

EGYPT: WILL HER DREAM COME TRUE OR TURN INTO A NIGHTMARE?

Anita Rai

(Author of the Book: “*Jihad and Terrorism*”)

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The people of Egypt are stepping up pressure on Hosni Mubarak, the country’s longest ruling leader to step down from the President’s post. In power for thirty years, Mubarak has ruled Egypt with an iron hand armed with a brutal security apparatus. Legitimate desire of the people to free themselves from the clutches of an authoritarian regime, however must be realised with caution. Not just the West, but the global community as a whole, cannot afford to have the continuing political chaos culminate in the Islamists coming to power in Egypt, whose stability is a must for the peace of the region and the world.

Amidst various legal and constitutional constraints imposed upon forming and running full-fledged political parties, and government restrictions on the media and opposition representations from functioning freely, Mubarak’s dictatorial government is opposed by several groups, of which *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* (Muslim Brotherhood) is the most conspicuous in terms of size, sponsorship, organisation, and popularity. Launched by Hasan al-Banna in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood is a seriously Islamist party aiming to create an ideal *Islamic* state. Hasan al-Banna declared, “Islam is ideology and faith, homeland and nationality, creed and state, spirit and action, book and sword.” Its rightist radical ideology soon spread from its homestead in Egypt, across *dar al-Islam*, the ‘territory under Muslim rule’. Sayyid Qutb, a vitriolic Egyptian Islamist made his own contributions to the Brotherhood by preaching some of the most contentious interpretations of Islam. Since the early 1960’s the ideology of Muslim Brotherhood like that of Maulana Maududi, accompanied waves of Muslim migrants, reaching the farthest shores of *dar al-harb*, the ‘territory not under Muslim rule’. Dr. Sulayman S. Nyang, professor and chairman of the African Studies Department at Howard University maintains, the following of Maududi

from the Indian subcontinent and Arab student following of Qutb who identified with the Muslim brotherhood, formed the MSA (Muslim Students' Association) in America. Nyang says:

Mawdudi and the Muslim Brotherhood enjoyed increasing Saudi financial backing...many Egyptian Muslim Brothers who fled from Nasser in the 1960s made fortunes in Saudi Arabia and Qatar before moving to southern California...while they were refugees in the Gulf, they became Wahhabis...many Muslim Brothers received positions in the Saudi educational system, especially at the Islamic University of Medina. In the United States, they became active in Muslim organizations.¹

Today, the Muslim Brotherhood, under the pretext of numerous names in numerous places, is a Multi-National Co. with a well-established web of mosques, charities, schools, clinics and day-care centres, backed by Saudis and oil-rich donors from the Persian Gulf. Muslims possessed with a militant-mentality, be in the Middle East, Africa or the West, are 'Brothers' in their unified adherence to the call of the Brotherhood to bring the whole world under the rule of *Sharia*.

Egyptian Brothers' vision for their country remains unreconciled with the secular nationalists'. The fundamental and foremost goal of the former is the establishment of a pure *Salafi*² Egypt, by eliminating all "toxic" influence of and from the West and instituting the mandate of the *Sharia* as prescription for all ills. The bad news is the Brotherhood activists and loyalists are far more numerous, far better funded and far greater organised. If the immediate Egyptian situation is not immediately addressed with wisdom and care, the Brotherhood and its allies will assert their leadership in the name of *Allah* and *Jihad*. And they have a keen ally in the Iranian Islamist regime which seized power in a Revolution fuelled by the power of the people of Iran. It was the people's sweat and sacrifice that actually forced Shah of

¹Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism*, (Washington, DC, USA: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2004), chapter 8.

²The obsession with taking Islam back to "its origin" constitutes the *Salafi* sect and its adherents are called *Salafis*. What is known as Salafism surged nearly one hundred years after Abd al-Wahhab had triumphed in the Arabian Peninsula. Salafis advocate the adoption of modern technology and means which they believe is necessary to regain the lost glory of Muslim supremacy. They argue that combining "their" ideology of Islam with modern sciences will, in the face of Western colonization, arm Muslim political forces for the battle to revive Islamic caliphate that will once again get the Muslims back in power. The Salafi movement is firmly associated with global resurgence of militant Islam and strong anti-Western sentiments. This had brought about the birth of Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i Islami.

Iran to step down. In the inevitable ensuing chaos, the people lost the moment to the manipulating *mullahs*. Shepherded by Khomeini the Iranian clergy pre-poised for action and aftermath, lost no time in reaping the rewards from a “holy” mess. It went into an all-out offensive mode. Khomeini loyalists hijacked the Revolution, permanently removing power from the reach of the Iranian people.

It is absolutely essential, Egypt is protected from a re-enactment of the Iranian catastrophe. The turbans which rule Iran are in perfect alignment with the Muslim Brotherhood philosophy and plan of action because the Brotherhood champions made permanent impressions upon their maestro and “maker” Khomeini. Khomeini met al-Banna in 1937 and learnt a lot about the utility and usage of terror as an essential weapon in politics from Muhammad Navvab Safavi, an ardent apprentice of the Brotherhood founder and Sayyid Qutb. Khomeini studied the works of al-Banna and Qutb with the thrill and zeal of an obsessed Islamist and translated several volumes of Qutb’s book *Fi Zilal al-Quran (In the Shade of the Quran)* into Persian. Qutb is also credited with inspiring Ayman al-Zawahiri and his likes into action! Maulana Maududi and his philosophy played as much an abiding role in the life of Khomeini and the outcome of the Iranian Revolution as did the Muslim Brotherhood and its ideologues. There is an unmistakable understanding between the Iranian regime, the Brotherhood and *Jamaat-e-Islami* founded by Maududi. It must be noted that the students in the seminaries of Qom (Iran) are brought up on the literature of Muslim Brothers and Maududi.

Two and half months ago, Iran’s Supreme leadership issued a *fatwa* to further its ambition to be recognised by the Muslim ummah as the global leader of Islamic Revolution. The content and character of this *fatwa* is an utter digression from the principal ethos of Shia Islam. It has however, won instant approval and congratulatory comments from the *Al-Azhar* in Egypt, the theological seat of Sunni Islam that empathises with Hamas’ code and conduct. Tehran’s close ties with far-right Sunni Hamas and Wahhabi Taliban, proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that the hatred unifying the Islamists is much stronger than the doctrines dividing them.

In case of the Brotherhood assuming power, the region’s chessboard will undergo drastic and dramatic make-over. The prospect of Tehran gaining leverage, in a

country with fanatic groups like *Gamaa Islamiya* and *al-Jihad* embedded in its belly, and Libya, Jordan, Saudi Arabia as neighbours, is petrifying. Prolonged indecisiveness by Egypt's political organism will hatch a geo-political space in the most volatile of the world's regions, with a huge appetite for aggressive Islamism to assemble and act in accordance with Theme-Jihad. We'd be confronted with a dreadful situation where an Islamist-dominated Egypt and an Islamist-ruled Iran will engage in a "brotherly" competition to prove itself as Allah's 'chosen' one to lead the 'chosen' ummah in a conclusive conflict with the pluralist world in the embrace of the West.