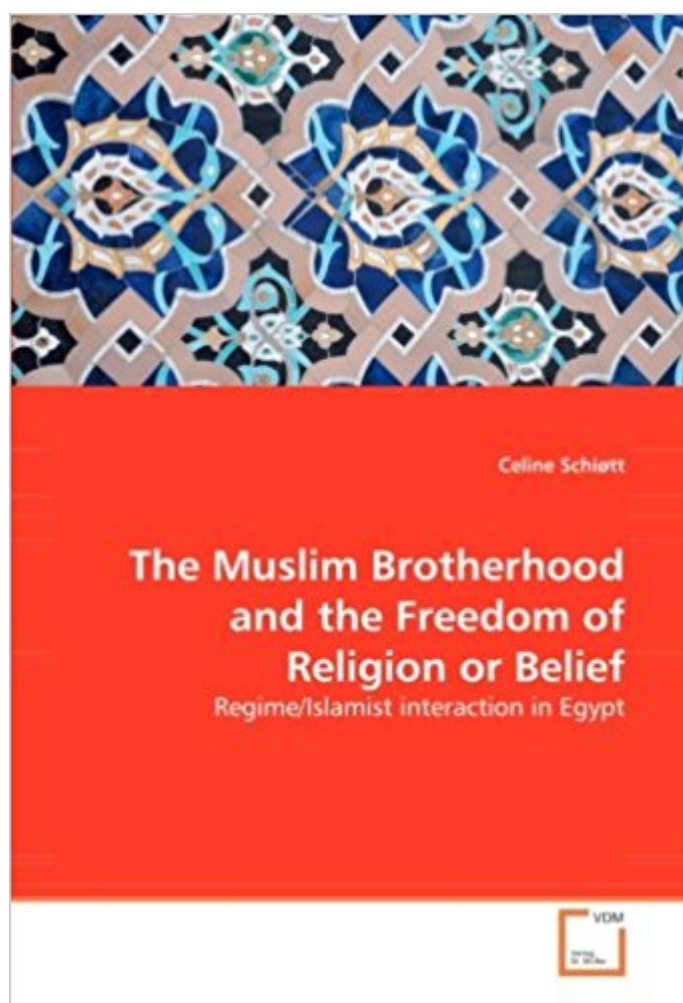


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The Muslim Brotherhood And The Freedom Of Religion Or Belief: Regime/Islamist Interaction In Egypt



Synopsis

Islamist movements like the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood are increasingly embracing democratic principles. Therefore, an exploration of their comprehension and support of the underlying values of democracy is crucial, in order to understand what democracy actually means to these actors. However, Islamists do not operate in a political vacuum. In the Egyptian context, one must consider the effects of long-term authoritarian rule, in addition to the Egyptian regime's political reliance on, and manipulation of, conservative Islam. This reliance renders the Egyptian regime unable to reject the critique against it regarding Islam and demands of increased protection of Islamic values. The result has been the creation of an illiberal religious discourse which functions as the Brotherhood's main, if not only, channel of influence. As the organization's democratic efforts do not achieve any tangible results, the illiberal traits are strengthened.

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Celine SchiÃfÄtt traveled and lived in the Middle East while studying for her master's degree in political science. This thesis was written while the author lived in Egypt. She now works in the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, specializing on Iraqi refugees.

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