved independently of each other and at different paces. Consequently, there was a discrepancy in the degree of their evolution and variations in the psychological make-up and the social features of Arab peoples. As a result, different state and regional interests emerged, and created a gap between Arab countries. There were tribal, modern societies and others close to European models. Those differences cannot be overcome except within a democratic framework. Put differently, there should be national institutions that operate according to democratic rules within each Arab country to re-build the Pan Arabist bond, reconcile Arab interests and bridge the gap between Arab countries.

2- There are many ethnic and religious minorities within the Arab World, such as Shiites, Kurds, Berbers and Christians. In the case of Arab unity, those minorities would be further marginalized, especially since their experiences with Arab regimes have been negative.

3- The Arab region and Arab oil are important internationally. International powers have vested interests in the Arab region, and the perpetuation of those interests requires further schism, and Arab economic and political disunity. I think that peaceful settlement in the region and Mediterranean partnerships coincide with this perception.

The major objective is a perpetuation of Arab disunity and merger of Arab economies with international capitalism, and preventing their integration. The only solution to this predicament is Arab democracy, which can lay down policy aiming in the long run to achieve Arab economic and political affinity and Arab interests. It seems that democracy is quite a valuable demand, because the gap between Arab countries is not only a political option of governments, but in some cases that of Arab peoples. The Arab Gulf is a case in point. Arab Gulf peoples would not choose Arab unity under any pressure if it negatively affected the degree of affluence in their respective countries.

As for the third question, how to revive Pan Arabist thought within the framework of democracy and human rights: Can there be a platform for this renovation?

The answer is yes. In my opinion, there are three issues that the Pan Arabist movement should take into consideration when reforming itself: -

1) Pan Arabism should be perceived as a historical phenomenon that needs a long period of time to mature before the Arab region becomes one nation.

2) The discrepancies between Arab states, whether economic or social should be respected, and those differences should be grasped.

3) The national, cultural, and religious rights of minorities should be respected, and their right to autonomy should be acknowledged.

It is important that an integrated democratic program be devised. I will specify it in seven points:

1- Adoption of an unambiguous concept of democracy as a value, institution and fundamental rights of people.

2- Mainly addressing people and acting according to their free will.

3- Peaceful advocacy of Arab unity.

4- Establishment of joint Arab democratic institutions, mainly popular, as well as social, cultural and political.

5- Creating joint Arab economic interests, in light of the difference in economic and social systems among Arab countries.

6- Suggesting a democratic federation that would guarantee to nations of the Arab World the continuity of current privileges, their right to enjoy their natural resources and the revenue of their work. This situation should be developed gradually through a plan of national development that would profit from the relative advantages of various Arab societies and focus on the development of the most underdeveloped regions.

7- Implementing all these objectives together in an integrated framework.

In my opinion, Gamal Abdel Nasser was the most progressive Arab leader in understanding this question and in dealing with it. There are several examples of this. Merger with Syria took place after a public referendum, and when secession occurred, he refused to use force. In the Charter, he pointed to the gap between Arab countries, which should be respected and dealt with. In his discussion of joint Arab action, he said, "The establishment of a federation of the Arab popular movement will impose itself in the future."

Pan Arabism Did Not Overlook

Democracy, Practices Did

Yehia El Gamal

First, I think that Arab Pan Arabist thought did not disregard democracy, but the practice or implementation of this thought - due to either objective or non-objective reasons - shied away from democracy. I say this about myself, because I am part of the Pan Arabist movement.

The issue of democracy was central to Baath thought and literature before its ascendancy to power. Moreover, Nasserism did not overlook democracy in theory. Democracy was advocated in Pan Arabist thought at an early stage. In the writings of Al Razaz, and Michel 'Aflaq's early writings, in addition to those of Al Rimawi, the issue of democracy was prominent. However, when the Ba'ath reached power, it reversed democracy and began to practice political despotism in its most violent and potent forms in the Arab World, which made people - even those who believed in unity - say that if this is unity, unity be damned!

I move to another experience: Nasserism, of which I consider myself a part. When Egypt seceded from Syria, Muslim Brothers in Syria were blamed for it. However, secession was due to our own behavior within the Nasserite experience. The absence of democracy destroyed the merger with Syria. If we, sons of this experience, do not grasp this reality, reform will be quite a difficult endeavor.

Pan Arabism did not overlook democracy: Pan Arabist political practices did. When it reached power, it could have offered the Arab World a genuine democratic experience. I claim that, had Abdel Nasser nominated himself after 1956 in elections in Tunisia or Saudi Arabia, he would have won; had he established a democratic system

in Egypt and nominated himself, he would have won the elections with a 70% majority and he would have eradicated the ridiculous phenomenon of a 99.94% majority. There were no objective circumstances that prevented Abdel Nasser from establishing a democratic system in Egypt. He himself said that, but he didn't. There is a clear-cut democratic embryo in the Charter. Furthermore, after 1967, there were democratic initiatives that were not pursued. We can probably borrow here an expression from the Baath party that is true of the Nasserite movement, "the disorders of origin," where individuals cannot identify with democracy and opposition. This is exactly what happened in the Nasserite and Baathist movements.

What is the solution? I tend to agree with Abdel Ghaffar Shukr about the seven points he enumerated, but I disagree with one point: autonomous rule for minorities. I would like to emphasize a fundamental point, namely, that it is imperative to develop Pan Arabist thought. I recall that Ahmed Sidki Al Dajani and I were telling Al Rimawi that a single central state encompassing Morocco, Yemen and Egypt was impossible, and that a federal state was the ideal solution, and he considered us traitors. Now, the only acceptable alternative is a federation, which actually indicates an evolution in Pan Arabist thought.

Democracy is an extremely important issue today, because the interests of the Arab nation call for this large conglomeration. If the Arab nation is destined to choose and decide, it will only choose unity because its fate and future are related to unity. Hence, it is important to persist in advocating democracy. The application of Pan Arabism that we have known lacked democracy. Democracy ebbed, and it should not have been absent. In my opinion, all political movements in the Arab World are required in the coming period to espouse democracy and human rights. Democracy has only one meaning:

pluralism, deliberation, supremacy of the law and the transfer of power. Those values were not invented, but evolved through practice over extended periods of time. In the Arab World, we are ripe for democracy. In fact, as Abdel Ghaffar Shukr mentioned, "We should not jump over reality, but should deal with it even if it is rejected. We should deal (with it) in order to change it through an extended process for the sake of respecting democracy and human rights."

Democracy Was Not A Popular Demand

Hossam Issa

There are two major problems: one related to understanding and the other about prospects for future. I think it is necessary to grasp what happened before suggesting new ideas to be implemented.

Abdel Ghaffar Shukr suggested excellent ideas, but there are several "legends" in his mind. The first is the link between capitalism and democracy. Democracy and human rights were not a capitalist product; their evolution took place under capitalism, but against it. Wasn't Nazism the German solution to the capitalist crisis in Germany?

I think that democracy and human rights are very modern ideas, and not as Yehia El Gamal said, that democracy emerged in the Greek era. In my opinion, it has no link with capitalism. I think that democracy was not applied not because Abdel Nasser and Saddam were despots, but because it was never a popular request.

This is due to several reasons. The first is that the fundamental demand was national independence. The Arab World, which was then occupied and suppressed, had no ambitions for democracy either in the sixties or in the seventies. This was the case in the entire Third World. I would even argue further that democracy and human rights were nonexistent both in Egyptian popular culture and the popular conscience.

The issue that is still raised is justice. Unfortunately, the link between democracy and justice has not been properly perceived until now in the popular conscience. During the forties, fifties and sixties, the social issue was related to Arabism. This was not confined to Egypt alone but included most Third World countries. Why? Because the inspiring model was the Soviet Union, which helped us and inspired even the liberals, even though it was not democratic.

I disagree with what Abdel Ghaffar Shukr said concerning the link between capitalism and democracy. The capitalist West treated slaves as beasts when slave trade was prosperous and hunted them to operate its industry. Industrial progress does not necessarily lead to democracy; there is an important dimension, namely, culture. I think that the idea based on "the end of history" is anti-democratic. In other words, communism emerged - not Marx's version but mainstream communism - on the premise that we were communists in the past and would return to it again. The end of history entails that the end was embedded in the beginning. Whoever deviates from the beginning would deviate from the logic of history.

Stalin, for instance, was captive of the logic of the end or culmination of history, and so are the liberals, the new Stalinists who perceive capitalism as the end of history. It is no coincidence that Yeltsin bombed the elected parliament while all the liberals of the world, including Egyptian liberals, stood watching.

The same applies to Islamists. At the beginning, the decisive word was for an interpretation of the text - which was already formulated - but not that of intellectuals and thinkers. Consequently, you have no place, otherwise you would be rejecting the ultimate end, which was pre-destined at the beginning.

This is Fascist logic - a barren thought, which produces a conventional ideology that people believe and espouse. We can evaluate any thought according to the ideas it produces in the people's mind. While Islamist thinkers claim they advocate democracy and human rights, their mainstream ideology is totally anti-democratic. The same was true for Pan Arabism in its prevalent ideological form. The Arabist movement has several fundamental pillars. We shouldn't necessarily have unity merely because we speak the same language, and share the same religion and history. However, we can, under a Pan Arabist movement, make use of those factors to achieve unity.

Hence, the cultural dimension becomes quite pivotal in modifying the status of human rights and democracy. It shouldn't be expected that society becomes democratic, even if the constitution is changed. There is something in the thought that does not propel democracy. Neither the Egyptian household, nor the Egyptian school and university, are democratic. The Egyptian University is probably the most antagonistic institution to democracy. In other words, the issue is not a democratic constitution, because actually, the Egyptian Constitution proved to be, in some clauses, one of the best constitutions in the world. However, the gap is quite wide between constitutional stipulations and the practical application of those stipulations.

There is something in our culture that is inherently anti-democratic. We should identify it without any fear or hesitation. For example, the issue of heresy, currently pervasive in Egyptian society, is quite awesome. It is also new to Egyptian society. This only means that democracy and human rights are not an issue at present in the popular conscience.

The final point is that, in our attempt to understand the past, we should not judge it by present standards and denominators. We would not want to be cruel. Nevertheless, this does not imply that we sanction violence, such as torture in prisons, etc. The absence of pluralism and the transfer of power is another issue. It impels on us to search for the cause, which led to the decadence of the Arab World in this domain, despite the existence of a solid ground for human rights, and to study also the aspects of Arab culture, which prevent effective political participation.

I would like to say in closing that focus on the cultural aspect might provide a solution to the question of democracy and human rights. However, I agree with the program put forth by Abdel Ghaffar Shukr as a good start for any future Pan Arabist thought.

Unity By Coercion

Is The Antithesis Of Democracy

Mohammed El Sayed Said

It seems to me that the problem is not the absence of democracy from Pan Arabist thought. The problem begins here. The first and second generations of nationalists advocated democracy as an antithesis to the practices of the Ottoman Empire. The fourth generation raised the issue of democracy quite strongly, especially after the calamity of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. We now have a legacy that is constantly developing through the work of individual nationalists, as well as important contributions from the Center of Arab Unity Studies on the problem of the absence of democracy from political practices of Pan Arabist parties.

Hence, the problem is not the absence of democracy from Pan Arabist thought. It is rather the susceptibility of democracy to be eradicated from this thought altogether, especially at the level of political action. The largest sector of Pan Arabist political blocs, or those, which advocate Arabism, tended to either absolutely or conditionally support Saddam's plan. Furthermore, during the Yemen war last summer, we saw the full-fledged adoption of military methods. This rejuvenated a major theory of Arabism pertaining to the mechanisms of national unity. This theory is based on the European heritage of the nineteenth century, and the expertise of both Germany and Italy in unification using military force.

In Pan Arabist thought, there are non-democratic principles, mainly compulsory unification using military force, which is a fundamental point in Pan Arabist thought.

The solution is, from a specific angle, the integration of democracy with other acceptable Pan Arabist objectives. In this sense, the issue

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is not discourse but could be a platform for action. However, if we desire to broach the ideology and fundamentals of political action, we are dealing with discourse. The latter means an organic entity of a field of knowledge and spontaneous knitting of concepts so that they form a relatively cohesive structure susceptible to deduction and induction. In this sense, democracy remains a mere addition to an already formed field; this addition sometimes seems relatively artificial. In other words, can a theory which advocates unification through a basic state, a charismatic leader and military force add democracy to this framework with full honesty and perfect compatibility with the original conceptual field? Obviously, this is not so easy. Both the structure of discourse and the intellectual framework should be modified in order to stir up the issue of democracy.

Hence, democratic criticism, which is genuine, true, and derived in most cases from a living experience where our intellectuals paid a lot from their personal security, is problematic. It is a "pretextual" criticism, i.e., it is meant to serve other purposes, more precisely, the fundamental pillar of Pan Arabism :unity, as if democracy was desirable only because it is the ideal means towards unity. Fine, what if democracy was not the only path to unity? Is democracy - qua fundamental freedoms - inherently worthwhile, or is it a mechanism of unity? This is related to a number of cognitive habits such as readiness to support any discourse or attitude, which might entail - or is thought to entail - unity but is not democratic. For instance, we can mention the smoothness with which any military coup d'etat or any impostor allegedly advocating unity is yielded to (there are many such models in our contemporary Arab history).

On the other hand, several achievements have taken place within the framework of Pan Arabist thought, such as relative tolerance of the concept of the nation-state, or what our brethren in the Arab Maghreb call the national state. This step represents a high degree of tolerance, but

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the central issue remains whether democracy is a concept generating knowledge or a program for unity.

I welcome the ideas that were mentioned in Abdel Ghaffar Shukr's presentation, and raise other supplementary ideas. I think that the integration of democracy with Pan Arabist thought is not an easy matter. It cannot be a mere mathematical addition to an already existing solid body of knowledge, which might accept additions but without modifying its own formation. We need to re-shape it by means of several denominators:

1) A complete break with the ambiguous concepts of nation and nationalism. Herein, the major premise of social sciences in the entire world plays its role: there has been a demise of absolutes and statics. Any social phenomenon is amenable to growth and deterioration. While the Arab nation can deteriorate, and has already been deteriorated and shattered even way before the imperialist plan, this nation can also be reconstructed. The same is true for all phenomena, even religious belief, they have their ebb and flow, ups and downs, and can disintegrate and patch up. Any phenomenon in life is dynamic. However, the ambiguous concept of the nation being outside history or ahistorical is some kind of intellectual preparation of anti-democratic ideas, i.e. the philosophic foundation is the romantic concept of Arabism and democracy. This romanticism actually prepares our minds for reversals.

2) How can violent practices be really sanctioned and condemned, in the meaning of an intellectual and political boycott of a legitimacy derived from non-democratic actions of regimes that adopted Pan Arabism ? This is an important issue. However, sanction does not mean presenting deeds of forgiveness, because no one is entitled to present them. It is rather a re-formulation of the legitimacy of the Pan Arabist project, and re-disseminating its seeds in the womb of those societies,

with all what this process entails in terms of putting an end to despotism.

3) Re-consider the project of unity. To view unity as a blessing in itself is a romantic counter-democratic perception. This absolute legitimacy given to unity is close to Fascism or idolizing the concept and the meaning, whereas the expression gains a significance of its own. Furthermore, unity should be enriched with several concepts such as democracy. However, this does not mean a mechanical and spontaneous link. It is conceived that with democracy, people would not vote for Pan Arabist or unionist parties. Unionists should, at least now, come to grips with this idea ; democracy might work out for a short or intermediate period, much to the unionists' dismay. Even the idea of national independence itself can have the same significance, namely, that democracy, at a certain moment might not provide the more nationalistic with the majority, but those who advocate compromises with imperialism might gain this majority. If we visualize genuine and free elections in Egypt, this might not actually be a direct passport for the project of national independence, and it is related to a wide array of considerations. In any and all cases, devotion to democracy greatly enriches the concept of unity, especially if practice conforms with thought.

4) The thesis of unity requires a thorough review of its strategies and mechanisms. If we assume that democracy is not an easy and smooth bridge to unity, and that we eliminate coercive unification since it uses violence, what is the alternative?

There are several ideas in Western thought mainly three major currents of thought: The first speaks on behalf of federalism, the Federal current, and it focuses on political mechanisms. The second is the functional current. It espouses unity through economics: establishing common markets, promoting and facilitating commercial exchange. This current of thought has a great influence within the Arab League. In fact,

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the special Arab case might not provide the magical solution through the economy, but in any case, the option of economic cooperation remains very important because it at least negates the idea of compulsory unification. The third current is called "interactions" and is based on vital interactions between people: conferences and meetings, especially between intellectuals and business people.

I would like to suggest here a final approach where I focus neither on economics, nor politics, nor social interactions, but rather on the concept of communication. I call it "communicative competence". It requires brightness in communications in dealing with Arab nations, especially the intellectual elite. This alternative is quite interesting in that it radically shuns compulsory unification, and stresses that the promotion of democracy should be modeled according to a "communicative network" based on culture, symbols, incentives, standards of action, and moral values. It should be oriented toward problem solving, which gives a genuine and concrete basis for unity, even if this unity did not have a constitutional, political or even economic foundation. This alternative implies that society is a communication and not a cultural unit, and that it is capable of interacting smoothly and easily. In this sense, there is an imminent need to renovate Pan Arabist thought. There are promising theories such as "the communication theory", but it is important to break with the current practices in politics and national discourse. It is also important to break with the violence practiced by some leaders and ruling Pan Arabist regimes. It would not be possible to restore legitimacy to Pan Arabist thought unless a complete break was made with all practices that keep thousands of intellectuals and thinkers in Pan Arabist regimes' prisons.

DISCUSSION

The Independent State Against Civil Society

Nabil Abdel Fattah

I have a number of comments:

My first comment is related to the degree of interest in democracy on the part of the pioneering forefathers of Pan Arabism , and the confusion between democracy and freedom. The concept of freedom was suggested in a romantic way, without a conceptual or institutional framework. Furthermore, this very concept was ambiguous and confused in the early writings.

Secondly, the concept of democracy advocated by the following generations of Pan Arabist pioneers, especially the third and fourth generations, focused on the concepts of social freedom and Pan Arabism .

Thirdly, the vagueness of the democratic option within the thought of the Pan Arabist movement was due to a potent desire to adopt political mobilization in order to effect speedy social and political achievements, whether this be perpetuation of the nation state project, or that of unity or merger.

In fact, the post-independence nascent state is the other facet of the problem of the degeneration of democracy in the Arab World. The first dimension concerns the structural impediments to democracy, embedded in values, cultures and institutions. This dimension was mentioned by a number of speakers, especially Hossam Issa.

The second dimension is the post-independence state. The institutions of this state were established as an exogenous entity superimposed on the internal structure of society. This refers back to the socio-cultural analysis, which could highlight the impediments to the adoption of the democratic model.

One of the major items of the post-independence agenda was the necessity of imposing the forms of the modern state. Furthermore, the post-independence state confronted complex problems concerning socio-cultural and ethnic structures. Hence, mobilization, the model of the "melting pot" in internal unification, were adopted, which strengthened state apparatuses, particularly in regimes ruled by radical Pan Arabist parties, such as Syria and Iraq. On the other hand, civil society institutions were weakened. Society was agitated by various disparities. Neither the state nor society could adopt a set of peaceful mechanisms to resolve the contradiction, for several reasons:

1) Pan Arabist parties strove to impose their ideology forcibly on religious and ethnic groups, which had adopted different methods to express their respective identities.

2) State legitimacy after independence was flagrantly used to suppress society, pluralism, opposition and to sap the vitality of civil life.

3) The concept of the state was ceremonial, based on the ideas of constitution, separation of powers, etc., which was imported from the West without considering the evolution which culminated in this final form of Pan Arabist state. The most clamorous Pan Arabist party raised slogans of Pan Arabism and Arabism for internal "consumption", which were used to bolster legitimacy. However, a general analysis of policies of those parties or their states - i.e., the state party - emphasizes that they did not care

much about either Pan Arabism or the unity that they advocated in their political discourse.

4) Concerning democracy as an option for Arab Pan Arabist movements, we can say that the disintegration of socio-cultural conditions in the Arab World might not enhance the toleration of democracy by a number of social groups. Mobilization policies led to a political vacuum in the Arab World. Meanwhile, some social and political forces raise pervasive values, such as the Islamic movement, which rejects several components of the democratic system and of human rights. However, does this imply that the Arab elite - whether advocating unity or modernization- should eliminate democratic discourse or democracy altogether as an option?

I think it is necessary to advocate the democratic option for several reasons, namely those of cultural pluralism. This pluralism and those existing contradictions will not be resolved by any ideology that repeals the democratic option. The Islamic movement is reserved in its literature on aspects of the democratic system. Many Arab political observers fear the idea that an Islamic faction might wield power: we have the case of Algeria, and prospects in Egypt and some other countries that, if an Islamic force reaches power, it might deal a severe blow to the freedoms of many social segments or political forces in opposition to the Islamic movement. Furthermore, ethnic and religious minorities in the Arab World dread the idea of an Islamic current being in power. Hence, we need a peaceful organization and resolution of the contradictions that pervade civil society in the Arab World, by adopting political structures that control debate and conflicts.

Concerning the rejuvenation of Pan Arabist thought, I think we have several precedents, whether at the level of nationalist, religious, liberal or leftist thought. The most reactionary is the traditional

liberal thought now ascending in Europe. I think that the renovation process has several conditions. It is not merely designing programs of action, stating what ought to be done. There should be a political and intellectual movement to critically examine the cultural and political situation, the history of ideas and practices under the Pan Arabist tide. Renovation should be an expression of a socio-cultural movement in society, which would implement the renovation project. There should be an interaction among the critical heritage, components of this movement, the situation in the region and the entire world, and international variables. Pan Arabist thought can be modified at different levels, for instance, the idea of implementation of the Pan Arabist or federal state. The world is now entering a different historical stage. This form of state is a predicament at present. Now, we are speaking about a post-Pan Arabist state, of the crisis of the concept of the Pan Arabist state.Undoubtedly, this can contribute to the renovation of Pan Arabist thought.

Haidar Ibrahim: (sudan)

I will speak neither about history nor the past. These are things we cannot read in retrospect now. I will focus on the present and the future.

First, we can say that the renovation of Pan Arabist thought at present takes one step forward and two steps backwards, particularly if we look at the coalitions that began with renovation, specifically the Islamic National Conference. This beginning indicates to what extent Pan Arabist thought can rejuvenate itself. Any trend of thought has priorities, and priorities do not mean a sequence of interests, but they mean fundamentals of a particular thought, i.e., a full perception. Consequently, priorities do not change with changing events and circumstances. Hence, I find it difficult for Pan Arabist thought to renovate itself and integrate democracy as a priority, because the original priority of Pan Arabist thought is simply unity. Since

democracy can contravene the concept of the unity of the Arab nation, one priority should prevail over the other, or else Pan Arabist thought loses its essence. The same is also applicable to Islamic thought. This is probably the secret behind the affinity between Islamists and nationalists.

In Islamic thought too, the priority is not democracy, but the unity of the Islamic Umma (nation) and the application of God's Shari'a. Hence, if democracy stands against the unity of the Islamic nation and the application of God's legislation, democracy can be sacrificed. We can therefore wonder: Would the priority still be the unity of the Arab nation even if it contradicted democracy? I think that the coalition between the Islamists and nationalists casts doubts that democracy can become a first priority in the Pan Arabist movement. I have read the declaration of the Islamic National Conference, and noted that, among its fourteen points, only one point discussed freedoms. During the discussions, the attitude toward events in Algeria condemned them as anti-democracy. However, Sudan was overlooked, despite the fact that the Algerian experience is that of a party that came near power but was prevented by the guards from reaching the seat, while in Sudan, we find parties that reached power through elections, and were deprived of their power by the guards. Nonetheless, nationalists did not denounce what happened in the latter case as much as they did with Algeria. Hence, the attitude of nationalists emphasizes that democracy is not a priority in their discourse.

Second: why reform now? Why wasn't it in June 1967 or October 1973 ? This question is raised now because rejuvenation might come as a result of internal or external factors. The latter is not genuine because it is mostly a reaction to exogenous circumstances.

Sidki El Dajani dealt with the history of ideas. I think there is another aspect, namely the sociology of ideas. The latter means that

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some ideas spread in specific environments, and I think that the Arab environment is despotic by nature.

Hence, it would be difficult to advocate renovation while the entourage itself bears the taint of despotism. This is also applicable to culture, as Hossam Issa mentioned. The modification of institutions and constitutions might not be important in this context. What is more crucial is the change of behavior and thought patterns.

Third, I noticed an overlapping of Pan Arabist thought, the Pan Arabist movement, and Pan Arabist authority. Pan Arabist thought discusses democracy, probably in the early writings of pioneers like Al Kawakibi. However, democracy did not exist either in the Pan Arabist movement or with some Pan Arabist authorities who did not rely on the thought or the movement. Consequently, democracy was not included in the agenda of those authorities and the movement.

There is also an overlap between Shura (consultation) and democracy which El Dajani mentioned, despite the great differences between Shura and democracy. This calls for further accuracy and specification. The introduction of some Islamic terms to the Pan Arabist lexicon might be due to the alliance between the nationalists and Islamists. However, I would like to indicate that the Islamic National Conference proved that this alliance was political rather than intellectual. This makes me question the issue of reforming Pan Arabist thought in the direction of democracy.

A final point remains, concerning the separation of thought and practice. It is inconceivable for an ideal thought to manifest itself in practice so easily. I think the flaw lies not in practice alone, but in shortcomings in the thought itself.

Mostafa Abdel Aal

I believe a debate of this magnitude can be an approach to resolving many problems. I have several questions on the presentations of the esteemed speakers. They emphasized that the Pan Arabist movement mainly emerged to resist foreign imperialism and Zionist aggression. If this were true, then why didn't the Pan Arabist movement deal with its members as the Zionist movement did, or as the European imperialists did with their citizens?

My second question concerns Yehia El Gamal's concept of "personalization of authority and nation" and the role of the elite and the intelligentsia in reinforcing this behavior. Yehia El Gamal indicated that Pan Arabist thought evolved. I disagree. Most probably, proponents of this thought reached a deadlock, retrogressed when they failed, and followed another path. This is not a genuine evolution.

The third question concerns popular culture: is it really anti-democratic? I think this is an important and worthwhile point to investigate.

I have two further comments. The first is related to what we might call "disadvantages of democracy", as in the point raised by Hassanein Krum, that unity might not be brought about through democratic procedures. I believe we should think this matter over, because there are many unification experiences that occurred through guns and rifles. Consequently, democracy is not the only approach. I recall here what Abdel Ghaffar Shukr said about the right of minorities to learn their original language, and this is democratic extremism. In France, the Basque should speak French. I think democracy should not lead us to surpass the limits of protecting the unity of our nation.

The second comment concerns what Mohammed El Sayed Said mentioned about communicative culture. I think this is part of the crisis of the elite, because it focuses on the role of the elite in cultural affinity and unity, while I think that if Arab governments sanctioned marriage between Arabs and provided double nationalities, this would facilitate the process of unification among Arab countries.

Negad El Borai

I would like to comment on two points mentioned by Mohammed El Sayed Said. The first point: is it true that Pan Arabist thought advocates unification by coercion? I do not think this is true. Intellectuals suggested unification through democratic means. However, they were for suppressing separatist movements by force, like what happened in Yemen. The preservation of unity is the aim, in order to maintain the integrity of the nation. This is a legitimate goal in all countries of the world, which might use force to preserve their unity and cohesion. This attitude is totally different than defending human rights violations in Yemen after unification by force. This latter attitude is worthy of condemnation.

The second point is that Pan Arabist thought did not defend unity by force. Abdel Nasser refused coercive unity with Syria. Baathists in Syria and Iraq could not impose unity by force.

I wonder, is democracy a step toward unity ? What I understood from Yehia El Gamal and Hassanein Krum is that democracy might be a path toward unification. But democracy would always remain an important demand. This opinion is different from premises stressing that Pan Arabist thought would give priority to unity if it contradicted democracy.

A final comment over what was said about popular culture and democracy. I think that this argument offers an easy justification for the non-application of democracy in the sixties. It is also an affront to

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Arab peoples, because it is illogical to say that democracy has never been a popular demand. There was a democratic movement searching for a mechanism for contending parties to reach power.

Ahmed Sobhi Mansour

I would almost say that Pan Arabist thought and practice are both antagonistic to democracy. Apart from philosophy, democracy means that a ruler would govern a village or a city for a specific period, for the sake of public interest and in return for a certain salary. At the end of the term, he becomes a regular citizen again.

In this sense, we cannot possibly be experiencing democracy now. We are living through a period of our evolution that we can call "Islamization of politics", in which we embellish great features on the ruler or even the chairman of the party. The nation is personified in the ruler who bears Pan Arabism inside him, or represents Islam if he reached power through a religious formula. This idea exists inside parties, and is very close to the organization of Sufism: there is the living Sheikh, dead guardians and the rest are all followers. We have not yet reached the stage where we see the ruler as an ordinary individual.

Undoubtedly, this issue requires a better understanding of democracy, and a re-definition of the relationship between the ruler and the populace. I think that opposition parties, the ruling party, and state institutions are all managed with the ruler-ruled mentality. All lines of thought might agree with me on this argument, whether they are leftist, rightist, Pan Arabist or religious.

Inas Taha

My first comment is that nationalists did not offer new dimensions for renovation until they were out of power. It was not suggested when they were in power.

My second comment, is probably applicable to all political factions in the Arab World, namely that, due to foreign challenge, intellectual and political elite were preoccupied with self assertion more than with democracy.

My third comment concerns parity and simulation. The issue is that the Arab elite and Arab nations deal with each other and with the outside world on the basis of simulation rather than parity, which negatively affects the prospects for creativity.

As for culture, I think that apart from official cultures, there are many sub-cultures. Without appreciating this, one would accuse a whole cultural entity of being anti-democratic. Furthermore, I think that part of the predicament lies in the fact that the elite grew out of the "remnants" of Western intellectual thought. This had an impact on its intellectual authenticity, and hindered its emancipation from Western thought.

I think that Mohammed El Sayed Said is right in arguing that democracy was susceptible to eradication in Pan Arabist thought. However, I think there are two issues that Pan Arabist thought did not contemplate, namely, the rights of minorities and of women. Part of the crisis is that we tended to believe that we can offer an objective and give it priority over other important objectives. And because postponement was long-term, objectives that were delayed are still on the agenda of our interests.

To sum up, neither Arab culture nor thought bears the responsibility for the eradication of democracy. In fact, we as elite, authorities, individuals, and societies faced many hardships and crises, which have shaken our performance in many domains, including democracy and development.

Hazem Salem

What Mohammed El Sayed Said suggested about the concepts forming a cohesive recognizable structure is an important issue when concepts are distinguished from ideologies and are dealt with independently. The concept of Pan Arabism encompasses the search for identity and self-assertion in light of the prevailing imperialist culture. The model of Algeria is indicative in this instance. The Algerian people imposed their culture and identity despite the violent French hegemony, which urged France to reconsider the question of cultural relativity.

Ahmed Thabet

While discussing the rejuvenation of Pan Arabist thought, we should differentiate among its various factions, between Pan Arabist thought and practice, and between nationalists who reached power and those who did not.

Concerning democracy, I think that it is a collection of tools and mechanisms to transfer power before being an authentic culture. Some countries have non-democratic cultures such as Buddhism and Confucianism. Nonetheless, democracy can be applicable as a mechanism for pluralism and transfer of power in those countries.

I think that democracy as an issue has never been a top priority for political currents in Egypt. However, all political parties in Egypt can tolerate democratic mechanisms; some of them even indulged in democratic practice, which only means that democracy became a source of consensus in the eighties. The problem is that the prevailing practice is neither Pan Arabist nor democratic. The Al Assad and Saddam regime exterminated mainly the Baathists, Nasserites and Communists. Consequently, we are not dealing with Pan Arabist regimes but with personal projects. Hence, I disagree with Mohammed El Sayed Said's analyses such as "democracy is

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susceptible to eradication", and coercive unification in Pan Arabist thought. I think that those are close to psychoanalysis, because we have not seen what nationalists did until now. It is also noteworthy that Pan Arabist thought never discussed compulsory unification.

Mohammed Mandour

Is democracy a value or a tactic in Pan Arabist thought? I fear that democracy in Pan Arabist thought might be a tactic. In any and all cases, if we wish that democracy be a core value in Pan Arabist thought, we need to reconsider national supremacy, national security and the concept of the state. I think that the essence of any thought should be the prosperity and happiness of people and nothing else. Therefore, the integration of democracy with Pan Arabist thought should parallel several changes.

Mohammed Mostafa

I agree with the fundamental idea of Hossam Issa's presentation concerning democracy, and Arab and Islamic culture. I believe that we, as nations and cultures, do not focus on the value of democracy as much as we do on justice, for example. I think that the approach to a democratic Pan Arabist thought is for nationalists to accept being in the opposition seats. Furthermore, economic interests are more suitable and feasible for Arab unity than establishing unity on the basis of theoretical ideals.

Mohammed Noa'man (Yemen)

I object to what Negad El Borai said about the unification of Yemen. In fact, the unification took place through democratic mechanisms. What happened later was a distortion of the beautiful dream, that of unity. During the years of unity, it was clear that Yemen was divided between two parties, institutions and presidents. It was also obvious that democracy was far removed from unity.

Hence, it was necessary to break the unity. What happened later was annexation by force and to the detriment of human rights and democracy.

Bahey El Din Hassan

Before giving the panel the final word for rebuttal, I would like to raise two questions. First: To what extent does the new coalition between Islamists and nationalists bolster the tendency of Pan Arabist thought toward renovation within the framework of democracy and human rights?

Second: To what extent was interest in democracy and human rights reflected in the platforms of Pan Arabist opposition parties?

Final Comments

The Gap Between
Intellectuals And The People

Abdel Ghaffar Shukr

Concerning Hossam Issa's comment, I dealt with democracy as an outcome of what happened in Europe under capitalism. However, this does not mean that democracy was the twin of capitalism. I agree that if the interests of capitalist forces lie with democracy, they will be democratic; with Nazism, they will be Nazi or fascist. By this I meant that it was difficult to discuss a democratic evolution without the maturity of class status in society and the emergence of large social groups with various interests. This economic pluralism is the basis for political pluralism. Conflict of interests between those groups is peacefully resolved through rotation of power. I wanted to highlight this central idea in the context of the emergence of democracy within the bounds of capitalist evolution. However, this does not mean that both are linked in absolute terms.

The second point concerns Mostafa Abdel Aal's comment: which is better for us, to deal with ethnic minorities by respecting their cultural specificity for a long period of time during which they would be integrated with Arab society, and teaching them the Arabic language in addition to their integration into Arab culture, or to deprive them of speaking their native language, etc.? This is a bewildering question.

Hossam Issa

One of the problems of the lack of popular appeal of democracy in the Arab World unfortunately lies in the mistakes committed by advocates of democracy.

Democracy for those advocates was in most cases a process of barter not in exchange for social justice but for more serious issues, namely national independence and animosity towards foreign imperialism. This is the greatest mistake, because democracy is often portrayed as an alternative to those goals. Nowadays, the idea of national sovereignty is considered a shred of the past, and democracy gains priority on the basis of reinforcing and supporting state sovereignty, or by contrast fully weakening the state. In advocating the latter, democracy is foremost even if this means striking the state during a period when it is suffering from a dangerous assault from without and a severe weakness in confronting the outside world. Herein, intellectuals are like explorers who deal with political issues as if they were new expeditions, while military leaders appear to be more conscious of the exigencies of power than intellectuals.

Democracy is a human need that should not be articulated to the detriment of social justice. The issue is how to democratize rather than undermine the state. The latter should be strong and steadfast, but not through security forces. I claim that democracy today is the demand of Egyptian intellectuals. The people are demanding justice. Democracy now is a cultural issue.

The second point is the relationship with Islamists. Undoubtedly, the major dilemma facing the Arab World today is how to deal with so-called political Islam. Isn't it high time to debate with this movement, albeit without accepting their concepts or platforms?

Yehia El Gamal

No Arab in recent history advocated coercive unification. However, this does not mean that we should defend others' mistakes. We are rather for unity in Yemen because it followed a democratic path.

The issue I raise here for contemplation, which Hossam Issa dealt with, is justice for the Arab and Egyptian people. Can we visualize justice without democracy, the supremacy of law, and institutionalization? If justice is a central issue in the Arab conscience, the people will demand democracy under the rubric of justice.

I do not support religious rule in any form, but this point calls for research. Islamic society has known institutions of civil society such as "Al Sabeel" (procurement of water), "Waqf" (endowment), etc. under severely degenerating political conditions.

Mohammed El Sayed Said

We are not putting any political movement to trial, but we are advocating an intellectual re-structuring.

What Mostafa Abdel Aal said about democratic extremism concerning the protection of minority rights in learning the national language needs re-evaluation. This actually reflects our traditional deprivation of the national rights of minorities. Here, I am dealing with two prominent minorities, namely, the Kurds and southern Sudanese, who were both compelled to learn the national language. To say that the French compel others to learn the French language is categorically denounced.

What Abdel Aal said about the elitism of the idea of unity through communication is not taken for granted. Unionist thought emerged during a specific period of international evolution characterized by a tendency to form empires. What we are witnessing now in the world is an alternative revolution, namely, the revolution of communication and information.

The point raised by Negad El Borai and Hassanein Krum, that Pan Arabist thought never advocated coercive unification can be

refuted. We will find what is called the fundamental model of which deals with the issue of unity in the literature of Pan Arabist thought. Here, we find a basic theory, which speaks about three pivotal ideas: the sub-structural state, the leader following Bismarck's line, and the realization of unity through coercion.

I think that the relationship between democracy and public opinion should be dealt with historically. In the case of Egypt, there was a link between democracy, nationalism, and independence from the Orabi revolt until 1952. This link was actually ruptured in 1952. This is true in many Arab countries. Ahmed Thabet indicated that the idea of democracy being susceptible to eradication was close to psychoanalysis. However, this is the elementary level of discourse analysis. Furthermore, historical experience proved a predisposition to sacrifice democracy.

As for what happened in Yemen, it is clear that the proclamation of separation in Yemen occurred after military invasion and not vice versa. Specific events are being falsified to support those speaking on behalf of unity. I think there is a tendency toward spontaneous support for any individual advocating unity as the key issue in Pan Arabist discourse.

Chapter Four

The Debate between Islamists and Other Political Forces
A Mechanism to Reinforce Democracy And Human Rights

Introduction

The mutual push-pull (attraction / repulsion) phenomenon between Islamic movements and other political trends in Arab countries had sharply negative repercussions on the human rights situation in several Arab countries. The seriousness of those repercussions multiplied when this repulsion was coupled with violent confrontations, such as in Egypt and Algeria. Hence, the dialogue between the Islamic movement and other political forces is considered a peaceful approach, which might reduce polarization and violent tensions between Islamists and other political forces. Consequently, this debate would ensure substantial guarantees of human rights in the political arena.

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) perceives dialogue as a necessary approach, in spite of the difficulty this approach might encounter, and the fact that its foundations are still fragile. CIHRS is aware that failure of this dialogue might have a more serious impact. For example, the collapse of the debate and probably the misuse of its mechanisms led to a civil war in Yemen; the exclusion of Islamists from the "National Debate" in Egypt severely undermined the effectiveness of this debate. While hopes are high for an effective dialogue in Algeria, there are no signs of sufficient guarantees for its success.

To explore the meaning of the necessary debate, the conditions for its efficacy, its forms and objective content as an approach to guarantee human rights in the Arab World, CIHRS organized an open seminar on

17 October 1994, through the Ibn Rushd Salon, to discuss this important issue. CIHRS invited two great intellectuals for this seminar: Said El Naggar and Mohammed Selim El Awa. Mohammed El Sayed Said, Research Consultant and Vice Director of Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, conducted the seminar.

Mohammed El Sayed Said

The fundamental idea behind the Ibn Rushd Salon is to rediscover the intellectual resources of our nation. It is the reservoir that produced the rational human traditions of the Arab intellect. Those traditions are quite important not only for us but also for the entire human legacy. The topic of this session is national debate as a mechanism to bolster human rights in the Arab World.

This topic is of special importance because the mechanisms of national debate have been tried out in at least three states: prior to civil strife in Yemen, in Algeria and in Egypt. This reveals that there is a desire to employ this mechanism to achieve conciliation within the political community in a number of Arab states. Debate culminated in a disaster in the case of Yemen; it produced the Covenant of Accord, which was followed by the civil war. There is an attempt now to revive the idea of debate and probably all "arts" of politics in general in Algeria; the experience of national debate in Egypt took place at the beginning of this summer. Fortunately, it did not lead to a disaster, but it also did not achieve a lot in Egyptian political life.

In spite of the diversity of results achieved by national debate in a number of Arab states, they are worthwhile insofar as they can be used to bolster and protect human rights. By this I mean the possibility of using political and national debate to reinforce and protect two aspects of human rights:

First, to support debate as a replacement for the tradition of raising arms, civil war, and the banning of political and intellectual forces deeply

entrenched in the political and intellectual life of their countries of origin. In this manner, the way would be open for what we call "democratic salvation" from Arab political dilemmas.

Second, this debate can be a mechanism for democratic salvation not only in form but in content. In other words, a pivotal point in national debate would be consensus over the protection and reinforcement of democratic and human rights, and commitment thereto by all members of the political community. In this sense, the idea of debate is quite important. I do not mean here one level of debate, such as over the re-distribution of political values, or the rules and regulations of political practice including the practice of power, but I mean other levels, such as that of political and civil society.

I think that the issue is quite intricate, since it encompasses the idea of law, democracy and rationalism. Put differently, it has direct philosophic, legal, political and operational aspects. However, one cannot help counting one's heart beats while observing events in Algeria, especially since the suggested debate offers a way out of the current political impasse which took the form of fierce civil strife. I believe that Egypt has a greater potential to offer a stimulus to debate as a mechanism for reinforcing human rights. Consequently, one of the major achievements would be the success of the idea of debate; its success in the past was only relative and was way behind the ambitions of the political and civil society in Egypt.

We are honored to have with us two great thinkers: Said El Naggar and Mohammed Selim El Awa, who are widely respected by political forces and enjoy an intellectual weight and resilience of attitudes.

The Majority Cannot Be Religious

Said El Naggar

I think that there is no more important question concerning the future and fate of Egypt and the entire Islamic world than the debate between the Islamic movement and other intellectual lines. I personally would not find any better person than El Awa to represent enlightened Islamic thought. I would like to take this opportunity to address specific questions to unravel the attitude of the Islamic movement toward the underlying issues. Undoubtedly, the role of the Islamic movement in political life in Egypt is worrisome. The movement is largely popular in the Egyptian streets, among a large sector of the educated middle class. It enjoys a large presence in our political and intellectual body. Nevertheless, authorities do not allow the Islamic political movement to play its role openly. It is banned from political action, prohibited from establishing a legal independent party. This is not a "healthy" situation. But we should overcome the fears that haunt a large sector of the Egyptian intelligentsia, which sees that the Islamic movement will use democracy to attain power, but would then repeal the democratic process. This might be an erroneous viewpoint, and we might be doing the Islamic movement a great injustice.

History reveals that any religious movement that reached political power turned directly to despotism, except for the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (30 years). Islamic history is the history of political groups that raised the banner of religion, but upon reaching power became a whip of tyranny. This applies to all groups, including the Mu'tazila, whose rationality and advocacy of justice I myself cherish. If we take a look at the countries where political Islam reached the seat of power, such as Iran or Sudan, we will find that the system of government in both countries is quite distressing. I think I express the

viewpoint of a large segment of the Egyptian intelligentsia which encompasses different political lines such as liberals, Nasserites, and socialists (which all are categorized under what we call the rational line in Egypt), when I say that we fear that the religious movement might become autocratic. The liberals are accused of being bewildered by the West, but this is untrue. We are part of the Arab Islamic civilization, which, in my opinion, is more thorough and impressive than any particular interpretation that the Islamic or the Liberal movements can offer.

No doubt Islamic thought is deep enough not to accept a unilinear interpretation of its texts. I have several questions concerning the relationship between political Islam and democracy, the latter being defined as a collection of values within the polity that control the method of wielding power.

The first democratic value is political pluralism and a multi-party system. The democratic system espouses a method to resolve conflicts over the evaluation of things: persuade the electorate with one particular point of view over others. What is the attitude of the religious movement vis-à-vis the multi-party system? What is the attitude of the religious movement toward the right of Egyptians to establish parties beyond the religious framework, i.e., secular or rational parties which advocate that religion is a matter of individual conscience?

The second value is intellectual pluralism, and the right of every individual to express himself. What is the attitude of the religious movement toward apostasy and heresy? Can the accusation of heresy be a tool of political action in such a way that my opinion on a specific issue can instigate such an indictment? Would the Islamic movement categorically refrain from using heresy and apostasy in political action? Would the individual be allowed to say that change in social

circumstances requires a change of women's status, and consequently abolish some precepts that circumscribe women's rights?

The Islamic nation (Umma) is experiencing weakness, poverty and dependency. The remedy to such crises comes in the forefront, and should not be stopped by a particular interpretation. The interests of the Islamic nation precede anything else, and this is spelled out in jurisprudence. Necessities justify the forbidden, or as it is said, "Wherever interest lies is Allah's legislation." Hence, we should ask ourselves: Why has the West reached such power, while the Islamic world is drowning in decadence? Is it because we have forsaken Islamic Shari'a? Is this the explanation? Or is it because the West began to have the upper hand over the Islamic world in the fifteenth century when the West became oriented toward science and the Church's hegemony was undermined?

In fact, we find in Islamic Shari'a many points that induce the use of the intellect and thinking over worldly affairs. As an economist, I think that bank interest is one of the fundamentals of a competent economic system. Fine. What would be the situation if a man comes and tells me that Abdullah Bin Abbas, for example, prohibited interests? The recommendations of social science are the necessary and sufficient conditions to specify the attitude and policies of the state. We are actually schizophrenic. We take after the West, and we are cowed by the West, while overlooking that the West reached this stage after it realized how to use political power properly. Their scientific and technological development was paralleled by advancement in social sciences and humanities.

Generally speaking, the question addressed to us as a nation is: to what extent should we refer to ancient fundamentalist interpretations in economic, political and social affairs, and to what extent do we turn to modern social sciences and their rational perception of the world? This question is the core of the current argument between

Islamic and other movements. The concept of "the interest of the Islamic Umma" might be the answer to this question, irrespective of any references.

The third democratic value is equality before the law, which is a fundamental value. The major issue here is equality between men and women and the elimination of any forms of discrimination against females. What is the position of the Islamic movement toward polygamy, women's testimony in court and inheritance? What is the Islamic movement's attitude toward the modification of the marriage contract in such a way as to ensure a woman's rights in the contract itself so that no one could challenge her fundamental rights? Another important issue raised in this instance is equality between Muslims and non-Muslims within the same community. Is citizenship or religious identity the source of rights and duties in the nation-state? If we argue that religion is the source of rights and duties, we would be restoring the "Millet" (religious sects) system, i.e., each religious sect would have its own courts and laws. This particular system led to the collapse of the Ottoman State. On the other hand, if we presume that national identity is the source of rights and duties, consequently, we would confirm equity between Muslims and non-Muslims as well as between men and women in all rights and duties. Hence, women would not be prevented from adjudication, heading the cabinet or even the state because this was prohibited in a particular old interpretation.

The fourth value is accountability. This value is related to elections. Any public official should be accountable - not only before God - but before other humans according to human rules, because government in this world should comply with specific rules and values that should not be trespassed. Furthermore, we should have freedom of choice through elections. The "Baya'" (oath of allegiance) means selection of an individual not through elections or referendum. The

ruler should be accountable to people as the supreme power and not to a religious interpretation, irrespective of its soundness, because this would be totally anachronistic.

Nowadays, human rights have become sanctioned through international documents such as the International Declaration of Human Rights and the Two International Covenants of Civil and Political Rights and of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Agreement on the Protection of the Rights of the Child. How does the Islamic movement perceive all those international human rights documents? Does it accept them, or does it express reservations under the pretext that they are the product of 300 or 400 years of human scholarship, while Islam was the first religion to advocate individual dignity and women's dignity, and that the general Islamic spirit - regardless of the texts - espouses justice, rationality and equality? I think that if we take this general spirit into consideration, we will agree that all human rights are part and parcel of the human legacy and that we should not reject them. In my opinion, it is also necessary to differentiate between constitutional and party principles. The constitution is the supreme law of the land, and should encompass all citizens of different religious, political, social and cultural origins. Accordingly, the constitution should eradicate all religious or social features, or any religiously oriented formulations that insinuate discrimination against non-Muslims, no matter how small they are. However, this does not deny parties the right to include in their platforms whatever they want and present it to voters to obtain their consent. The constitution, on the other hand, should be devoid of any religious or discriminatory features against any sector of the nation. This is an extremely important issue.

There is, finally, the meaning of majority. In democracy, the majority cannot be religious or racial. Therefore, a Christian

majority, or a "white" racial majority cannot legislate against Muslim or black minorities. This is not majority in the democratic sense. The latter means open majority, i.e., that any citizen can be included in this majority. It is the majority of the opinion and counter-opinion (opposition); it should be open to all citizens and should be amenable to change into a minority. Religious, ethnic or racial majorities are not majorities in the democratic sense.

We are neither Iran nor Sudan

Selim El Awa

I think there are many fewer points of disagreement between Said El Naggar and I much less than I expected. I disagree with him over one or two issues. I think that the core disagreement lies in the source of legitimacy or reference. He sees that the reference is human beings, while I see it as an outcome of religious faith that we should be committed to because our faith orders us to do so. If we authentically believe in God, prophets and the divine message, we should act according to this belief.

I have a number of elementary points:

1) A debate cannot exist with "purges". We cannot have a real national debate while the authority advocating, directing and controlling this debate decides beforehand to eliminate a group of people from participating in the debate. All political forces should contribute to the debate. The elimination of any group or member is sufficient cause for failure of the debate.

This happened twice in Egypt. There is the experience of what is called "national" debate, which was specified and orchestrated by the National Democratic Party (NDP) alone. This is why the debate failed to reach a minimum level of agreement or consensus. Its results were formulated by committees formed by the NDP alone, hence, it was not a debate, but rather something close to a new declaration of the July 1952 Socialist Revolution! In every period, the political system changes in form but repeats the same meanings in different terminology. Therefore, the experience of partial national debate was a great fiasco, while the debate organized by the Youth Committee of the Lawyers' Syndicate succeeded because it did not eliminate any forces.

2) There is no alternative to debate for nations like ours. The alternative is rifles, guns and knives. We have seen Farag Fouda killed in the middle of the street, and Naguib Mahfouz being stabbed with a knife on the sides walk. The only alternative is to allow people to express their opinions freely while maintaining their human rights and dignity, not in the minimal sense but within a reasonable limit. The other option is for people to turn into wild beasts because their thought is restricted, their human needs are not fulfilled, they are frustrated because, if they are educated, they are unable to find employment, and if they work their dignity is violated; if they belong to a political group, their ultimate fate is confinement and to be tortured to death, and if they reach a further level of opposition, they are assassinated in public. The official statistics revealed 202 casualties on public roads last year, which only leads to a situation of general panic. The entire Egyptian society is now experiencing a state of public terrorization, which does not propel any progress whatsoever. Terror is worse than death because death means rest and tranquillity while terror stifles creativity and circumvents values, which can destroy the individual and transform him into a cowardly, opinionless good-for-nothing. We cannot ask society to jeopardize the life of its citizens every day, nor can we ask people to walk "with their hearts in the palm of their hands," ready for martyrdom. There is no way out of this general panic except through open doors and channels for people to express their opinions freely while preserving their human rights and providing the means for a national debate among various political forces within the polity.

3) This point concerns the relationship between Islamists and other political forces. I have recently returned from Beirut where I attended the First National Islamic Conference alongside 102 prominent national and Islamic figures. We presented two papers: one on behalf of Islamists, which I prepared, and the other of nationalists, written by Hossam Issa. The two papers were discussed

over three days. Recommendations were released: they attempted to unify for the first time the two forces that express the conscience of the entire Arab World. The first force claims that our resurgence would be based on national unification, while the other says that it should be Islamic conglomeration. All attendees overcame their differences and conflicts. They focused on the challenges of Western hegemony and the Zionist movement, which is gaining new footing every day in Palestine and other Arab territories. Those two challenges preoccupied the conference. The issue that there are Islamists and "other" political forces is misleading. There are political forces including Islamists and nationalists, and they are all crushed under the sole of stiff military boots, strangled by the grip of a monarchy that claims divine right and imposes allegiance on Muslims, or under the rule of tyrants who monopolize the wealth under the earth to subdue people, or despots who falsely claim their allegiance to Islam. No existing regime in Arab Islamic territory, except Pakistan, has free elections. Consequently, they should be avoided. Not a single regime can be considered a precedent or ideal to follow or take after. Those who claim an Arab-Islamic resurgence cannot find their ideal type in any of the existing governments. Are the values mentioned by Said guaranteed in our contemporary Egyptian society when we are governed by a regime that has nothing to do with either religion or democracy? This regime is an undefined entity that has no shape or content. Do those values exist in the Maghreb, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen or Sudan? Not a trace. Why then do some of the forces, which are crushed side by side with the Islamists, put the latter partners on trial? We should join hands, thoughts, and voices to emancipate this nation from foreign and local servitude.

4) This point deals with the problem of "generalization". Said El Naggar indulged in generalizations in his argument. The Islamic movement is often dealt with as a unified homogenous force. In fact

the Islamic movement, like Nasserism, leftist movements and liberalism, is composed of several sections or factions, because the initiator of any new idea immediately becomes a new dissident leader and forms his own new subdivision. How can we, graduates of the contemporary school of social sciences, deal with various sections and subdivisions as a single entity? Generalization is erroneous, and is harmful to our opponents as well as to our protagonists. I call for specification, and for addressing the Islamic factions according to what each one advocates, believes and decides.

I discuss again the fears expressed by Said El Naggar concerning the Islamic movement. I first admit that those fears are legitimate and justifiable because they have a solid basis. However, discussions reveal that those scruples are unfounded, or not all of them are equally justifiable. I once attended a seminar where one of the key figures of the Islamic movement justified dictatorship and the rule of a despot who obtains the oath of allegiance through terrorism and intimidation. He claimed that this was acceptable so long as this ruler was applying Islamic Shari'a. I disagreed, and said that it contravened Islamic Shari'a and the legal rule known by every law school student that "what is built on a fallacy is null and void". All religious movements that wielded power became tyrannical (Abbasids, Omayyads and Ottomans). Some issues should be stressed while dealing with those despotic states.

Defenders of those states claim that, during their rule, the greatest books and works saw the light. Averroes (Ibn Rushd) emerged during the rule of the Omayyads ; Mamluks preserved the Islamic legacy in the Mahmoudiyyah and Al Dhahiriyyah libraries and the works of Al Sakhawi. All this is true, but has nothing to do with rulers. This is the development of the civil, not the political society.

Preachers in mosques stood and said, "No leadership 'Imama' to a despot and no allegiance to thee who coerces people to pay him

allegiance." The ruler was a despot and used to obtain the oath of allegiance by force; people yielded because they feared the power of the sword. The problem is that there was a division in society between a political community, with a tyrant on top, and a civil society that worked in silence. This is exactly what is happening now: a political community that says, "I neither hear nor speak." Consequently, we are dealing with a repetition of history, and this should be explained by what is called an "enlightened" Islamic movement - and which I call the Islamic movement per se. Authors are writing and the audience is not reading. Thinkers are denouncing the status quo and authorities turn a deaf ear. We are striving to develop enlightened political thought inspired by the Islamic general spirit away from despotism and submissiveness, so that we can advocate freedom in light of Qur'anic verses, and consultation (Shura), which is a similar mechanism to that of democracy. Shura or consultation parallels the core and content of human rights in the contemporary era. It espouses accountability of rulers and equality, which are guaranteed by Islamic texts.

This political thought has remained on the doorstep of rulers from the Omayyads until today. The books that we consider "heritage" can be best called "description of the court" because they related all that went on but did not offer a political thought. Now we need to develop the political thought. Several years ago I wrote a book called "The Political System in Islam", where I criticized the allegation that there was a specific Islamic political system, and that despotism was legally tolerable, because this was not true. I also criticized the idea of the Caliphate as an Islamic system of rule. The Caliphate was a tool for the circulation of power after the Prophet's death. We are allowed to change those tools until doomsday. I also criticized the premise that consultation (Shura) did not entail any commitment on the part of the ruler, as this was equally untrue.

Hence, we should develop thought first, then practice. Throughout its history, our nation has had no experience with democratic practices. We as a nation are doomed to autocracy. If the ruler ends up being a god or half-god, the nation becomes dead and insignificant. If the nation desires to be resurrected, it should devise means to stop rulers from being gods or half-gods. The only mechanism is the transfer or alternation of power. It is an effective method to achieve democracy and guarantee human rights, individual and collective freedoms, the right to form parties, and the right of religious groups to have a different religion from that of the majority. I am against the word minority or Dhimmis (non-Muslims). This mechanism should ensure those rights and freedoms. In the West, we find hundreds of methods for the transfer of power. However, they all share two aspects: a specific timing for elections, and the right of the parliamentary majority to call for early elections if it decides to impeach the government. Those two factors are considered a double-edged weapon: the ruler knows he has only six years to give his best because he might not be re-elected in the following elections, and he is aware that if he misbehaves, the majority can take him back to the populace to regain trust. This is the only contemporary method that is acceptable to God, the Prophet and the faithful. All other available methods, including the oath of allegiance to kings, Caliphs and commanders of the faithful, as well as the 99.9% elections, are illegitimate and are not sanctioned by either religion, rationality or the interest of the people. Religion is all interest, and Al Izz Ben Abdel Salam says: Religion is the realization of interest. There is no method that achieves this interest wisely except direct and free elections tied to a specified period of time, which the parliamentary majority can limit or shorten. This mechanism also ensures the accountability of the ruler. Hence, all forms of government in the Arab and Islamic world have no connection with religion, since religion, as it is said, is " provision of interest".

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As for fears by Pan Arabist and liberal streams that the religious movement might become despotic, they are legitimate, taking into consideration historical experience. However, if we review the literature of the Islamic movement now, we will find no justification of those fears.

The Arab Islamic civilization surpasses the narrow interpretation offered by the Islamic movement in Egypt. I think that the Arab Islamic civilization to which all Muslims and non-Muslims in the region belong includes the Islamic legacy; the Qur'an and the Sunna are not outside the framework of this legacy. This civilization includes also the Coptic heritage in churches, icons and temples. This Coptic heritage has been written in Arabic throughout the centuries; it also encompasses art in flutes and beautiful Christian and Islamic songs, either joyful or sinister. Selective identification with certain symbols rather than others is considered a deficiency in personality because it cannot see the panorama of Arab culture. It is not due to a specific religious reference, thought or political attitude, but rather to rigidity of the heart or soul. The same applies to allegations that women's voices are taboo, which Sheikh El Ghazali refuted by saying that women are ordered to speak.

As for the relationship between political Islam and democracy, Said sees pluralism as a commitment by humans while I see it as an instinct that Allah has created in people. Allah created the universe in diversity and plurality. He could have - if He willed - created a homogeneous world, but on the contrary the world is heterogeneous and diversified. Pluralism has a strong origin in religious spirit. I wonder how those who advocate the unification of the political nation can impel it around a single viewpoint in politics! I think this not only contravenes social sciences but also is totally against religion.

I would like to bring up another point, namely, that allegation of heresy and apostasy is not a tool of political action. Imam El Shafei

said: I wonder about he who argues with me about a controversial issue and says, What you say is wrong and what I say is right, this is not an issue. I say: "My opinion is right but could possibly be wrong and the opinion of others to me is wrong that might possibly be right." This is the Islamic heritage to which we refer. We work in our political and social life in light of those principles laid down by the great scholars who taught us and our forefathers.

We cannot accuse anyone of heresy, not even Jews or Christians, because they and we are grounded in public and social life and may God have mercy on us and them on Doomsday. No individual can take God's place to evaluate the faith of others. If this is our attitude toward other religions, what would it be toward proponents of other ideas in politics, economics and sociology? Those cannot be combated with the weapon of heresy. Furthermore, this accusation is considered null and void. I remember that in his last debate in Alexandria, Farag Fouda said, " I hereby declare before Mohammed El Awa that I am a Moslem and have faith in God and his Prophet; there isn't but one God and Mohammed is the Prophet of God." But those who assassinated him did not read the basics of Islam. I also say that political parties based on the separation of religion and the state have the right to be established within the Islamic State, because the combination of religion and politics is not inherently organic. We are not a state of Ayatollah in Iran, nor are we the Islamic political regime of Sudan. Ours would be a civil state governed by the transparent glass box.

I agree with Said El Naggar that the majority should not be religious but that of voters. The ideal method to reach the majority is through free elections, invented by the West. There is no other method of transfer of power except through elections. To say that the electoral system contravenes Islam because there is Bay'a (oath of allegiance) etc., is irrelevant in our contemporary political life. There

are no texts in the Qur'an or the Hadith that say rulers are irreplaceable and that the Bay'a is the model of the political system. Formerly, scholars said that the procedures concerning rule are all provisional, i.e., where they concern the situation of the nation.

Said El Naggar discussed the issues of inheritance, testimony and polygamy. Here, we have two different references. The first stipulates that all God's orders and the Prophet's sayings and deeds are obligatory. I accept this reference. The second reference says that God's and the Prophet's orders should be perceived in light of what we judge as useful or harmful. If we deem what God ordered to be harmful, we leave it out. I reject this reference. I cannot possibly accept that we can rescind the clear-cut absolute text of the Holy Qur'an or the Prophet's Sunna. Truly under some social circumstances or political developments a specific rule would not be implemented, or would be postponed to a certain period. However, the text cannot be judged as inadequate according to people's whims because these are the rules of the Divine Legislator, He who knows the changing nature of people's interests. This we categorically reject.

As for the question of inheritance, it is incorrect that the woman gets half the man's share. The woman gets half in two cases: if she has a male brother, and in the case of the husband and wife. This is based on one reason: after her husband's death, the woman is not responsible for providing for her children, while the husband is. The sister is not also responsible for providing for her brother, but the opposite is true. Both parents get equal shares: if the mother is an only child, she gets one third, while the father gets one sixth if he has brothers. If the deceased has only female children, they get two-thirds of the inheritance; if he has an only daughter, she gets half. The rule of the male getting a share equal to that of two females is a shortsighted reading of the text. The question of polygamy has a

religious reference: God tolerated polygamy but did not order it. It is sanctioned but under certain restrictions, mainly fairness between wives. Those restrictions can be put in the form of laws to evaluate justice, decide to annul or prevent the second marriage if the judge deems fairness impossible. All this is permissible and no one can claim that restrictions of this right are forbidden, but the abolishment of polygamy is forbidden.

The third issue is female testimonial competence, which is equal to half the male's testimony according to a clear Qur'anic verse. This has two bases: justice, i.e., that the witness b

e acceptable as just by the administrator, and that the witness be aware of what is being testified to. It is important to clarify that, if there is no ther witness but a female, her testimony is accepted. For instance, if a traveling group has only one woman among them. Furthermore, her testimony is acceptable in situations that only a woman attests to in primitive societies, such as giving birth, nursing, circumcision, etc.

Consequently, the issue of female testimony being worth half of the male's is unsound except in situations where both males and females are present. If only women were present, their testimony is acceptable. A large number of Islamic states do not apply this principle except in personal status cases. As for civil, administrative and criminal codes, women's testimony is equal to that of men. This is a natural evolution due to women being exposed to public life and women's employment alongside men.

Said knows that the argument, "We have forsaken science, hence, we became underdeveloped," is a fallacy. We deteriorated from the time of the Omayyad and the Abbassid states until today because of political tyranny and nothing else. The West progressed because of two revolutions. The first, against despotic monarchy, began in 1215

and culminated with the French Revolution, and the second was a revolution against a church that restricted creativity. There is no priesthood in Islam that restricts inventiveness. The Sheikh of Al Azhar had a wrong opinion concerning female circumcision and I am preoccupied with the reply now. Islam includes a rule: whoever is right has two rewards, if he is mistaken, he gets one merit, and no one is free from wrongdoing.

As for the question of usury and the specification of interest rates, I say that Islam forbade usury and considered it a sin, but did not specify what usury is. The experience of Islamic banks seems important theoretically. I was a legal consultant in one of the Islamic banks until last year. However, I resigned after the catastrophe of the Bank of Credit and Commerce, which proved that there was no difference between Islamic and other banks. Hence, it was no longer my right to work in such banks which allegedly operated wrong fully yet relating to Islam.

Furthermore, the issue of the constitution requires further discussion because its stipulation of the state religion is not a regressive reference, nor does it do injustice to the rights of non-Muslim groups, because Islam preserves all their rights. We do not preserve the rights of Christian or Jewish minorities as a benevolence but because their rights are stated in the Qur'an and the Sunna, and are theirs whether we like it and sanction it or not, by adjudication if not smoothly. We are dealing here with a stable legal situation supported by the Qur'an and the Sunna.

Finally, all experiences proved that violence, regardless of its motive and the tyranny of the ruler and irrespective of the justifications, leads to calamities even in cases of national liberation wars. The greatest of these was the national liberation war in Algeria, which supported the rule of a single party and culminated in the civil strife that we are witnessing today.

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Discussion

The Rightly Guided Caliphs

And the emergency Situation

Haitham Manna' (Syria)

I was glad to hear an Egyptian liberal and enlightened Islamic discourses. I believe that we should differentiate between the retrogressive and enlightened interpretation of Islam, and Islam as a humanitarian, just religion. Undoubtedly, the existence of different lines of religious interpretation is quite useful and healthy. However, it is our right as observers to judge, which among those lines is the most sound interpretation of religion. This is an approach to religious and social reform. In Europe, religious reform preceded the French Revolution.

It is possible today that an enlightened Islamic trend could establish a republic through elections in such a way that no member of society would be excluded. We should support such a trend, otherwise why accept Christian democratic parties in the West while we reject any religious party? By this I mean we can agree on an Islamic social consensus and on the establishment of Islamic democratic parties following the model of Christian democratic parties. Herein, the problems of reference, interpretation, explanation and controversy emerge. The moment we accept the principle of absolute judgment, we would reject what we might call "time".

I would like to mention here that Islam experienced three stages: the first stage was secrecy. In other words, political and religious opposition, in our contemporary sense, did not have the right to be

expressed in Mecca. The second stage was that of the "text," the first constitution known after Christianity was selected. According to my knowledge, this simple paper was acceptable as text when Islam was still weak. The third stage was called the "emergency" stage. In ten years, the Prophet led 27 raids. Verses of the Qur'an conveyed to the Prophet were quite sharp and stiff. When it was possible to educate the prisoners of war, Muslims did so, but when animosities between Muslims and atheists were accentuated, captives were killed. Both cases occurred in the Islamic State; in other words, the captives were dealt with according to circumstances.

I think that the rule of Abu Bakr was a period of emergency. Omar has lived through political stability that allowed for lifting this emergency. In Islamic history, we will find that the hegemony of the dogmatic "text" rather than intellectualism and rationalism prevailed, except for a few cases when Omar used his own judgment to achieve public interest away from the texts. But we as Muslims can consider ourselves under a state of emergency, holy war "Jihad" or mobilization that the Muslim forefathers experienced during Abu Bakr's caliphate.

Once we understand this point, we will be able to define those concepts. However, if we differentiate between the text and the circumstances of its revelation, we will find that the application of verses to our current circumstances is incompatible with human interests. Fourteen centuries later we are still asking: should we perform amputation on the thief and where exactly should we dismember him? The problem of taking the text at face value and isolating it from its social origin is unacceptable in the core of Islamic jurisprudence.

Furthermore, mixing between religion and politics causes great damage. In the name of religion, a colossal number of people were killed in Afghanistan, even surpassing the victims of war against the

Soviet invasion. In Algeria, intellectuals are assassinated under the banner of religion. Hence, we need to lay down regulations to control contention and conflict, which should commit parties calling themselves secularist, Islamist or liberal in such a way that competition would be humanitarian and fair.

Mohammed El Sayed Said

I plead with Selim El Awa for specification and not generalization. In order to understand the idea of specification, we should compare modern theses of the Muslim Brothers movement on the one hand, and those of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria on the other. The major Islamic movement in Algeria is highly ferocious compared with the Muslim Brothers. The latter is a model of the golden middle-of-the-road or a search for channels and bridges with civil and political society. I think that unless we encouraged this moderate wing, we will lose a great deal. Suppose we are dealing with an unenlightened Islamic movement - in my opinion, the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front is unenlightened: the nature of political balance of powers would lead to a mutual long term bloodshed which would entail a collective suicide of the entire Algerian society. However, even in the case of an unenlightened Islamic movement, what is to be done? Shouldn't we look for a pivotal point within a political negotiation between independent forces inside the civil society - the Algerian for instance - and search for peaceful coexistence and organization of political life to save the society from this aggregate hysteria? If the Islamic Salvation Front is controlled by an unenlightened majority, what do you think of the Armed Islamic Group ? Shouldn't we search for a way out of the two-faceted political dilemma: either Islamic movements would have a majority of votes and have the legitimate right to rule according to the Constitutional stipulation, or would compile an arsenal of weapons so huge as to exterminate the entire society. Here we also need further research.

Ahmed Ebeid

Can we call the existing political regime anything other than sheer despotism? The documentary sources of the existing political regime, represented in a permanent Emergency Law, a constitutionally-suspected political representation system, and a legal system that does not take human rights into consideration, are all indicators of an extremely despotic political system. Even what we might call a democratic experience is quite fragile and ceremonial under the law of political parties, which contravenes the simplest meanings of freedom of expression, democracy and transfer of power. Not relinquishing power in general means stifling the idea of democracy itself. Fear of potential political despotism is not an issue for individuals toiling under despotism and not attempting to reverse it through genuinely organized effort. I also believe that Egyptian liberals' reading of Islamic history is rather selective and focuses on the negative aspects in the process of the transfer of power. Comparing the trends of power transfer in the Islamic state in the seventh century AD to those invented by the West in the modern era is unscientific. How then did the Islamic nation offer humanity the greatest human rights practices throughout ten centuries in the freedom of worship and belief, individual freedoms and even freedom of expression? Individual cases in history are tremendous, and we sometimes feel they represent a certain trend. But Islamic Shari'a taught humanity the method of peaceful transfer of political power in the most precise sense. It also still affects the daily life of the entire nation. Despite some drawbacks in the mechanism of transferring power, Islamic Shari'a practically offered humanity the fundamentals of human civilization.

Ahmed Abdel Hafiz

I think we are dealing with two sets of logic: a logic of contradiction and one of integration. Instead of adopting a single

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reference, we can adopt two. I used to think that moderate attitudes were hypocritical, but now I see them as perfectly convenient to allow for debate and accord instead of playing a zero-sum game where the total gain of one team means the total loss of the other.

Mostafa Abdel Aal

I will comment on Selim El Awa's argument concerning public intimidation, which propels us toward debate. El Awa thinks that the injustice done to us far exceeds our differences. I think this is a controversial issue for two reasons: the first is that some forces are profiting from this injustice or at least they are not directly subjected to it. Consequently, they are not very keen to see national forces uniting to confront authorities. The second reason is that Islamic discourse could be so intimidating that other forces or movements would prefer state oppression.

This is our genuine issue. To what extent can we attract profiteers of this injustice to join the moderate front? To what extent can we soothe the rigidity of Islamic discourse?

Selim El Awa

My attitude toward Islamic references is for "Ijtihad" (intellectual exercise), innovation and against dogmatism and imitation, for freedom and against oppression, for democracy and against dictatorship. This is not debatable but rather a fundamental opinion of mine. What I mean in the issue of reference is that I should not be eliminated and marginalized because I belong to a certain religion and I am in confrontation with others who monopolize power but do not belong to my religion, nor want to refer to it; hence, we should both turn to the voter for evaluation. I believe that there is no religious scholar worthy of the name who would say that the text is absolute in time and place. The text is always subject to

circumstances of time and place. I agree with Haitham Manna' that we should not overlook the causes for the revelation of Qur'anic verses, nor should we separate them from economic, social and political conditions within society. I recall here that a scholar from Tripoli came to Al Iz Ben Abdel Salam, one of Egypt's prominent Imams, and asked him how he reached his interpretations. He said, " I know only one rule: If one comes to you for consultation, ask him about the traditions and rituals of his country and those applicable amongst his people. Do not stick to what is written in your books. To be rigid is to go astray in religion." These are our forefathers.

There are five objectives of Shari'a: four of them are for people - money, offspring, soul and contingencies. Only one pertains to religion: preservation of religion. Hence, religion was sent for people, and any interpretation that harms people does not belong to religion.

The negative effects of mixing religion with politics that Haitham indicated might be true. Would the solution be to eliminate religion from life, or would it be a multiplication of means and mechanisms that prevent despotism and oppression and restrain the use of force in the name of religion? I definitely tend toward the second solution, because the elimination of religion contravenes basic human rights.

Arabic Islam is Different

From African and Asian Islam

Haitham Manna'

We do not intend to become interpreters of texts. We are only presenting historical facts because history is either for or against us, exactly like the Qur'an, which can be either for the Muslim or against him. To us, history is on our side, and we should use it to form modern knowledge. We are not captives and refuse to be captives of this history. However, we should remind people that the majority of

great Islamic figures were killed by Muslims and not by Arab Christians, for example. We can mention that the first man who killed a monk in the entire Arab Islamic history belonged to the Islamic Group in Algeria. It took us ten centuries to kill one Christian man in all our history. Consequently, people like these are not worthy of our ancestors. But how can we talk about one Islam? We should speak about two Islams: a decadent, stern and dogmatic Islam that deserves no debate, and an enlightened Islam. I do not accept assassination of a soul in the name of Allah when this soul espouses the same religion and the same belief.

There is one fundamental point. I see the entire issue as political and cultural, in addition to the balance of power. For example, when the socialist movement was on the rise, Mustafa El Sebai was compelled to write about the socialism of Islam. When socialism ebbed, they claimed there is no socialism in Islam. The same occurred with the democratic trend in the forties, etc.

We are dealing with the balance of powers and an intellectual battlefield. During this combat, we should not overlook the essentiality of debate and the elimination of all forms of violence. This implies giving others the full right to express themselves. I believe that freedom of opinion for all would allow people to judge opinions and counter opinions.

Hassan Nafaa

I think that Said El Naggar and Selim El Awa's presentations reveal that they have much more in common than in opposition. Selim El Awa might even have greater disagreements with a large number of factions within the Islamic movement than with Said. Consequently, we should differentiate between intellectual underpinnings and political practices within various schools of thought.

I have two remarks. The first concerns the forces with which it might be useful to debate, namely, the genuine national forces, which adopt national issues and advocate national reform and nothing else. The second remark concerns El Naggar's argument concerning the attitude of Islamic forces vis-à-vis international human rights documents. I think that, as Naggar mentioned, those documents are an international human heritage. However, we should take into consideration that not all that is included in those documents conforms with Arab traditions and culture. For instance, is the right to abortion a natural and fundamental right of women? This is a controversial issue, and disagreement here is legitimate and justifiable. Differences of philosophies, conditions and traditions of societies allows a certain society to reject a particular idea or philosophy if it is not compatible with its circumstances. Therefore, I disagree with making the principle of consent or ratification of all rights included in international human rights documents a criterion for respecting democracy and human rights.

Ahmed Abdallah

Where does the issue of earning one's bread stand in this discussion? How do we confront poverty with human rights, because the issue of economic and social rights is raised but does not receive the same attention as civil and political rights. It is important to answer the questions at hand. If the problem is culture between secularists and religious advocates, to what extent can they coexist and have a mutual debate? The issue of earning one's living takes the debate to different levels.

Omar Al Qurai (Sudan)

The predicament stirred up by this discussion is related to the textual references. Selim El Awa says that Islam sanctions pluralism, transfer of power, freedom and rights of minorities. Nevertheless, if

El Awa debates with other Islamists and they can show in the text that he is wrong, he cannot challenge the text, and herein lies the real predicament. For instance, there are clear-cut verses on the Dhimmis (non-Muslims) and the Jizia (head tax). You have no choice except to claim that you are secularist and would not implement this verse because it contradicts human rights. Any compromise is an intellectual dishonesty unless one attempts to interpret and review the texts themselves. However, this contravenes the concept of traditional interpretation, which approves intellectualism and scholarship where there is no stipulation in the text. I think that we should interpret the texts themselves. Some texts are related to their surroundings, so if circumstances change, the text would be overlooked. However, if we argued on the same line as Islamic groups, namely that texts are relevant as references for all time and space, this would be wrong because God legislates for society and not for Himself. Shari'a is hence incomplete but changes according to the variations of social circumstances. This modification should occur while coping with the text rather than avoiding this confrontation. The spirit of religion is man's dignity, so if this dignity is violated under a specific text, we can ignore that text.

Another point concerns the question of Ridda (apostasy). In the Qur'an, the apostate should be killed, since Islam originally expanded by the power of the sword. Consequently, whoever joined Islam by the sword cannot renounce his faith except with the sword. However, had Islam expanded through free persuasion, defection would have also been through individual freedom. Here we should ask ourselves how to deal with the clear-cut unchallenged text concerning killing the apostate.

I believe that Shura (consultation) has nothing to do with democracy. Shura is a system of consultation of a wise and rational individual by the group. However, in the democratic system, the ruler

should yield to popular will and protect the rights of minorities. I think that the rights of women and of minorities are all jeopardized by Islamic Shari'a unless we reinterpret it.

Khaled Al Azaar (Palestine)

I will return to the lecture on the national debate as a mechanism to reinforce democracy and human rights. I think, first, that had the two intellectual currents represented by Said El Naggar and Selim El Awa broadened their spectrum, they could have met at many points, albeit superficially. However, I think that this "meeting" would not be genuine. For instance, if we extend the Islamic and the liberal lines to their far end, they should split at a certain point. There is also the case with the Arab-Zionist conflict, or democracy. The introduction of a new variable to either discourse would separate and not unite them. This core controversy between the two movements is so notorious in the disagreements between Fatah and Hamas in Palestine. I finally ask: What are the mechanisms that we can use to prevent a collision between contending forces such as Hamas and Fatah? What mechanisms should we resort to in order to protect human rights in case such a clash occurs?

Said El Naggar

I will summarize my rebuttal in a number of comments:

1) Human rights are derived from several sources. Those rights date back to the rise of religions. The modern liberal movement contributed greatly to the formulation of human rights documents. I should say that Marxism, as it was practiced in Soviet Union, was an obstacle to human rights because it is well known that socialist states revoked all international human rights documents under the pretext that they focused on formalities and overlooked the fundamental issue, which is bread and butter. The greatest deceit to humanity is to

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exchange freedom and human rights for bread and butter. Democracy and human rights are actually the path to decently earning one's bread and butter.

2) I would like to clarify my attitude toward regimes in power. I am perfectly aware of their despotism and violation of human rights. However, I focus on the conflict with those regimes because I believe that they are doomed to fall sooner or later. Conflict will occur between Islamic factions and any other movements that do not espouse Islam as a source or reference. This is why I focus on the Islamic movement.

3) Is there one Islam or several versions of Islam? No, there is not a single Islam; Islam in Turkey is different from Islam in Iran, India or Malaysia. They even differ over core issues. In fact, polygamy, testimony in court, and males getting double the share of females in inheritance do not exist in a huge number of African Islamic states. Hence, we cannot visualize that there is a single interpretation to which we should commit ourselves.

4) The core of the issue is the source or reference. If religious texts are the reference, this means that there are limits to what one can do. If we claim that religious texts are amenable to development, and that there is a difference between religion and Shari'a, we can establish a debate, especially since Shari'a was often duplicated during the Prophet's life. This indicates that Shari'a is totally different from the core of religion or creed.

5) When we discuss social science, the supremacy of rationality in human relations, and the necessity of adopting social science recommendations, I conclude that wherever social sciences clash with texts, time and space would confine the latter. Put differently, what the mind dictates is the interest of the Islamic nation, and whatever achieves the interests of the Islamic nation is Islamic by definition.

On the other hand, if the reference is to the interests or utility of the nation, this opens the door wide to an accord between political and civil forces. I agree with the saying that Islamists do not give sufficient importance to social change, which requires the modification of social organizations. A large number of texts deal with social issues and problems: marriage, divorce, and inheritance. These are variable social issues, and the application of one and the same text thereto might not conform with public interest or utility. Social change might be so potent as to leave no room for any clear-cut text to prevent it. For instance, Islam sanctioned slavery. Truly, it restricted it, but originally it was permissible. Can anyone today advocate, on the basis of the text, a restoration of slavery? We also have criminal penalties in Islam (stoning, amputation...). Can anyone claim their application because there is an explicit text? In fact, circumstances have changed so much that this cannot be rationally acceptable.

Chapter Five

The National Accord Charter And Public Elections In Egypt

Introduction

The legislative elections that took place on 29 November 1995 - irrespective of their distressing repercussions - were an important occasion for the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) to shed light on the situation of human rights and public freedoms in Egypt, and strive to formulate a national consensus over the necessity to respect those rights and freedoms. CIHRS thought that a thorough discussion of those issues calls for a coordinated or unified attitude to be taken by various political forces and public figures.

The provisional Charter of National Accord, which was proposed during the third conference of the Committee for Coordination between Trade Unions in October 1994, was a first step toward this goal. The core of this charter supports peaceful democratic evolution in the country, and ensures respect of human rights. Furthermore, the obstruction of this project one year later deprived the nation of an opportunity to form a consensus vis-a-vis democracy and human rights during elections. Hence, CIHRS decided to organize a special cultural evening - under the auspices of the Ibn Rushd Salon - shortly before the legislative elections, to discuss the possibility of releasing a charter for national consensus which basically focuses on the issues of democracy and human rights, and which invites the contribution of civil society institutions as well as public figures. CIHRS has taken into consideration that the achievement of this objective, either during or after elections, is essential to reaching a consensus over some points of disagreement.

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CIHRS also considered this evening of 8 November 1995 a suitable moment to discuss a number of alternative ideas, which could bolster consensus over the process of democratic transformation and respect for human rights, and place issues related thereto at the top of the agenda of legislative elections.

CIHRS invited the following guests to this evening

1) Hossam Issa	Professor of Law, member of the Political Bureau of the Arab Democratic Nasserite Party.
2) Hussein Abdel Razeq	Editor-in-Chief of the Left Magazine
3) Helmi Mourad	Deputy Chairman of the Labor Party.
4) Maamoun El Hudeibi	Vice General Guide and Official Spokesman of the Muslim Brothers.
5) Wahid Abdel Meguid	Director of the Arab Affairs Unit, Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies.

CIHRS selected Wahid Abdel Meguid to chair the evening.

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There should be a consensus
over the political process

Wahid Abdel Meguid

This seminar, which is devoted to the discussion of a charter of national consensus, is one session in a series of seminars organized by CIHRS since the beginning of this year. The aim of these seminars is to reach a minimum level of understanding among parties and political forces to support democratic development and emancipate ourselves from the long stagnation of political life.

I will provide a brief background before we ask our speakers to discuss their views on this issue.

The groundwork for a charter of national accord began with an idea raised during the conference on "freedoms and civil society" launched by the committee of coordination among trade unions held in October 1994 in the Doctors' Syndicate headquarters. The idea was raised spontaneously in some of the papers, discussions, and comments during the conference. From the beginning of the conference, contributors advocated a formula of understanding among parties and political forces that would represent the democratic foundation of national consensus. The idea was quite ambiguous at the outset, in terms of procedures and mechanisms, though it was clear in terms of content. Contributors to the conference elected a committee, composed of a number of prominent figures, to come up with a formula for the charter. After long deliberations and meetings, the committee agreed to call upon all political parties and forces to appoint representatives to this committee to discuss this formula. Actually, all parties and political forces have been contacted, including the National Democratic Party

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(NDP). All forces - except the NDP - responded to this invitation, and designated their representatives to the committee.

As is customary, a sub-committee was set up in February 1995 to devise a formula, and prepare a blueprint for the charter. This provisional version or blueprint was amended several times between February and August /early September 1995. There was consensus over a large part of the formula of the national charter. However, some disagreements remained unresolved and there were attempts to reach compromise. However, the election campaign began to impose itself, and some contributors thought that the process of formulation should be postponed until after the elections. Others thought that it would be quite difficult to reach a final consensus after those long debates over points of disagreement.

Generally speaking, we are dealing with rich and enlightening experience. Irrespective of its outcome, it can be considered unprecedented in terms of the thoroughness and breadth of the topic. The end of 1994 made many contacts made between major opposition parties over some questions. Many statements have been released concerning various issues. However, this was a new experience, meaning that it did not aim to reach a consensus over specific political issues on particular occasions, but to reach a formula of general understanding and consensus over the political process.

We are aware that democratic development requires some kind of understanding, and the absence thereof hinders the real democratic path. Democracy is a matrix of conflict, understanding or even consensus over major questions. If conflict or consensus disappear, democracy disappears with them. Hence, there should be a minimum level of public understanding or consensus over fundamental issues: it is, therefore, important to lay acceptable foundations that all sides agree not to violate or trespass within the framework of national accord. Undoubtedly, we need to evaluate this experience so that it

will emanate - if ever it is accepted - from a common ground of understanding and harmony. If it is ever interrupted, and the non-violent political conflict is accentuated, it will be useful to other experiences, since one of the major problems of socio/political life in Egypt is the absence of an accumulated experience of democratic development.

We ask our respected speakers to briefly evaluate this experience, then visualize its prospective fate and the possibility of perpetuating it after the elections.

Guarantees: Yes,

Outside The Bounds Of Islam: No

Maamoun Elhudeibi

When the idea of a charter of national accord was suggested, we were fully disposed to providing all the necessary guarantees to achieve justice, human rights, and a political system that grants the transfer of power through free, sound and legal ballots, and rules according to the people's will.

When the committee began to meet, there were two opinions at the top of its agenda. The first was Nabil El Helali's. He contended that the first step consisted of laying down a framework for political action to transcend antagonism and violence and reach objective debate and rationality, which ultimately derive from the will of the people. This point has been agreed upon. We thought that we represented different currents of thought, having various ideas and methods. Our meeting and unanimity over diverse issues means that we have become one party, which seemed practically impossible.

When the idea of the charter was proposed to us, we discovered that it exceeded the framework we had agreed upon. I mentioned in the committee meetings that there are "oceans" of differences in beliefs among us that we cannot overcome. If we start with the part concerning guarantees to restrain the political regime to which we agreed, this is considered a great achievement. Nevertheless, we should endeavor to discuss other issues in the hope of reaching a consensus over a social or economic formula. We have the International Charter of Human Rights, which includes many clauses on the social and economic systems we can adopt and agree upon.

The major question here is: what are the guarantees to which all political forces should be committed, and which should bind any

political force, either winning, losing, or ascending to power, so that no single force will usurp power, and deal a severe blow to freedoms and the entire democratic system? We also had another problem: how do we bring the people into the discussion of this charter ? I am allowed, as a candidate, to tour coffee shops, but still security patrols are behind me. How can I explain economic, social and philosophic concepts to people? To whom and how ? Why don't we attempt to get out of the maze in which we live? We would like to agree first on the fundamental points, and then implement them. We have proposed 15 points in this instance; we presented them and published them in some newspapers. We emphasized that the state should be a democratic republican system, whether presidential, parliamentary or constitutional, within the Islamic framework. I stress that, as a staunch believer, I cannot by any means forfeit the original text, provided that all points conform with mainstream Islamic concepts. Without this principle, I cannot accept anything, and ours will remain a dialogue of the deaf. I say this from the outset, so that no one will attempt to convince me otherwise, or we will be caught in a vicious circle. I say that the decisive criterion in endorsing any item or clause is that 90% of the people should vote 90% for it, in order for it to pass. We should consult the people over Islamic concepts: should they be a prerequisite for rule or not? If less than 90% of the people vote for it, I will accept the decision of the people. We would commit ourselves and ask others to be committed to this point.

We also stressed the following principles:

1) The people are the source of all power. No individual, party, group, or agency can claim its right to power, or continue to practice it, without a free popular will.

2) Commitment to the principle of transfer of power through free and genuine elections.

3) Freedom of belief should be absolutely unrestricted.

4) Freedom of religious worship for all known holy creeds.

5) Freedom of opinion, and of peaceful advocacy within the bounds of public discipline, morals and the fundamental pillars of society as spelled out in the first chapter of the Constitution. A prerequisite of those freedoms is the freedom to own and use various mass media: television, broadcast stations, tapes, video, facsimile machines, newspapers, journals, books, leaflets, etc.

6) Freedom to form political parties. No administrative authority has the right to interfere to prohibit or restrict this right; an independent judicial authority should be the deciding body with regard to violations of public discipline, ethics, fundamental principles of social life, or what is considered a revocation of peaceful action. The judiciary should stop those who use or threaten to use force or violence, and should be totally impartial.

7) Freedom to organize, promote and contribute to public assemblies within the bounds of social safety, non-interference with security, refrain from the use of or threat to use force or carry weapons.

8) The right to peaceful demonstration.

9) The right to popular representation through a parliament elected via free and genuine franchise for a limited period of time, with new elections held periodically. Election laws should encompass guarantees of the integrity and soundness of elections and impartiality of those responsible for them.

10) The right of every citizen to participate in legislative elections once he/she fulfills the general conditions spelled out by law.

11) The right of all citizens to become members of legislative councils through election or appointment, once all candidates have met the eligibility requirements.

12) Independence of the judiciary at all levels and in all areas. The judiciary should not be intimidated, enticed, or ridiculed. All accused should be tried before their natural judges, all forms of exceptional courts should be cancelled, and activities of military courts should be restricted to crimes and violations of military rules for military personnel only.

13) Separation of prosecution and investigation. Public prosecution authority should be independent of the Ministry of Justice. All suspects being provisionally detained should have the right to plead against the public prosecutor's decision before a judicial authority. Suspects accused of committing terrorist acts should not be taken into custody for six months.

14) The army should not interfere in politics. The army should be responsible for defending the state from external aggression. The regime should not resort to military forces either directly or indirectly to impose its will or hegemony, or threaten to castrate individual freedoms. The Minister of Defense should be a civil/political minister, like his other counterparts.

15) The police and all internal security apparatuses should have civil duties according to the Constitution. Their responsibility should be restricted to protecting state security in general, and they should not be used to preserve the existing regime, or as a tool to suppress the opposition. They should be governed, and their leadership controlled by a regulatory system, and they should be prohibited from interfering with political activities and public elections.

Those are the fifteen points we proposed. Concerning the Constitution in power now, and suggestions to either abolish or amend it, we think that the major predicament lies not in the Constitution itself but rather in laws that have overlooked its clauses concerning freedom, equality, and political and intellectual pluralism. Despite the fact that the Constitution stipulates a multi-party system, laws made the foundation of any party conditional to the will of the President of the Republic only, which negates the concept of pluralism. The Constitution states that freedom of the press should be granted, but the law prohibits the establishment of newspapers except under certain conditions and restrictions. Hence, the issue is not amendment or abolishment of the Constitution, but rather annulling laws and decrees that restrict freedoms, in addition to the Emergency Law that has been in effect for 15 years.

This is the position we take. Anyone having any objection to these items is welcome to discuss them. We are also ready to negotiate and discuss any additional points.

Should we agree on the fundamental principles, we can complement the social and economic aspects. However, there are certain steps that we should take first. We have already suggested them.

Mutual Distrust and Skepticism

Hussein Abdel Razeq

I would like to note that this attempt to formulate a charter of national consensus is the third and not the first of its kind. The first attempt was when a group of major opposition parties (the Wafd, the Tagamu', the Labor and the Liberal parties) met on 5 February 1987, and reached some kind of agreement or charter over the necessary pre-requisites of a democratic society. They proclaimed it in a general assembly in Abdin, and promulgated a message supporting the Muslim Brothers' declaration, in addition to another message from the Communists. This attempt began after the dissolution of the People's Assembly, and culminated in the 1987 legislative elections, which practically put an end to this agreement. The second attempt took place in 1989, and was broader than the first. We reached a full and detailed provisional program for political and democratic reform. Meetings were held in the Labor Party headquarters, at which Helmi Mourad, Saif El Islam Hassan El Banna and Essam El Erian represented the Ikhwan, and I represented the Tagamu'. Nasserites were absent at the beginning, but Farid Abdel Karim began to attend the meetings later on. When the program was presented to the heads of parties, no one objected to it; on the contrary, they considered it ample and detailed. However, they thought that the part concerning the conditions and guarantees of elections was sufficient. Hence, the issue ended up with the 1990 elections, and the attempt did not proceed further.

The final attempt, which began - as Wahid mentioned - during the conference held thanks to the initiative of trade unions, actually produced a blueprint for consensus. It was signed by the Tagamu' and Wafd parties, in addition to a number of other prominent individuals.

I will not go into the details of the Charter, or the details of our attitude vis-à-vis political and democratic reform, since the platform of the Tagamu' in itself proves that we are ready to go quite far, even further than the limits of democratic development (which in our opinion is the only outlet that can save Egypt). Irrespective of our disagreements over the economic and social aspects, they exist and will exist because our perception of economic and social reform differs from that of the NDP, the Wafd, the Muslim Brothers and the Communists. It cannot be contended that the concept of consensus or charter means that all political forces will agree, because this would not be consensus but deceit. We can agree upon a political, legal, constitutional and democratic framework that controls action, in which each side would propose its platform and the people would choose those who would implement this platform.

I will discuss the experience of the national charter. I think that, generally speaking, it is a very positive experience. However, it met with three obstacles:

First: It was obvious - without any proclamation - that mutual distrust prevailed among various streams. Some contended that Nasserites spoke of democracy, while their experience in power contradicted all forms of democratic principles. The Tagamu' is a Communist party. If Communists did not ascend to power here, what about the Soviet Union and other countries? The Muslim Brothers did what they did in the Lawyers' Syndicate and Sudan. A certain reservation and inner feeling of the incredibility of this suggestion prevailed within each force vis-à-vis the others. This feeling hindered the accord; even though it was not candidly expressed, it was spelled out clearly later on.

Second: Some contributors attempted to make the charter surpass the limits of political, democratic and constitutional reform to encompass

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economic and social issues. Everybody knows this is a controversial issue.

Third: There were attempts to impose a particular intellectual line on the Charter. Some even feared that the Charter might have been prepared in accordance with a liberal logic, i.e., that liberals were imposing their point of view. In other words, the Wafd Party was leading this whole process and was pulling all parties into its territory. In my opinion, this was categorically untrue. Fortunately, the Left was not accused of attempting to impose its viewpoint on the Charter. However, there was a great fear that the Muslim Brothers and the Labor Party would impose a certain line of thought. This charter, according to those two forces, stemmed from their "slogans" of "Islam is the Solution" and "The Qur'an is our Constitution." The attempt by some forces to impose a certain pattern on the Charter is one of the problems that have hampered its ratification. Elections were only an outlet to postpone the topic until a resolution could be reached. The question is: What future awaits this project, and is it possible for it to succeed?

I believe that the success of this process is a function of several factors:

The first is the elections, their results, and how those forces will interact during the elections. The idea of coordination was a fiasco, except coordination of elections among the Tagamu', the Nasserite and Communist Parties. The Nasserite Party announced that it reached a formula of coordination with the Labor Party in a number of districts. Moreover, the Tagamu' reached almost total accord with the Nasserite Party, except for one or two districts. Interaction during the electoral battle can either help various forces to embellish the project of national consensus with a new spirit or can thwart it altogether. Elections by themselves do not decide the fate of this process. In my opinion, if we desire to have a charter of national

accord in the true sense, we should focus on political and democratic reform and avoid any attempts to impose a certain line of thought or controversial issues on it. Unfortunately, national issues themselves are sources of controversy. The issue of a Mediterranean market stirs up controversies. We could have agreed upon democratic and Pan Arabist issues and dropped economic issues. However, those issues became foci of controversy.

I stress - and I am not promoting the view of the Tagamu' Party - that when the first project of the charter was proposed to us, we objected because our contribution was delayed. Our first contribution was on the 16 April session. Up to that date, we did not have any activity in the conference, and I do not know the events that occurred later. The coordinating committee said that word had been sent to us, but our leadership said we had received nothing. After a telephone call, we knew that meetings were being held. We went and found that the organizing committee composed of Said El Naggar, Ibrahim El Dessouki Abaza, Helmi Mourad and Yehia El Refai all prepared a project.

The project was presented to us. Our only objection concerned a clause about the private sector, which we found unnecessary and thought should be deleted. Discussion of economic aspects should encompass the private, public, and cooperative sectors, in addition to some services. There were no disagreements over this point. When the amended project was proposed, the changes we introduced were quite limited, because we were ready to accept anything to guarantee democratic debate. Our objection was to the sentence, " part and parcel of the Arab and Islamic nation" on the first page, since we think that there is one Arab nation but several Islamic peoples. However, we did not object when they insisted on leaving the sentence unchanged. We also rejected the idea that the presidency of the Republic be for a single non-renewable term. We thought this was

unusual, and we demanded, as others did, that it be two consecutive terms. We also added some sections to economic freedoms. We tried to add a special clause on the Pan Arabist issue, which we thought did not stir up any disagreements. But we finally accepted what all members agreed upon, or what seemed so to us. Evidently, if debates are resumed after the elections, we will contribute with the same spirit in order to reach a consensus, provided this consensus be impartial. It should be restricted to democratic issues, which to us represent the framework of action.

A Political Suicide for the Nasserite Party

Hossam Issa

I will not deal with the circumstances of this attempt to formulate a charter of national consensus, since Counselor and our dear brother Hussein Abdel Razeq have already done so. There was some ambiguity, at least for Nasserites, when the process of formulation of the charter was proposed. When I was asked to attend, I recalled what Hussein Abdel Razeq had said, namely, that this charter involved the question of democracy only, and laid down a framework and guarantees for democratic action.

I believe that from day one, there was an attempt to opt out of this framework. Once this was done, the minimum level of consensus would automatically change. If any plan is devised to deal with economic and social issues, the minimum level here means that we would meet half way. However, I felt differently than what Hussein Abdel Razeq claimed, namely, that the project had clear-cut boundaries. It is an absolutely liberal project that adopts the complete liberal viewpoint.

Problems might not have been raised, had the democratic issue alone been adopted from the liberal proposal. However, when we deal with economic or political issues, even by implication, it becomes impossible to proceed. This represents a political "suicide" for a party that primarily relies on the issue of social justice in its campaigns.

Our image is one of staunch defenders of social justice. When this issue is broached from a nineteenth century liberal perspective, which is different from Taha Hussein's viewpoint concerning the question of exempted education, it becomes impossible to have a meeting point. I asked the Nasserite Party not to sign this charter,

and said that doing so meant political suicide of the party. We cannot possibly accept a statement that proposes free education only in the elementary grades, while Taha Hussein extended it to the secondary level. Should we renounce Taha Hussein's proposal at a time when the issue of free education is no more raised in any country of the world except Egypt ? In France, Japan and other capitalist states, education is free of charge. Then, what is the secret behind the war waged on the poor even in the realm of education? No country in the world claims that education should not be free of charge except Egypt and the World Bank!!

The Nasserite Party could not accept this formula, which would have meant political suicide. I said that if the Party signed this statement, I would immediately resign.

A final point remains: why did the process fail?

This was not due to the lack of political parties in Egypt. While we were trying to agree on a formula for the Charter, half of the parties were busy making deals with the government over the elections, which decided in advance who would be appointed to Parliament and who would not. Why should we overburden ourselves with agreement and consensus? This is the issue, and this is the truth.

Shari'a And Women's Rights

Are the Points of Controversy

Helmi Mourad

I apologize for being late because I had to participate in another meeting. I was pleased to listen to my colleague Hossam ; he is open-minded and always seeks an idealistic picture that can only be achieved through progressive steps. We cannot move from the situation he described, and we all heard, to a vigorous national project that would save the country and make the required paradigm shift.

I was delighted with the invitation I received from the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, not because it had to do with the project of the Charter, which we exerted a great effort to produce in its final form (and was not endorsed by everybody until now). I was pleased with the invitation not merely because it concerned finalizing the national charter or attempting to overcome obstacles that hindered it, but because it linked between this topic and the elections that are currently taking place. We are witnessing a period that will have a long-term impact and serious repercussions. Unless we are careful that those elections are carried out the way we want, and unravel the mistakes and shortcomings therein, we will waste the election battle. We would even use up years to no avail, and the charter of national action would remain incomplete. As Hossam kindly indicated, any political force ascending to power can easily violate the charter. What is the guarantee? We are dealing with a paper being endorsed now, but what about tomorrow? Once any force comes to power - this is not the first time, and there are many precedents in our history - it comes up with reasons to justify using the same or even more repressive methods. Pretexts are always available, mass media are always there, temptations are numerous,

and favoritism is prevalent - oppression and restriction are also accessible in such a way as to stifle all voices. What's the worth of the charter? At present, it is worthwhile due to the elections. We should have a unanimous stand and claim guarantees and rights of both voters and candidates; without such guarantees, no elections could exist. We should request those rights firmly and disclose all violations of those guarantees.

We have not formulated this charter for ourselves but for the sake of the citizens. It has been agreed upon by all forces, except for a couple of lines that the protagonists of two different opinions could not resolve. When an Islamic party or Islamic political force claims that it wishes to preserve the stipulation in the current Constitution that "the official religion of the state is Islam", and that Shari'a (religious precepts) is the major source of legislation, the reply is: Let's postpone the discussion of this point until the time is ripe for amending the Constitution. The second point concerns women's rights. Some advocated women's rights while paying full allegiance to Islamic Shari'a, while others said it was not necessary to mention allegiance to Islamic Sharia. When we ratified the International Declaration of Human Rights in the United Nations, the Egyptian government expressed reservations about the provision stating that women had the right to marry irrespective of the difference of religion. We said: there is no need to stir up this point, and let's agree on "the rights of women while respecting beliefs and traditions". Hossam's comment on education was rectified immediately, and everybody agreed on this. Does this mean that we should not cooperate, or that we should freeze the project?

We are formulating a national charter, and I advocate a national charter that claims free and honest elections. For instance, political parties have issued a statement demanding guarantees of freedom of

elections, which has been signed by all. Let's implement this special charter on elections.

The International Parliamentary Federation issued a document including the standards that guarantee the integrity of elections. We ask for no more than that. Let this document, which has been signed by Fathi Sorour, Chairman of the People's Assembly, be implemented. It is unacceptable that we should appear before the entire world and the government overseeing those elections as though we could not achieve consensus. We agree on the fundamentals of human rights, freedom and dignity, prohibition of torture and oppression etc. Without those fundamental principles, no Egyptian citizen can implement any project, either great or small, unless the government allowed it. Without the assertion of citizens' freedom, their right to life, and respect for laws, the state and the Constitution, we would have wasted our time.

A free press that confronts realities and explains important matters should exist. Laws should be firmly applied so that citizens can be assured of their public interests, rights, and equal opportunities, that they will not be oppressed, their dignity not be violated, and that they will not be subjected to torture.

I think that the decisive point now is the elections and their guarantees, rather than searching for full and comprehensive consensus on all issues. Otherwise, the elections will be a waste of time, and will not safeguard our rights, freedoms and the future.

A Controversy over the Cultural Choice

Wahid Abdel Meguid

I have a few brief comments concerning the charter of national consensus, in light of the comments by speakers who took part in this evening's discussion. No one offered a clear picture concerning the fate of our discussion, and whether it would be shelved or postponed indefinitely.

Hossam was relatively explicit when he said that a consensus was impossible. The arguments and rebuttals of other speakers gave the impression that it was difficult to move towards ratifying a document of this magnitude. The points that have been agreed upon for a long time represent more than ninety-five percent of the document. There have been attempts since 1987 to reach a consensus - over the issue of democracy - under a different rubric, but they were not restricted to elections only. There was general agreement about democracy. But this is quite different from formulating a charter or reaching a full consensus on this matter. There are many differences between a document where we make specific claims on the government, and debate or entente over certain questions.

What's new about this experience is that the debate actually attempted to identify points of consensus and points of disagreement. Debate over the general framework of democracy should have dealt with major issues pertaining to division over the cultural choice. Until now, we have failed to find a specific way of dealing with this predicament. Controversial debates in our present discussions revolved around this division.

Because we are not ready to exert additional effort to discuss the real scope of this division, we yield to a belief that there are things we cannot change. It seems to me that there is a psychological aspect to

this problem. There is a barrier between some political forces and Islam, and another barrier between other forces and democracy. Due to mutual distrust, things escalate and the crisis is accentuated. I think that the major controversy that hindered the charter concerned the status of Islam in this document. One line of thinking considered it necessary – as Hudeibi pointed out - that the agreement be on democratic basis and in accordance with the general principles of Islam. Another line refrained from alluding to those principles. Each line had its alleged reasons and justifications. However, the problem is that when disagreement over this issue in particular accelerates, the possibilities of a dialogue become quite complex, and an atmosphere of instigation pervades the debate. Each side seeks a defensive wall to hide behind. It is quite difficult under such circumstances to bridge the gap between opposing sides. Nonetheless, in my opinion, it was possible to reach a formula of general understanding over this disagreement, in which each side found a possibility for accord over respective ambitions.

Hossam Issa probably exaggerated in his comments. The problems he raised, either on the topic of the public and private sectors, state commitment to maintain public over private property, or the topic of education, were mainly problems of verbal formulation, and have already been amended.

Hossam Issa

Public property, in our opinion, does not mean streets, roads and bridges. The problem is that the public sector, by law, is not public property but a private property of the state. What we are defending is public property sanctioned by the Constitution, namely state territories, deserts, etc.

Wahid Abdel Meguid

This issue was overstated from the outset, and it consumed a large part of the debate that should have been devoted instead to reconciling major disagreements and the main obstacles to this charter.

A final point I would like to raise concerns the value of such documents. For instance, we can say that this charter is merely a piece of paper that can be torn apart. In fact, if we are dealing with real guarantees within society itself, the starting point requires commitment by all participants. Such commitment launches a process of evolution in society, because its essence is commitment before the nation. If this commitment is obtained at the beginning of an evolutionary process, this means that this commitment will entail accountability within the process of political and social evolution. Consequently, if we underscore the importance of this action, or its prospective consequences, this will naturally result in low enthusiasm, and skepticism about its usefulness. Hence, it would ultimately fail. The importance of this process surpasses its being a simple paper. However, it would be the beginning of a political and social combat to create a propellant force that can progressively safeguard the commitments included in this charter, and commit the contributors or those signing it to what they pledged to the nation.

Maamoun El Hudeibi

I felt that some are saying that we want to impose our will on the charter. This idea did not occur to us at all. I am talking about the minimum level that I can accept and be committed to. If you wish to have a maximum level, agree with me first on the minimum, and claim the maximum you wish. I demand democracy within the bounds of Islam, and will not accept any other alternative. Whoever wants

other principles can claim them, and I cannot stop you, neither can I tell you to be committed to this charter.

When we sign the charter, we would like to be one hundred percent sincere in our agreement. I have specified the democratic system I would accept. We have presented the book WOMEN AND THE POLITICAL REGIME, where this minimum level that we agreed upon is specified in full.

You are free to request additions to this minimum level: if you want Communist parties. ask for it, non-religious parties, ask for it, or request that the stipulation on Islam being the religion of the state be removed from the Constitution. But you cannot compel me to consent to that.

DISCUSSION

The Evil of Power

Gamal Asaad

I will not discuss the question of religious factionalism. Some people know my opinion on this topic. I came to Cairo to nominate myself in the elections and to take part in a political combat. I knew I would ultimately fail because I am a Copt. But I preferred to fail in Cairo than in my own hometown, because in Cairo I would be able to organize seminars and conferences. However, I was very disappointed by the security blockade imposed on me and my colleague, the Labor Party candidate, in the same district, to such an extent that we were prevented from talking to people and distributing our papers to them.

Shouldn't parties' take a stand on this? If not now, then when?

What consensus are you seeking? Frankly speaking, there is a duel between parties, and we do not know when it will end.

Each party has its own platform. Each platform specifies the point of view of the party or political group. Let's choose the common issues and agree on them without duels.

When the Muslim Brothers were arrested, we all opposed their trial before a military court (without the need for consensus). Strangely enough, everybody now is for democracy and became staunch defenders thereof. Why? Because we were under severe pressure, and because we have nothing but democracy. However, democracy does not come through consensus, but through guarantees.

In fact, I do not feel quite comfortable with the word "guarantees"? Would government offer such "guarantees". The real

guarantees are presence in the streets, or as Hudeibi confidently said, "obtaining 90% support from citizens", i.e., he is sure that 90% of the rank and file are with him, otherwise he wouldn't have said those words. He is free to estimate as he wishes. If you can guarantee 90% of the people, you can also ensure democracy. But the most important thing is that you be democratic when you reach power, thanks to this support. That is what we wish.

Mourice Sadek

Speakers have raised the points of consensus and accord, but they all overlooked the issue of accord between Copts and parties.

This question was stirred up for the first time when the Muslim Brothers (MB) called for reconciliation between Copts and the MB's in 1990. The MB group met with me and with other key Copt leaders, but we reached no reconciliation or accord - with due respect to them. The dialogue between us was not published in Egypt, but some Arab newspapers published it. I wished the MB's would publish it because it was important and serious. Today, I was surprised to find two very strange headlines in the AL AHALI newspaper. The first story was excellent and was written by Nabil Abdel Fattah. He said that Muslim Brothers were the reason why Copts have been eliminated from political life, as they penetrated all positions, agencies and institutions to the detriment of Copts. Hence, Copts became apathetic. Also, the National Democratic Party (NDP) marginalized Copts.

In the second story, Selim El Aoua emphasized that the saying " No patronage of a non-Muslim over a Muslim" did not imply that a non-Muslim or Christian would not be appointed to a high position, and that a Christian cannot become a president of the Republic. This is the first time that we hear such words, supposedly from the Muslim Brothers. I do not know whether they were said because of the

elections, or reflect a genuine position. Furthermore, Hudeibi is saying that the MB's agree to freedom of religious rituals for any faction or sect, while Copts are prohibited from building churches and places of worship in Egypt. What I would like to say about elections and accord is that there should be a practical discussion of Copts' nomination in elections. Gamal Asaad said he would fail in elections, being a Copt. I agree to this, because the tide is high for religion, and Muslims will not elect non-Muslims.

Religious preaching now advocates, " Champion the Muslim cause". The ordinary man, according to his creed as a Muslim, cannot give his voice to Copts. So how can a Copt reach the People's Assembly? Should we suggest that a certain number of seats be devoted to Copts, as is the case with workers and farmers?

Copts do not wish to be "appointed" to Parliament, and categorically refuse what Kamal El Shazli said, namely, that the government will reconcile with Copts and appoint a number of them. We would like Copts to reach the Parliament through the joint effort of Muslims and Copts. Several alternatives have been suggested:

George Isaak suggested the first. He said that we should return to the party list system; those lists would include Copts who would be elected by people through the party list. The second, which I myself suggested, was that Copts have their own electoral districts, so that Muslims and Copts would elect them. The third alternative is that we restore the system of relative representation of Copts in specific districts. There should be a seat for Copts, another one for workers, and a third for women. Those are the three possible solutions to the problem of national reconciliation with Copts.

Hussein Abdel Fattah

I do not see that the failure of the experience of reconciliation and consensus was always related - as was claimed - to elections. Truly,

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some issues have been wrecked on the doorstep of elections, but our experience in joint action as youth's shows why the process fails. Despite its prominence, the generation, which includes respectful figures, is condemned by its own former conflicts. We, as youth, are not ill-fated. Our experiences in confrontation with Israel, the Industrial Fair, and the Book Fair are living proof that we can co-exist with the Islamic and Nasserite movements. We have been detained together, have had mutual debates, and together we confronted the prison administration. We are not doomed by animosities we have never grasped nor inherited from earlier generations, even though each line of thought attempts to force-feed us such animosities. I am not accusing anyone, I am stating a fact.

The problem with consensus is that it is not raised until political forces in Egypt feel the burden of pressures exerted on them. No political force - even though I belong to the Tagamu'- expresses its need for others when it is strong. On the contrary, this need emerges in moments of weakness and impotence vis-à-vis the state (which actually derives its power from dispersion of opposition forces). While it was at the peak of its power, the Islamic movement did not suggest this. Today, it is weaker, so it is expresses its need for others. When Marxists were at the peak of their power and predominant among the Egyptian rank-and-file at the end of the seventies, they never mentioned their need for others. The same goes for the Nasserites.

The second question is: can the charter of national accord be considered the minimum level of consensus among political forces? Or is it the maximum?

I think that, in light of the three issues raised by Hussein Abdel Razeq, serious problems have emerged and have been fostered by skepticism and mutual distrust among those forces as a result of their historical experience, despite the fact that a lot of water has run

under the bridge. Hence, the charter is considered the maximum level of agreement now.

The third issue, may Hudeibi allow me, is that I was surprised when I heard him say that when he ascends to power, he will provide the guarantees already agreed upon. In fact, I do not presuppose that any of the existing forces engaged in this dialogue assumes that it would be eligible to ascend to power. I advocate the charter of national consensus because this nation is in need of a new "outfit" that no single political "weaving machine" can produce. All weaving machines should operate together in harmony. If any side perceives that it can knit this outfit single-handedly let it go ahead. This sort of attitude has produced the present predicament of this nation.

The fourth issue is that I have noticed some kind of confusion in Hossam's speech. He finally said that he wanted a national project, and that the sole guarantee was the presence of strong political parties. The problem now is how ? If this minimum level of consensus, which is not yet a comprehensive project for general progress, cannot be achieved, we will not have generations enjoying mutual trust and cooperating to form a new homeland to opt out of the impasse. We will not be able to stop the vicious circle of violence and counter-violence in Egypt through a peaceful and democratic evolution. We will be caught in an inescapable circle of hell.

The final issue concerns a question I would like to address to Hussein Abdel Razeq. It seems to me that there is confusion between the concepts of national consensus and front. I think they are totally different, and this issue needs further clarification.

Ahmed Hassan

The last comment made by Maamoun El Hudeibi attracted my attention, particularly when he said: I am offering you a minimum that you can agree with me upon. Then, he refused to consent to the

minimum offered by others. I could not understand this logic, so please give us further explanation.

Khalil Rashad

In fact, we are dealing with the issue as if the obstacles to the proclamation of the charter were the problem, and as if the success of negotiators in proclaiming the charter would end the problem and resolve the crisis. Even when an agreement is reached over the two controversial points, what is the worth of the document?

In the final analysis, the document represents claims made by parties on the government to restrict its despotism and allow parties to participate in the political process. Suppose that the government refused to comply with the document, what then? What is the power of the document? And what is the power that parties possess vis-à-vis a government that can turn down demands included in their document, as it has done with similar documents?

The problem is not the document, or a specific formula. The predicament that this document highlights is political fragility in Egyptian society, a crisis of government, parties, people and arbitration. Parties and government consult the people, and whoever is smart and can play the political game skillfully with people can win their support. Consequently, they can either remain in power or be removed. We are excluding the people from the formula, namely, parties are addressing the government, and are making claims on the government, but do not turn to the people. Actually, parties do not possess mechanisms that include people as a major component of the formula.

The most pervasive group in the Egyptian political arena, which has been able to achieve great success, is the Muslim Brothers. Despite any disagreement with the group, we cannot argue that it gained footing on the political stage more than any other group. In

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my opinion, it achieved those gains because it shied away from the methodology of other parties, namely, filing petitions with the government. On the contrary, this group addressed the people directly, devised new methods of approaching the public, offered specific services, and gained political effectiveness. Consequently, it became a political "nightmare".

It is indicative that when the government calls for elections, it feels that the first force to be eliminated is the MB, because this is the major candidate that can have a threatening political presence. Other parties are no problem because they are groups of elite's or political salons which do not interact with the people.

I think that the main aim behind this document is null and void. In other words, its fundamental value would have been great before the elections. Parties can use the document to propose a minimum level according to which they can participate in the political game, in such a way that if this minimum level is absent, there would be no political game. The document is merely a negotiation chip that emerged at a very convenient moment. Consequently, I do not see that the document in itself is important. The major reality is the existing political weakness, and resorting to government rather than exerting more effort to mobilize people. We are often unjust toward the people when we accuse them of apathy and passivity. Actually, when the people see a serious effort, they promptly respond.

Consensus Over Identity First

Ahmed El Gammal

At first, I would like to express my reservations about the comments made by Maurice Sadek, Director of the Egyptian Center of Human Rights, of which I am a member. I see that Liberal resurgence in Egypt was preceded by a powerful popular revolution

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in 1919. Egypt did not reach liberalism in its broad sense, as this concept was defined by the 1923 Constitution. However, there was a very strong political and social movement, and there was a cohesive elite that agreed on specific national issues. The 1923 Constitution was a manifestation of a comprehensive popular upsurge, where the elite joined efforts with the people on a common ground, namely, and resisting British occupation. Later, this wave receded during the forties and the fifties, two decades, which suffered from the disintegration of political force. The situation culminated in extreme pluralism that encompassed Fascists, Communists, nationalists, Islamists, and fundamentalists (Salafis).

After the revolution, and the launching of the socialist transformation, the charter of national action was suggested. I think that this stage witnessed a national assembly, where most political forces or most intellectual and cultural movements then met. Some of them expressed themselves, while others were silenced. However, generally speaking, a national debate, which lasted over a month, took place among various forces. During the rule of President Sadat, we find the platform of national action, the paper of international variations, the October paper and finally the multi-party system in 1976. I recall here some of the meetings among various political forces to establish parties. I remember in this instance the debate among Nasserites, Marxists and Communists, which did not come to any specific agreements.

Hence, there are several moments in Egyptian history that witnessed attempts to meet over specific programs. In my opinion, which some people might interpret from a logic of conspiracy, the external factor - represented in Egypt's attitude vis-à-vis the question of national independence, Egypt's Arab stance, and plots by external powers against Egypt - played an effective role in the political shake-up in Egypt. I cannot isolate this point from what is going on in Egypt

now: those controversies, the sudden drop or the "heart attack" that besets any national meeting of this magnitude concerning various projects.. I do not see - and this is no accusation of anyone - that any line of thought can offer a comprehensive perception of liberalism, including free market and supply and demand, separately from one another which advocates national autonomy in its classical sense. Old dreams are over. We are now in an era where the world community is a small village. We are penetrating modernism and post-modernism. All that we are living through now cannot be isolated from the issue of "Mediterranianism". Today, Egypt is returning to the question of identity - before an agreement is reached over a common ground. We are returning again to dualities of "war or no peace", "Arabization or Mediterranianization", "fundamentalism or renovation", "authenticity or modernity ". It is logical to raise those issues again now, when the Zionist enemy is preparing to become the super-power of the region.

I would like to say that specific issues like national autonomy, identity, and belonging have stirred up colossal controversies among the ranks of the Egyptian elite. Consequently, those who cannot agree on the meaning and content of their identity and belonging in terms of geography, history, civilization and culture will not find a common political ground. Politics is a form of expressing civilization and culture, which ultimately shape the identity and progress of nations.

Today, for example, had Hudeibi - whom I respect and revere - been confident that if he counted the votes of 90% of the rank-and-file he would get full support, I would ask him, why don't you run for election side by side with an Egyptian Copt since you guarantee this majority? Let this behavior pervade other districts: this will be the best indication of the seriousness of your suggestion.

Things lose credibility because there are specific issues that have not been broached at all. Concerning the external factor and conflict

in the region, probably Egyptian Liberals feel safer when they have international support, since it is desired that the American model of free market, pluralism, civil society, etc. pervade the region. If we observe the situation around us, we will find tribal systems like Qatar being oriented toward municipal elections, and the Sultanate of Oman forming a Consultative Council.

We cannot meet to put forth a charter of national consensus, national coalition, or national front, unless we could be decisive over Egypt's role in the world. The problem of "the egg first or the chick" persists: should we begin with the local or the external arena ? I think that it is a complementary process, and that we should not isolate the external factor.

Gaber Gad Nassar

I'm afraid that long experience with political despotism turned the elite's attention in this nation to trivial phenomena. Consequently, they overlooked the roots or important factors, which can remedy all simple and superficial problems.

The idea of national consensus among parties probably contradicts the concept of party itself. The party is a political organization, which seeks power. When the Egyptian law or Constitution mentioned political parties, it did not provide this definition, but stipulated that the party "shares government responsibilities". In this way, it is desirable to have parties to sit beside the ruler to entertain him, to provide him with legitimacy, or to perpetuate his continuity. The question is: did political totalitarianism lead parties to become unconscious of their basic interests, instead of creating democratic political mechanisms inside Egypt or guarantees for the transfer of power within the party itself? We notice that all Egyptian parties revolve around a particular figure: we cannot imagine that a party like the Wafd can survive without its leadership. The same is true for

the Tagamu' and other parties. Therefore, people fear that any candidate for government can turn despotic because they are not used to the mechanism of the transfer of power. This is applicable to the Islamic, secularist and Communist movements. On the other hand, it is totally different in the West. In France, for example, they are not afraid if the National Front reaches power, despite its extremism, because when it does, it will be committed to the existing mechanisms. When Egyptian parties wake up and claim those mechanisms, some of them paradoxically coalesce with the authorities. Some parties participate in elections, while others boycott them; hence, opposition in the People's Assembly does not surpass 10-15 members. Practically, we are not dealing with opposition per se, or political life, or collective thought. There is only one thought, one autocratic political orientation, albeit some "spicy" additions.

Consequently, the idea of national consensus should be preceded by the idea of common consensus over the mechanism of the exercise of power, even within each party.

Concerning fellow Copt brethren, I think that no candidate can run for elections and win, whether Muslim or Copt, without the help of the government. The problem is the barrenness of the political regime, and the absence of mechanisms for the exercise of power. The problem of Copts should be resolved within the framework of the predicament of the nation and not within vicious circles. The crisis lies in the despotism of the ruling regime. Confrontation of the crisis is a confrontation of despotism.

Shafie Shalabi

I am honored to be the coordinator of the national consensus committee and to have been directly delegated by Egyptian trade unions during my work as president of the preliminary committee for decision-execution of the conference on freedoms and civil society. I

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would like to point out that when trade unions called for an assembly for national debate in February 1994, and the conference on freedoms and civil society in October 1994, I was keen to invite all banned parties and political forces. Among the recommendations of the conference was a plea addressed to all parties and political forces to devise rules for joint action that transcend differences, which would be called the document of national accord.

Despite the fact that this endeavor has not yet been completed, it is on the way to completion. Several principles have been unanimously agreed upon, and all parties and forces were keen to participate therein. This is an unprecedented event in the history of this nation. Political forces are aware that the hazards they experienced brought disasters and defeats to the country. Then, it was necessary that they work together to lay the foundations and rules for joint action. This issue, they thought, should be viewed seriously and be dealt with quite responsibly, because it concerned the fate of the country.

A quick comment on what Helmi Mourad and others mentioned about what is called the "document of party leaders." We should not confuse a document that claims integrity in the election of the President of the Republic, and the charter of national accord. In the latter, we are not dealing with claims but with rules of joint action; we are not suggesting those claims to the President or any other authority.

To say that the agreement failed is incorrect. A serious effort has been underway since the general assembly of trade unions on freedoms and civil society met on 14 October. Committee action began only in February, as indicated. All political forces presented their papers and suggested their viewpoints in order to reach an inclusive formula. I claim that the controversial issues are agreed

upon. There are only a few sentences to be dealt with in the final version.

I finally say that elections are a contingent event and should not affect our mission. On the contrary, they should bolster it.. It is my belief that the general will and desire is the perpetuation of the accord and the principles agreed upon in order to tightly formulate the document. The mechanisms of implementing the charter will be discussed later.

Dina Aboul Fotouh

I feel that what we are doing is a waste of time, because the majority of forces involved in the preparation of the charter of national accord suffer from isolation from the public. Hence, the charter can rightly be described as a charter of accord among minorities. None of us went to the universities to evaluate how many students belong to various parties. The sweeping majority of the student community does not participate in party activity. We can probably exclude the Muslim Brothers, who have a strong presence in the university. In my opinion, it would be better for parties to invest this time in socializing people. There are growing fears of neo-imperialism, which imposes the issue of identity to counter those fears. Parties should concentrate their efforts on socializing the public, particularly the youth. The monopoly of key positions inside parties by elderly figures is a sign of the scarcity of young members within parties.

Ahmed Ezz Eddin

In my opinion, disagreement over the national charter is a healthy sign, because we do not want rubber-stamp committees that would agree from the first session on inherently controversial matters. If we agree that parties lack popularity while the Islamic movement

doesn't, the question is: what is the source of its popular appeal? Surely, the Islamic movement has a particular commitment. Consequently, when we say to the Muslim Brothers, "If you want to agree on the accord, you have to renounce the question of Shari'a," we are actually asking them to forsake their belief and commitment toward people. I wonder who deserves more concern: the people or unpopular parties?

The logical and natural order is that the Islamic movement should remain with the people even if it contravenes all parties. We cannot ask the MB's to renounce their beliefs and abandon their commitment to the public in order to achieve agreement with the parties.

Alaa Qa'oud

I will discuss a point concerning the people's attitude toward Islamic Shari'a. In fact, I have learned in my study of law that a referendum should be called to evaluate voters' opinions on specific points (yes/no). Consequently, no one can call for a referendum over Shari'a precepts, simply because the question of Shari'a is too controversial to be a yes/no matter. If Hudeibi wants to do so, he should first indicate how Shari'a views a number of questions, such as Copts, non-Muslims (Ahl Al Dhimma) and women. Shari'a should be put in clear-cut, specific and detailed statements, and when this is done, there can be a referendum.

Otherwise, the question of a referendum on Shari'a betrays the essential meaning of a referendum. The view of Shari'a attitude toward the question of women's rights, for instance, should be clarified. We find that the four Shar'i schools classify women's rights in some cases under the rights of slaves. The same is true for the question of non-Muslims.

The second point concerns the concept of majority and minority. In a democratic system, majority and minority should be open, i.e., individuals should be able to side with either the majority or the minority moving from one to the other, depending on the issue. Hence, it is unsound to speak of majority and minority on the basis of a religious classification, which hinders the idea of open majority or minority. According to democratic theory, majority and minority should not be categorized on religious grounds.

Final Comments

Consensus or Deals?

<u>Hossam Issa</u>

The ambiguity of the idea is true, and I said I found it quite unclear. From the outset, it was suggested that the NDP be invited to participate, why ? Liberalism has idealistic principles, according to which everybody should be present. But this party governs Egypt, and has turned it into a gloomy and melancholy entity over the years. Supposedly, we want to change the system that seeks to bolster an anti-democratic, totalitarian and anti-popular system. So, why solicit the ruling party?

I cannot understand, for example, that Maamoun El Hudeibi would sit with an NDP representative to discuss common principles of democracy, while some MB leaders are awaiting a military court prison sentence. I say that the idea might be appealing if we agreed on fundamental principles to alter the existing situation, which is more and more intolerable, rather than seek to overthrow the regime. Change means forming a powerful popular consensus over concepts of the minimum level of democracy, which can save the nation from its predicament. The problem is how to reach an agreement over the desired minimum level of democracy and create this popular movement while several parties are negotiating and making agreements with the government over elections (which are supposed to be the basic tool of change). If some are negotiating five, ten or even twenty parliamentary seats, it is inconceivable that those parties can promulgate change.

Another problem is that we agree on democratic principles, mainly that the transfer of power should be respected. However,

parties that consent to those fundamental democratic principles do not practice those principles. For example, the Constitution is repeatedly violated, yet none of those "liberal" parties object because this violation achieves their goals. Had they been genuinely liberal, they should have attempted to amend the Constitution in such a way as to achieve their objectives, instead of being voiceless. Putting the public sector on sale (privatization) serves the purposes of the Wafd Party. Nevertheless, it cannot be sold under the current Constitution, which stipulates that, "preservation of the public sector is a national duty and its devastation is a crime." The genuine liberal should strive to amend the constitution before privatizing the public sector. But to applaud for the sale yet claims to be liberal is inconceivable. How can I believe that such people would respect the constitution we are designing? I think that the Constitution should be reformed where it is no longer adequate. It should be modified first, then laws should be devised, but we would not accept a law that breaches the Constitution.

Despite the fact that I have a different interpretation of the question of Islamic Shari'a being the major source of legislation, I see that this provision is not addressed to the judiciary, exactly like the stipulation that the official religion of the state is Islam. However, the predicament of the Constitutional Court is that the application of the Constitution, according to its perception, means changing a whole body of laws, canceling bank interest and modifying the entire banking system. The Court attempted to opt out of this dilemma by stating that the text applies to laws that have been introduced since the 1981 Constitutional reform, and those preceding this date would remain unchanged. This is not feasible because the Constitution is the fundamental law that gives meaning and life to all laws either preceding or succeeding it.

Hussein Abdel Razeq

I will summarize my comments in specific points. The first is that I do not believe that the suggested charter was intended to form a front or to petition the government. What was suggested - even if it was not fully achieved - was a mutual pledge by all political forces, whether in power or not, to be committed to specific issues. In other words, the Egyptian government would, for the first time, have a true democratic basis, power could be transferred through elections, etc. Consequently, the charter is addressed to public opinion rather than to government. Any person reading it would find that we are not saying "demands". In this context, a disagreement is flaring up now over the stipulation "that application be within the bounds of Islamic principles". It emanates from a specific intellectual perception that I do not accept. Truly, I am a Muslim, but they think that Islam is a religion and state, and that "the Qur'an is our Constitution," etc. I n my opinion, religion should not mix with politics. I am not asking Hudeibi to abandon his opinion, neither should he ask me to abandon mine, because the issue has nothing to do with the mechanisms of democratic action, and this is the problem. It is not true that we have collided with each other - what Helmi Mourad said is not true, because we discussed this point in four sessions. Maamoun El Hudeibi did not attend the last session and Helmi Mourad said he would speak for the Muslim Brothers. We reached an agreement, and started to sign it: Fouad Sirag Eddin, then Khaled Mohei Eddin, Milad Hanna, then Aboul Ela Madi. Then, a crisis emerged, and a meeting was held to discuss it. Adel

Hussein attended as representative of the Labor Party for the first time, but Hudeibi didn't show up, and said he did not want to attend and cause problems, because he had formerly clashed with Said El Naggar. We reached an agreement that all attendants signed. Helmi Mourad proposed to present it to the Muslim Brothers. Then it was

revealed that they did not accept the agreement. Then, elections were held and the issue was postponed. I am not appealing to Hudeibi to abandon the minimum level, but the problem is that he is demanding the maximum level. "Accept it, and renounce all your principles." But I won't, nor will I ask him to do so. We should proceed with the mechanisms of democratic action.

As for the weakness of parties and the power of the MB, one cannot argue that all parties, whether those officially recognized or those lacking legitimacy suffer from extreme feebleness. The analysis of this phenomenon is time-consuming, but whoever lived through 1967 to 1977 realizes that the picture was not the same. On the contrary, the Left was quite effective inside the university. We were imprisoned, tried and falsely convicted. Some forces did not support us then. Today, the Islamic movement in its various forms, mainly the Muslim Brothers, is the most effective and omnipresent force. All other forces support it, but there are reasons for this, some of them due to the nature of the regime and others related to the current party leadership (including me), in addition to international and Arab conditions, etc.

A final point is worthwhile: Hossam Issa insisted that some parties sided with the government. I would like to know them, because some newspapers claimed that the Wafd did, and I am positive that it did not, nor did it make any deals with the regime, nor did the Nasserites or the Tagamu'. It was also published that Maamoun El Hudeibi met with Kamal El Shadhli. If we believe rumors, we will unintentionally destroy the idea of pluralism. Every party is accused of being a government agent or an agent of Sudan. When the Tagamu' is said to side with the government, I criticize it. I even did so in a book, and I am still in the Tagamu' leadership. It is inconceivable to accuse all political parties of "playing" on the government's side. I hope we will see specific evidence, instead of believing political gossip.

Maamoun El Hudeibi

I would like to explain to Maurice Sadek that we haven't had any talks for an accord between you and us because we haven't had any disagreements. The Imbaba incidents took place, and it was said that a church was burnt. We said that this is an irregularity, and that we ought to sit together as partners to discuss the methods of rectifying it. We had no disagreements, you did not represent Copts, and neither did we represent Muslims. We were a group of Copt and Muslim elite discussing a phenomenon that emerged in society and that called for an immediate solution.

There was consensus and there still is. When I knew that Saad Fakhri Abdel Nour was a candidate in the Waili district, and that another Muslim candidate raised the slogan, " No patronage of a non-Muslim over a Muslim." I said, "On our behalf, state that this rule cannot be applicable, because patronage is for the entire Assembly and not a single individual." By the same token, we replied to the thesis that women should have no patronage over men, and consequently should be admitted to Parliament.

We clearly emphasized that Copts should be appropriately represented in the People's Assembly. They are part of the nation, and we cannot deny an important section of the nation full partnership and the enjoyment of all rights.

In the 1987 legislative elections, Gamal Asaad was on top of the MB and the Islamic Coalition's list in Assiut. The general guide issued several supportive statements. Assad's list succeeded thanks to the Ikhwan's great effort. When he came to me this time and asked to nominate himself in the Dokki district, I welcomed the idea. However, I asked him to study the region and assess the people's tendencies. The conditions of those elections did not allow any Copts to nominate themselves due to government bias and court martial

trials. However, we supported Copt nominees through the Labor Party.

Concerning the Charter, I agree with Hossam Issa. The idea was that we agree first on specific issues, but we did not want to discuss additional issues. We thought we should establish a popular bloc and a popular movement. It would be nonsense not to address the public and urge it to claim a resurgence movement. We were hoping to usher in the agreement with a popular movement that would impose a popular will in elections where freedom and integrity are guaranteed. Hence, I objected to inviting the NDP, but then said, invite the NDP, but I am sure no one will show up.

I think that the points I presented pertain to mechanisms of action and shy away from controversial issues. I said that when we agree on the mechanisms, we might agree on other issues. It is necessary to agree on something, and we should support each other because freedoms are "taken" and not "given". Citizens should realize that the price of freedom is many sacrifices.

Whoever seeks freedom should work hard, because an intellectual movement cannot flourish under a restriction of freedoms. We advocate an abolition of restrictions that prevent citizens from expressing their ideas and thoughts. We should begin with freedoms: without them no effort will bear fruit.

Wahid Abdel Meguid

Finally, I thank all the speakers. I think that the issue has been discussed in a preliminary way, but needs further discussion in future meetings.

Appendix 1[*]
Glossary

- ### 50% representation of workers and peasants:

    This principle was sealed in the "Charter of National Action" ratified by the National Conference of Popular Forces on May 21st, 1962. It allocates 50% representation for workers and peasants in all political and popular organizations and representative bodies. This principle is still enshrined in the Permanent Constitution proclaimed in 1971.

- ### Abbas Madany: (1931 -)

    In 1954, Madany joined the Revolutionary Committee for Unity and Action of the Liberation Front. He was a member of the first of the provincial popular councils between 1969 and 1974. He was arrested in 1982 in relation to unrest in Algeria. He headed the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria, established in 1989. The FIS was dissolved in March 1992 after winning the first round of parliamentary elections. In 1995, Madany was put under house arrest.

- ### Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakeby:

    (1854-1902) Born in Aleppo, Syria. In addition to his study of religious and linguistic disciplines, he studied natural sciences. He was chosen chief of Aleppo province. In Syria, he worked as a lawyer and published a paper titled "Al-Shahba'a." Because of intimidations by the Turkish authorities, he moved to Cairo in 1889, and wrote in

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[*] *A list of key names, movements , and terms.*

Al-Mu'ayad newspaper against Turkish despotism. The focal point of his political thought is the concept of despotism. He called for the East pursuing the road of democracy with consideration to its peculiar conditions. Among his works are: The Traits of Despotism and the Downfall of Servitude, and The Mother of Towns.

- Abdel-Razek al-Sanhury:(1895 - 1971)

Legal jurist and scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, Shari'a, international law and sources of law. He is now considered the most prominent legal juristic persona in the Egyptian civic culture. He held many political and administrative posts: Dean of Law school (1936), twice Minister of Education (45-6 and 47), President of the Council of State (1945-54). He is the drafter of the civil codes in Egypt and a number of Arab countries. His politics were closer to the Wafd party. Al-Sanhury supported the 1952 revolution and participated in drafting the well-known "six principles" announced by the Revolutionary Command Council. He also drafted the statement of King Farouk's abdication, as well as the agricultural reform law. During the 1954 crisis, he joined those calling for constitutional government, the dissolution of the Revolutionary Command Council and free presidential elections, and was hence deposed from his post as the president of the Council of State. He consequently applied himself exclusively to scholarly work in Egypt and other Arab countries. In 1970, al-Sanhury was awarded the state merit prize in social sciences by president Nasser.

- Abdullah al-'Alaily:

Arab thinker, proponent of Pan-Arabism and advocate of Arab revivalism in the forties. The "Pan-Arab Constitution" is considered one of his most important contributions. Al-'Alaily combined Pan-Arabist drives and European bourgeois Pan Arabist views.

Fathi Yakan:

A prominent Arab thinker. One of the theorists of the Islamic movement and the Muslim Brothers. He concerns himself with the questions of the activist aspect of the movement.

Hassan al-Banna:

Founder of the Muslim Brothers. He was born in Beheira, Egypt, and brought up in a religious environment that affected his intellectual formation. As a youth he joined a Sufi order, and was active in charity work. During his student years in Damanhur, he participated in demonstrations and other activities in the context of the 1919 revolution. During his study of Islamic sciences in Cairo, he joined several religious societies. In 1928, he founded the Muslim Brothers and started establishing branches for the group in Cairo and other governorates. He formed the "jihad regiments" which undertook the assassination of Chancellor al-Khazendar and prime minister al-Nuqrashy, and later attempted to assassinate president Nasser. Al-Banna was assassinated in Cairo at orders by King Farouk.

Hassan al-Turaby:

Sudanese Islamic political thinker and leader. Studied law at the university of London and the Sorbonne. Under his leadership since the sixties, the Islamic movement in Sudan underwent broad transformations in its propositions and performance, which came to be characterized by pragmatism and great flexibility. Turaby held ministerial posts under Numeiri after the reconciliation between the Muslim Brothers and the regime in 1977. He and his disciples contributed directly in drafting the renowned Islamic laws of September 1983 that launched the rule of Sharia in Sudan. Currently

he is the speaker of the National Assembly (parliament) and Secretary General of the Popular Convention (the sole legal party). He is considered the mastermind of the current regime, and has great influence on Islamic movements outside Sudan.

- ## Ibrahim Shoukry:

Chairman of the Socialist Labor Party, established in December 1987. Previously, Shoukry had been a member of the ruling Arab Socialist Misr Party and the Arab Socialist Union. Roots of the Socialist Labor Party go back to the thirties, especially to the Young Egypt Party of Ahmad Hussien. In 1950, Shoukry was elected to the Parliament. The SLP has an Islamic orientation, specifically after it allied with the Muslim Brothers in 1987.

- ## 'Isam al-'Iryan:

As a student, he was one of the leaders of the Muslim Brothers in university. He was elected to the parliament upon the alliance of the Brothers with the Labor Party in 1987. Elected Assistant Secretary General of the Medical Syndicate. He was arrested in 1995 at the head of a group of Muslim Brothers' leaders, and charged with membership of an outlawed underground group. The case was subsequently referred to a military court which sentenced him to five years in prison.

- Jamal Abdel-Nasser:

(1918-1970) Born in Bani-Murr village in the province of Assiut, upper Egypt. Graduated from the military academy in 1938. Participated in the 1948 war in Palestine. Founder of the "Free Officers" organization, which took power in July 1952 and founded

the republic in June 1953. In 1956, he was elected president, which he held until his death in 1970. Nasser stood for pan-Arabism, and supported the struggles of Arab and African peoples for independence.

- Mahfouz Nehnah:

One of the leaders of the Islamic movement in Algeria. Participated in founding the "Guidance and Uprightness Society", the biggest religious charity association in Algeria. He has been severally detained for his political and missionary activism that extends for more than twenty years. He founded the Movement of the Islamic Society (Hamas) in December 1990. Ran for presidency in November 1995, and came second to president el-Amin Zurwal. The Movement received 69 seats in the parliamentary elections of June 1997.

- Michael 'Aflaq:

Syrian intellectual and writer. In 1940, he founded the Arab Ba'ath (renaissance) Party, which in 1952 united with the Arab Socialist Party founded by Akram Hourany to create the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party. It stressed Pan Arabism unity and socialism as the three forces Arab society should embrace in order to rejuvenate the Arab world. Although politically different, two branches of the Ba'ath party have been in power in Syria and Iraq since the sixties. Among his works are: The Common Destiny Battle for Renaissance, On Pan Arabism and Socialism. Aflaq was expelled from the Syrian Ba'ath party in 1966.

- Muhammad Abdou: (1849 - 1905)

Born in Beheirah, Egypt. He studied at al-Azhar and was not convinced of the methods of teaching. Hence he later called for the reform of al-Azhar. He was greatly influenced by Jamaludin al-Afghany who called for an "Islamic League." In 1877, he received Alemia (doctorate) degree from al-Azhar. He was appointed professor of history in the school of Islamic sciences, and professor of literature in the School of Languages. He was banished from Egypt for supporting the Urabi revolt against the British occupation In Paris, along with al-Afghany, he published "Al-Urwa Al-Wuthqa" (The Secure Bond) newspaper as the organ of the underground society of the same name. Its aims included the call for an Islamic league, denouncing despotism and colonialism. In 1888, he came back to Egypt, where he was appointed a year later as the Grand Mufti. Abdou called for renovating Islamic thought. Among his books are: The Message of Monotheism, and Islam: the Religion of Science and Civilization.

- Muhammad Selim al-Awwa:

A prominent Egyptian intellectual and lawyer. He is considered one of the symbols of the enlightened Islamic trend. Member of the Board of Trustees of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR).

- Nasserists:

They derive their thought generally from the Egyptian political experience under the rule of Jamal Abdel-Nasser (1952-70), and the principal intellectual and political instruments of the 1952 revolution: "The Philosophy of the Revolution" and the "Charter of National Action." Nasserists call for "Freedom, Socialism and Unity." They advocate pan-Arab nationalism, the Arab character of Palestine, and the attainment of social justice as based on the concept of Arab socialism.

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They have a considerable political influence in Egypt and the Arab world. In 1992, a court order allowed for the establishment and the legal recognition of a Nasserist party in Egypt, after the Committee of Parties' Affairs of the parliament had denied it several times. .

- Preachers not Judges:

Written by Hassan al-Hudaiby, the second supreme guide of the Muslim Brothers (died in 1973). He was imprisoned in the late sixties as a critique to the concept of *takfir* -- the idea that society as a whole lives in a state of apostasy. The book included clear criticism of al-Mawdoudy, and implicitly refuted Sayyed Qutb's book "Signposts on the Road," which is considered the bible of the radical Islamic movement. It stresses that the task of the Muslim Brothers is to propagate Islam within society.

- Rachid al-Ghannoushy:

Leader of the Islamic Revival Movement in Tunisia, which was formerly called the Tunisian Islamic Movement. Al-Ghannoushy became president of the IRM in 1981. In September 89, al-Ghannoushy had to leave Tunisia upon being accused of expressing extremist views.

- Sakifat (shed) Bani Sa'eda:

Refers to the first meeting held after the death of Prophet Muhammad to discuss the selection of a Caliph, where a dispute occurred among the first generation of the Prophet's companions. The dispute took place when the Muhajerin (the Muslims of Mecca who immigrated with the Prophet) felt that the Muslims of Medina who supported the Prophet (Al-Ansaar) were seeking to occupy the

place the former had held among the Arabs before Islam. The matter was resolved by pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr as Caliph.

- Saleh 'Ashmawy:

One of the historic leaders of the Muslim Brothers. Held the post of Deputy Supreme Guide under the third Supreme Guide Umar al-Telmisany. Subsequently, and due to internal struggles, he was excluded from leadership posts.

- Sheikh Abdel-Maguid al-Zendany:

Head of the Shura council and one of the doctrinal leaders of the Yemeni "Reform Party" known for its Islamic orientation. In the last elections of April 1997, the Reform party received 51 out of 301 parliamentary seats.

- Tagammu Party:

Established in 1976 as the left-wing of the three platforms which president Sadat had allowed within the then ruling Socialist Union. The Tagammu (officially the National Progressive Unionist Congregation) seeks to defend the interests of workers, peasants, and national productive capitalism, as well as women and the youth. Tagammu advocates democracy, socialism and pan-Arabism. The party's chairman is Khaled Mohi el-Din, one of the leaders of the "Free Officers." Five members in the parliament represent it.

- Tarek al-Birshry:

A prominent Egyptian intellectual. He is a sitting Chancellor at the Council of State. Among his works are: Democracy and the July Revolution, the Political Movement in Egypt 1945 - 1952.

- The National Dialogue:

In October 1993, at the outset of president Mubarak's third term in office, he called for a "national dialogue" to formulate national consensus on societal problems, with a focus on combating terrorism. The opposition forces called for extending the subject-matter of the dialogue to include radical political reforms such as the amendment of the constitution. The dialogue included representatives of political parties, NGOs, universities, professors' associations, media personnel, writers, professional syndicates and specialized national councils. The Wafd and Nasserist parties boycotted the dialogue, and the Muslim Brothers were excluded. Most estimations agree that the dialogue ended with rather meager results.

- The New Wafd Party:

Presents itself as the continuation of the old Wafd Party, the traditions of the 1919 revolution and the historic leadership of Sa'd Zaghloul. The current head of the party, Fouad Sirag-el-Din, had been among the youthful leaders of the old party and had held the post of interior minister before 1952. The party preaches political, economic and intellectual liberalism and market economy. After its establishment in 1987, president Sadat ordered the disfranchisement of some of its leaders under the pretext of having corrupted political life before the 1952 revolution, which led the party to freeze its activities. On October 29th, 1983, a court order permitted the New Wafd Party to resume political activity. Moreover, its leaders were rehabilitated in February 1984. In 1984, the

New Wafd allied with the Muslim Brothers in the parliamentary elections and won a number of seats. In the elections of 1987, it received 30 parliamentary seats.

- The Popular Arab Islamic Congress:

Established in the early 90's for the purpose of approximating the views of Pan-Arabist and Islamic organizations in the Arab and Islamic world. The first session of the PAIC was held in December 1993 in Khartoum, Sudan, and was attended by representatives from fifty Arab and Islamic countries.

- Umar Abd al-Rahman:

Born in 1938 in Daqahliyah, Egypt. Taught at al-Azhar university. His judgment of Sadat as "an apostate ruler," was the religious basis on which the Jihad organization depended in assasinating the president. He was chosen leader of the Jama'a Islamiyah upon its breaking away from the Jihad in 1981. He wrote a number of books, among them: The Types of Rulers and their Judgment, and A Word of Truth. He is currently imprisoned in the U.S. for involvement in the explosion at the World Trade Center.

- The Yemeni war:

In 1994, Yemen witnessed a civil war lasting for two months between the separatist Southern forces lead by vice president Ali Salem al-Baidh and governmental forces loyal to president Ali Abdullah Saleh. The war ended on July 7th, 1994, when Saleh's troops marched into Aden which had been proclaimed by the separatist as capital of a southern state. It is noteworthy that a North-South unity accord was signed in 1990 while the armed forces remained divided.

Appendix 2*

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
Salon Ibn Rushd

6/5/1995

Renovating Islamic Political Thought
within the Framework of Democracy and Human Rights

In their heated debates with Islamic political groups, most political movements and forces claim that these groups put forth intellectual formulae incompatible with democratic discourse (such as pluralism, peaceful transfer of power, popular sovereignty, etc.) or human rights discourse (such as equality between men and women, freedom of belief and expression, freedom of conscience, etc.)

General criticisms addressed to Islamic political thought are supported by the fact that Islamic forces that have acceded to power in some countries have turned to totalitarianism in practice. On the other hand, Islamic groups contending for power in other countries lack specific and clear-cut attitudes towards democracy and human rights as they have been formulated and endorsed by the general human experience through arduous struggle.

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* The four papers presented herein constitute the background papers for the five salons that are grouped and included in this book. Those papers we extended to the participants along with the invitations.

Others, particularly sympathizers with Islamic political thought and activist groups, argue that political Islam possesses the elements necessary to realize all aspects of democracy and human rights. They assert that the criticisms to political Islam stem either from misleading or mistaken interpretations of history, or from interpretations based on experiences which are not necessarily binding to others. In this context, some advanced ideas on those two topics have been suggested recently. They are worthy of discussion and contemplation.

As a matter of fact, treating these perspectives on the basis of enlightened understanding and debate is one of the most important solutions to a problem preoccupying those in the Arab political and intellectual arena. Furthermore, such a debate would spare the region further human rights violations, which occur as a result of the collision between advocates of these perspectives and their opponents.

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
Salon Ibn Rushd
26/11/1994
Renovating the Progressive/Marxist Movement
in the Framework of Democracy and Human Rights

Progressive thought has been highly esteemed in the Egyptian and Arab intellectual arena. In the wake of the Second World War, it was a major factor in the rise of an Egyptian progressive movement that played a prominent role in the Pan Arabist tide in Egypt, and enabled the Egyptian people to withstand great foreign challenges. Moreover, progressive thought and the progressive movement achieved many important accomplishments at the local level.

However, progressive thought and movement have been severely shaken

since the mid-seventies. Their major premises have been widely criticized, especially those related to democracy and human rights. Due to many factors, the progressive movement has receded to such an extent that for some it has lost its attractiveness and influence in recent years, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Hence, progressivists have been moved to search for the causes of the deterioration of the movement and to revisit the major concepts of all progressive schools of thought, in the light of the internal and external transformations, in order to cope with them effectively.

It is important in this context to identify the viewpoints that seek to breathe new life into the body of progressive thought, and the way in which they approach the issues of democracy and human rights. Some claim that the progressive thought and movement still have an opportunity to present themselves as an intellectual and political

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alternative capable of achieving progress and prosperity for Egypt, despite the presence of other contending perspectives with different approaches to democracy and human rights (most prominently the liberal and Islamic perspectives.) In this regard, the question is to what extent can the renovating progressive thought take into its consideration the entrenchment of democracy and human rights, and the guarantees necessary to uphold them, on the level of internal organization, the modi operandi, the political program and relations with the others.

Abdel Ghaffar Shukr's study "Towards a New Progressive Movement in Egypt," which was published by *Al Ahali* newspaper between 20 July and 17 August 1996, is a pioneer effort in this domain. (Enclosed is an introduction by Shukr that will be distributed to the esteemed guests for discussion in the Salon.) In order to shed light on the issue of renovating the progressive movement and the position of the issues of democracy and human rights vis a vis this process, the CIHRS is holding a forum on this issue which is certainly one of the top-priority issues on the Arab as well as the international levels.

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
Salon Ibn Rushd
28/1/1995
Renovating Pan Arabist Thought
within the Framework of Democracy and Human Rights

For nearly seven decades, pan-Arab Pan Arabist discourse has occupied an eminent place in Arab political thought and action. Pan Arabist forces succeeded in gaining power in a number of central Arab states (e.g. Egypt, Syria, Iraq), which put to the test their ability to achieve the goals adopted by this discourse. Most prominent among these objectives are: overcoming divisions and nation-state schisms to achieve unity; confronting imperialist and Zionist projects; and progress in the social, economic and other spheres.

An evaluation of this experience reveals that pan-Arabism, in thought and in practice, has failed repeatedly and needs a thoroughly critical and renovating review. Many thinkers and activists who offered several worthy contributions that call for discussion and scrutiny felt this.

In the course of the comprehensive revision that pan-Arabists have been engaged in for the past several years, democracy and human rights have emerged at the top of the agenda of issues to be revisited. Some persistently assert that these issues have been prolongedly discarded in the practice of pan-Arabist forces, and that this disregard or deficient practice were real impediments to the effectiveness and credibility of the Pan Arabist call.

Whether the shortcomings as regards democracy and human rights may be ascribed to deficiencies in the nature of pan-Arabist thought itself, or if they stemmed from the inconsistent

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
Salon Ibn Rushd
17/10/1994
The Debate between Islamists and Other Political Forces
A Mechanism to Reinforce
Democracy And Human Rights

Polarization and reciprocal adversity between Islamist tendencies and other political forces in the Arab countries impact adversely on human rights in more than one Arab country. This effect is even exacerbated when violent confrontations erupt, as in the case of Egypt and Algeria. On the other hand, dialogue constitutes a peaceful approach that may ensure ending violent tensions and polarization between the Islamists and other political trends. It may provide more effective guarantees in the political environment of human rights.

Recent experiences indicate that dialogue is an essential and recommended approach, albeit an uneasy one. The collapse of dialogue, or maybe misusing its mechanisms, has led to civil war in Yemen. Moreover, the exclusion of Islamists from the national dialogue in Egypt has greatly undermined its validity. Whereas there is hope for an effective dialogue in Algeria, nothing as yet indicates the establishment of sufficient bases and guarantees for its success.

Democratic intellectuals hold part of the responsibility for the fragility of the concept of dialogue as an approach for establishing sufficient guarantees for democratic transformation and human rights. It is about time that they fulfill their responsibility in enriching the concept of dialogue and establishing it on firm bases.

This seminar aims at tackling this task through exploring the meaning of the required debate, the conditions of its viability, its framework, and its content as an approach for ensuring the respect of human rights in the Arab world.

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
Salon Ibn Rushd
18/11/1995
The National Accord Charter
And Public Elections In Egypt

The People's Assembly elections, due to be held by the end of November, represent an excellent opportunity to shed some light on the conditions of human rights and public freedoms in Egypt and to crystallize national consensus on the need for respect of these rights and freedoms.

Undoubtedly, the issues of basic rights and freedoms will be raised within the context of these elections. However, they could be much more strongly and effectively presented as the most important elections-related issue if they were the subject of a coordinated and unified stand by a number of political forces and public figures.

The National Consensus Accord project was launched at the end of last year during the third conference organized by the Committee for Coordination between Professional Syndicates under the title "Towards a Civil Society." In this conference the idea of a national consensus accord, having at its core the support for peaceful democratic development and guaranteeing respect for human rights, was put forward.

Almost a year later, the project still stumbles facing many impediments that are mainly caused by political differences on specific aspects of the project. Failure to reach an agreement on those controversial aspects denies the people the opportunity to receive a unified and common position on democracy and human rights during the present elections.

The CIHRS takes the pleasure to invite you to take part in discussing the possibility of adopting a National Consensus Accord on the issues of democracy and human rights during the elections or immediately in their wake. The Accord should be open to all-civil society forces and public figures to join. We should not delay the declaration of an already approved position until reaching consensual formulations on the controversial aspects. In this context, other ideas or alternatives may be put forward to entrench or deepen the consensus on promoting the democratic transformation and the respect of human rights.

It is also possible, nay necessary, that discussions in Salon Ibn Rushd deal with the following topics:

- The possibility of making human rights and democracy a main issue in the current general elections.

- The possibilities of forging a common stand on democracy between political and trade union forces during the elections by adopting a national accord on the issue.

- Alternative ways and ideas to place democracy and human rights at the top of the agenda in the current elections.

- Ways to maintain the dialogue on the guarantees of peaceful democratic transformation and human rights after elections.

The CIHRS has the pleasure to invite you to participate in the discussion of these issues.

Practice of pan-Arabist rulers, there remains a virtual consensus that these two issues should be placed at the heart of the fundamental bases for reforming the pan-Arab Pan Arabist discourse at present and in the future.

LIST OF CIHRS'S PUBLICATIONS

I. Human Rights Debates:

Human Rights Guarantees Under Palestinian Self-Rule Authority.
1- Part One: The Political and Legal Considerations. English & Arabic.
2- Part Two: The Cultural Considerations

Under Print
3- Human Rights Under Totalitarian Regimes: The Case of Sudan 1989.
4- Human Rights Guarantees of the Palestinian Refugees Under the Current Peace-Process.
5- Stumbling of the Political Liberalization in Egypt and Tunisia.

II. Intellectual Initiatives Booklets:

1- Sectarianism and Human Rights, Violette Dagueree (Lebanon).
2- The Victim and the Executioner, Haytham Manna (Syria)
3- The Civil and Political Rights in the Arab Constitutions, Fateh Azzam (Palestine). In Arabic & English.
4- Human Rights in the Arab Islamic Culture, Haytham Manna (Syria). In Arabic & English.
5- Human Rights- The Right to Participate, Ahmad Abdallah (Egypt)
6- Human Rights – The New Vision, Moncef Al Marzouki (Tunisia).
7- Citizenship in the Arab Islamic History, Haytham Manna (Syria). In Arabic & English.
8- A Plea for a New Egyptian Constitution, Ahmad Abdel Hafeez (Egypt).
9- The Challenges Facing the Arab Human Rights Movement, Bahey El Din Hassan, Editor. In Arabic & English.
10- Children and War.

III. Ibn Rushd Booklets :-

1- Freedom of the Press: A Human Rights Perspective, Mohamed El Sayed Said & Bahey El Din Hassan, Editor.

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2- Revitalization of Political Thought through Democracy and Human Rights: Islamism, Marxism and Pan Arabism, Essam Mohammed Hassan, Editor. In Arabic & English.
3- The Peace Process: Implications for Democracy and Human Rights, Gamal Abdel Gawad, editor. In Arabic & English.

IV. Human Rights Education

1- How Do University Students Think of Human Rights, a Monograph written By the Students of the 1st and 2nd Training Course of CIHRS Volume 1 &2.
3- An Introduction to Understanding Human Rights System, Mohammed El Sayed Said, (Egypt).

V. Periodicals:-

1- "Sawasiah", Bimonthly Bulletin, Arabic & English
2- "Rowaq Arabi" Periodical Journal, Arabic & English.
3- "Alternative Visions", A Selections (MERIP) Magazine

VI. Joint Publications with other NGO's:-

a. With the National Committee of the Egyptian NGO's:

1- Female Genital Mutilation, Amal Abdel Hadi.
2- Female Genital Mutilation: Facts & Illusions, Seham Abdel Salam.

b. With Muwaten (The Palestinian Association for the Study of Democracy):

Problematic of the Democratic Transformation in the Arab World.

c. With Group for Democratic Development and the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights:

Setting Civil Society Free (A Draft Law on Civil Associations and Institutions).

First of all, I think that the problem of democracy in the Arab World does not concern this or that line of thought; it is rather a societal problem.

Abdel Ghaffar Shukr.

Abandoning the sanctity of the Islamic movement and undermining the monopoly of the religion of the majority are elementary issues of civil-political interaction.

Nabil Abdel Fattah

The Muslim Brothers is not Islam and its opinion is not Islam. Whoever disagrees with the group would be right. No one professed the holiness of the group's intellectual thought and opinion, even if it were based on fundamental religious texts or interpretations.

Mammoun al-Houdaibi

In democracy, the majority cannot be religious or racial. Therefore, a Christian majority, or a "white" racial majority cannot legislate against Muslim or black minorities. This is not majority in the democratic sense. The latter means open majority, i.e., that any citizen can be included in this majority.

Said al-Naggar

Democracy is not merely mechanisms and institutions ; it is primarily the culture of tolerating the "other" and accepting differences.

Haidar Ibrahim Aly

I claim that democracy today is the demand of Egyptian intellectuals. The people are demanding justice. Democracy now is a cultural issue.

Houssam Eissa