



PROJECT *on* Middle East Democracy

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Hudson Institute

“The Future of the Muslim Brotherhood”

The Mayflower Hotel, 1127 Connecticut Ave., NW 10:00 am

The Hudson Institute hosted an all-day event addressing the future of the Muslim Brotherhood in light of recent developments, such as the election of Hamas in Gaza and Iran’s new assertiveness in the region. Panel topics included “The Brotherhood within the Sunni-Shiite Rivalry,” “The Brotherhood State in Gaza and Its Impact on Islamist Politics,” “The Brotherhood and the Turkish Model,” and “The Brotherhood in an Era of Al-Qaeda’s Relative Decline.” The following notes are focused on the second panel, “The Brotherhood State in Gaza and Its Impact on Islamist Politics,” which included **Jonathan Schanzer** of the Jewish Policy Center; **Ahmed al-Rahim**, a Yale graduate and scholar of Arabic and Islamic studies; and was moderated by **Hassan Mneimneh** of the Hudson Institute.

In discussing the compatibility of Islamist movements and democracy the panelists outlined the implications of the electoral victory of Hamas. **Jonathan Schanzer** addressed the current breakdown in governance and the “systemic violations of human rights” that have taken hold in Gaza since Hamas assumed power. From the imposition of vice squads and vigilante groups that seek to maintain moral order to the closing down of newspapers critical of the government – Schanzer termed the current situation as the “Talibanization of Gaza.” The implementation of two separate Palestinian governments and limited interaction between the West Bank and Gaza are leading to an erosion of Palestinian national identity. Schanzer explained that the rivalry between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority can be traced back to the creation of Hamas as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. He pointed out that the Muslim Brotherhood has essentially done what many have accused Israel and the West of doing – dividing the Palestinians so that they are weakened and harder to negotiate with.

Meanwhile, **Ahmed al-Rahim** focused his talk more on the Muslim Brotherhood. He explained that it is not a monolithic organization but more pragmatic, consisting of regional, independent offshoots with varying policies adapted to local issues. While not an official political party the Brotherhood has adopted the electoral process and has met relative success in this endeavor (especially with Hamas, its affiliate in Gaza); however, because it is not formally recognized as a political party it can maintain its status as a social movement.

As the Muslim Brotherhood and broader Islamist movement seeks to incorporate different elements of democracy, the panelists questioned whether this could lead to a broader, long-term acceptance of democracy or would this acceptance end after electoral victory. As the process is ongoing and relatively new, the answer to this question remains to be seen.