



A “Moderate” path is just another road to disaster

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The historian Bernard Lewis once characterized Muslim fundamentalism's vision of democracy as: "one man, one vote, one time."

With this in mind, one reads with amazement a passionate essay describing the "Moderate Muslim Brotherhood" in the March/April issue of *Foreign Affairs*, flagship of the influential Council on Foreign Relations. Its authors argue that America should talk with the leaders of this vast pan-Arab organization, whom they conclude believe in some form of democracy.

This is a recurrent theme in forays by well-intentioned scholars and journalists anxious to find an alternative to a clash of civilization between the West and Islam. In the past few years, these Lawrence of Arabia explorers have attempted to

show hair-splitting differences between bloody-minded jihadists such as Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri – a former top leader of the Brotherhood – and more docile Brotherhood types, who speak English, wear suits, and inhabit apartments, not caves. These moderates, the article states, include some who are "Shakespeare admirers."

Based on dozens of interviews with Ikhwan leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world and Europe, the *Foreign Affairs* authors declared that the Ikhwan movement "would honor democratic processes" once in power – unlike the Nazis, Bolsheviks, and the Baathists of Iraq and Syria who used bait and switch tactics.

"The Brotherhood differs from those admonitory precedents; its road to

power is not revolutionary. It depends on winning hearts through gradual and peaceful Islamization," the director of the Immigration and National Security Program at the Nixon Center, professor Robert Leiken, an expert on Latin and South America, wrote.

Invariably, these reports reflect an eagerness to make a finding based on logic rather than on the facts at hand. In a twisted way, they are deeply condescending of Muslim terrorists who are declared acceptable just because some say they listen to classical music or read English literature, i.e., because they resemble some of their Western interlocutors.

Shakespeare loving and other pandering aside, let us look at some hard facts.

The Brotherhood dates to the 1920s in Egypt. Any true Middle East scholar will readily know it spawned the entire array of Muslim radical fundamentalist organizations operating today from the Philippines to the caves of Tora Bora. During a long history of mayhem, the Brotherhood leadership over decades has authorized, glorified, and praised jihad in its official literature. Not one of its leaders has ever renounced that violence. Indeed, in the Foreign Affairs essay, Mr. Leiken and his co-author assert that such violence is authorized but only in "countries and territories occupied by a foreign power."

This designation included killing Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s,

Israelis in the Levant up to now, and, although the question was not asked of any of the "brothers" interviewed, Americans in Iraq.

There was no need to ask the question. One of the most eminent leaders of the Ikhwan movement, who appears weekly on Al-Jazeera's "Sharia and Life" program, is an Egyptian-born, Qatar-resident grand priest, Sheik Yusuf Al-Qardawi. He has specifically ruled that Americans in Iraq and Israelis everywhere should be targeted by suicide bombers, who will be considered martyrs and heroes. Sheik Qardawi was not interviewed for the article in question, even though he ranks among the top 10 leaders of the Ikhwan's International ruling councils.

Scholars anxious for a rush dismiss extremist pronouncements by Sheik Qardawi and others. Indeed, the authors tell us that, in the "Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," such talk is "the Muslim functional equivalent of the Christian doctrine of 'just war.'"

Unfortunately, those conducting such flimsy reporting and superficial scholarship can always turn back and say, "Oops, sorry."

But "sorry" will not do for the thousands, maybe millions, of secularists, moderate Muslims, Christians, Kurds, Shiites, and other minorities who will pay the price if Brotherhood-affiliated groups get to rule Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Algeria, and Syria in the next decades with an American green light.

Splitting hairs by arguing that Osama kills in the name of G-d and a pie-in-the-sky heavenly caliphate while the more pragmatic Ikhwan

are trying to rule on earth will make little difference to those who will be in the mass graves.