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The Muslim Brotherhood

A Failure in Political Evolution

Nawaf Obaid



HARVARD Kennedy School
BELFER CENTER
for Science and International Affairs

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Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs
Harvard Kennedy School
79 JFK Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

www.belfercenter.org

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Cover photo and opposite page 1: A man wears a Guy Fawkes mask and carries his daughter during a celebration by the Muslim Brotherhood movement to declare victory of Gaza and Hamas against Israel, in Amman, Jordan, Friday, Aug. 29, 2014. (AP Photo/Mohammad Hannon)

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Foreword

Nawaf Obaid's insightful analysis of the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in Arab societies and the political process is a "must read" for understanding the basis for the intractable conflicts that plague the Middle East. Dr. Obaid offers a concise history of the Muslim Brotherhood country-by-country as a foundation for his incisive analysis on the principal reasons the group failed to achieve their political ambitions. Today, as the Muslim Brotherhood's influence continues to wane, this report raises important questions on the future of the Middle East. Is the Arab Spring a thing of the past? Will the "old order" resume its role in ruling the Middle East? What is the future of political Islam? These questions and others reverberate through the pages of this penetrating review of the Muslim Brotherhood's legacy and how it continues to shape events that are unfolding, today.

— **Rolf Mowatt-Larsen**

Director, Intelligence and Defense Project

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Introduction

While the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) started as a movement centered on resistance to what it saw as the Westernization, or de-Islamization, of Muslim culture, it soon realized that resistance was only as effective as its access to power. Thus began the group's long attempt to infiltrate the halls of governance. As this report will show, these attempts have failed. In essence, the tree of the Muslim Brotherhood has been unable to flower into a viable governmental structure for the Arab world because it is still fed by its oppositionist roots.

Three core elements of the MB have kept it from being able to mature into and be accepted by the Arab public as a preferred political entity. First, the MB's primary objective was defined in its early years in educational terms: "to raise a new generation of Muslims who will understand Islam correctly."¹ It was a return to Islam, "din wa dawla." Islam was viewed not only as a guide to private belief and ritual but also as a comprehensive system of values and governance intrinsically different from (and superior to) the political systems of the West.

As one can see from the group's nearly nine decades of history, this emphasis on religious ideology has not served it well when it comes to securing votes or being accepted into roles in governmental systems that, even in the relatively religious MENA region, inherently crave and reward more religiously neutral technocrats. Despite its extensive social efforts—in many countries it has filled large social gaps left open by inept bureaucracies by providing services such as food handouts, education, health information, and community-building campaigns—again and again, one finds MB representatives, and the organization itself, struggling to convince the larger public and government officials that its intentions are not tainted by an ideology bent on inserting more religion—including sharia—into politics and the legal system. And as this report will show, the Arab populace seems to have grown increasingly inimical to such insertion over the lifetime of the organization.

¹ Lia (1998).

The second aspect of the MB that has kept it from being able to gain access to governance is the fact that the organization has frequently been unable to keep its members in step. The Brothers have split over various issues: the degree to which the organization should seek to implement sharia, the means by which that should be done, the methods proper to responding to the group's suppression, the organization's view on jihadist violence, and the types of candidates and positions to put forth during elections and in parliaments. This lack of ideological coherency has resulted in a sense among the Arab populace that the group is too riddled by infighting to be trusted with governance.

For example, under President Nasser, the Brotherhood was suppressed and dissolved in 1954, spurring the creation of the "secret apparatus."² This group attempted to assassinate Nasser, who retaliated by putting on trial, exiling, and hanging members of the Brotherhood—a purge that lasted until 1970. The imminent threat of the Nasser regime caused a split within the organization, resulting in the ideological radicalization of many members and inspiring Sayyid Qutb's call for holy war against the system and its supporters. Once again, Nasser harshly punished Brotherhood members and executed Qutb. The period of ease between the Brotherhood and the later-elected Sadat then wore thin and some Brotherhood members called again for holy war, while others urged a more conservative, institutional response. Constant pressures like these have incessantly tested the group, forcing members to continually alter their thinking and redirect their message, with the result that the overall position of the group has become muddled.

This example hints at the third innate MB feature that has prevented it from developing into a viable form of governance: its connection with and/or failure to refute connections to jihadist terror and political violence. The Brotherhood has been designated as a terrorist organization by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Russia (Kredo, 2015). In December 2015, a report made by British Prime Minister David Cameron pointed out that although the Brotherhood has been vocal about its opposition to al-Qaeda, "it has never credibly denounced the use made by terrorist organisations of the work of Sayyid Qutb, one of the

2 Ibid.

Brotherhood’s most prominent ideologues.”³ This contrasts with the U.S.’s approach, which still acknowledges the organization as being overall non-violent. In a National Security Council email, the argument is made that “the de-legitimization of non-violent political groups does not promote stability,” but rather “advances the very outcomes that such measures are intended to prevent.”⁴

Whether or not the MB is officially designated as a terrorist group, its actions have led many to link it with al-Qaeda, Hamas, and ISIS and other acts of politically or religiously motivated violence. The group’s support for violence in Egypt is well documented and discussed briefly below. In the 1970s and 80s in Syria, the MB consistently engaged in violent interchanges with the Baathist government.⁵ These confrontations culminated in February 1982 with the killing of 30,000 civilians by Alawites and some Kurds.⁶

The IAF in Jordan has maintained that it has “consistently refrained from violent political action in Jordan and remained committed to nonviolent change.”⁷ And yet, four IAF members attended a funeral tent erected by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi—leader of al-Tawhid and member of al-Qaeda—on June 11, 2006.⁸ The IAF has also expressed support for Hamas.⁹ There have recently been reports that the senior official of the IAF “called for support of ISIS and condemned the Western air strikes in Syria and Iraq.”¹⁰

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) was an offshoot of the Brotherhood that vehemently opposed Israel’s existence, designating Israel “as a manifestation of Western imperialism in the Islamic lands.”¹¹ In attempts to distract from the Oslo Peace Accords, the PIJ bombed a military bus by Netanyahu in January 1995 and set off a suicide nail bomb in Tel Aviv in March 1996 (BBC, 2003). And then there is Hamas, the Palestine branch of the Muslim

3 Cameron (2015).

4 Emerson & Hoekstra (2015).

5 Baltacioglu-Brammer (2014).

6 Ibid.

7 Brown (2006).

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 The Tower Staff (2014).

11 Who Are Islamic Jihad? (2003).

Brotherhood, which is responsible for numerous acts of violence via its *intifadas*.

Finally, in Tunisia, the trend has largely been a failure of the Brotherhood to clearly and swiftly distant itself from jihadist terror. In August 2013, Ennahda declared Ansar al-Sharia a terrorist organization, but for many Tunisians, this response was “too little, too late.” Then came the assassination of secular human rights activist Chokri Belaid and, five months later, his fellow leftist Mohamed Brahmi.¹² These assassinations created a rallying cry throughout Tunisia for change and led to Ennahda surrendering the interior ministry. The sense was that the group had been lax on fighting terrorists as countless cells had been allowed to form along the Algerian border in the mountainous areas.¹³

In short, as an oppositionist movement that has had a difficult time keeping its members united and that also has myriad links to terrorism and/or a failure to address terrorism, the MB has struggled to gain legitimacy as a viable form of governance. This report will trace why. It begins, in Chapter 1, with a history of the group—from its origins in Egypt and its central ideological underpinnings to its links to political violence and its engagement in the elections following the so-called Arab Spring. In Chapter 2, the major MB affiliates in other countries —Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, and Tunisia—are profiled. Then, Chapter 3 provides a more in-depth look at why the group failed in its objectives.

Finally, in the Conclusion, the claim is made that the Muslim Brotherhood is doomed to stay stuck in its past. Yes, it will most likely continue to offer social services, make religious assertions, and seek political offices. However, its history is far too riddled with infighting, violence, and resistance to give way to a cohesive organization that will ever gain widespread support as a source of respectable political leadership in the Arab world.

¹² Legge (2013).

¹³ Bechri (2014).

What Is The Muslim Brotherhood?

Origins

The Muslim Brotherhood is an organization founded in 1928 by Hassan Al Banna in Ismailia, Egypt, following the abolition of the Islamic caliphate in Istanbul in 1924. Al Banna believed that moral decadence, economic bankruptcy, and anti-religious education were all part of the deliberate design of European powers to weaken and dominate the Muslim world, and his thinking greatly influenced the Brotherhood's early trajectory. From an unusually young age, Al Banna was preoccupied with the moral laxity he saw around him. He felt that there was a decrease in the respect for tradition and religion and a widespread enthusiasm for Western secular culture.

There were other similar groups, but what distinguished the Muslim Brotherhood was its religious interpretation of the country's malaise and the prescribed framework for its solution. The Brotherhood sponsored local social services and community projects that demonstrated the group's concern with public welfare and created new avenues for recruitment, which captured the hearts and minds of Egyptians.

From 1928 to 1932, the primary goal of the Muslim Brotherhood was enlargement of its membership around Ismailia. Within four years, the organization had branches along the eastern and western edges of the Delta. The establishment of each headquarter was followed by the creation of a project (mosque/school) that came to serve as the focus for the activities of the community. In 1932, the first branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was established in Cairo. By 1949, there were two thousand branches and 300-600,00 members.

In Ismailia, the Brotherhood contained both middle and lower class elements—although it was unclear which group dominated. Eventually, persons from the lower echelons of the educated middle class occupied the leading positions, giving the Brotherhood the popular and non-elitist character that it retained even after it had become an influential political force. Protecting the organization's financial independence became a major concern for Al Banna. He advocated a policy of non-reliance on local authorities for financial aid to welfare projects and relied on benefactors who were not in a position to dominate the movement. Thus, the Brotherhood's professed nonalignment with the dominant political forces, underpinned by its relative financial independence, added much credibility to its ideological program.

The Muslim Brotherhood never offered a detailed and coherent vision of the Islamic order it sought to create. It stemmed from the group's emphasis on *Amal* (action) and *Tanziim* (organization) over *Fikra* (ideology).¹⁴ This rendered the political thought of the group susceptible to conflicting interpretations. Some see its rejection of partisan conflict and calls for the establishment of a comprehensive Islamic order as evidence of a coercive project to gain state power and impose its agenda by force. But viewing the group this way misses many important nuances.

In its formative years, the Brotherhood was mostly devoted to a bottom-up approach of incremental societal reform. Yet it still embraced jihad in regards to Western imperialists and Zionists. In the 1930s, it invoked the principle of jihad against rival opposition groups and the Egyptian government, establishing paramilitary organizations like the *Jawala* (Rovers) and the *Kata'ib* (Battalions) that drew inspiration from the fascist youth organizations of interwar Europe. Late in 1942, the Brotherhood established a separate unit that came to be known as the "secret apparatus," a group that was responsible for the assassination of a prominent judge.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the Brotherhood's most significant strategy has been its willingness to work within the existing political system for the advancement of its goals. As early as 1941, the Brothers advocated participation

14 Wickham (2013).

15 Ibid.

in the system through contesting elections, aware they would need to do so if they were to have any real influence. Unsurprisingly, the Muslim Brotherhood set up an international organization. The Brotherhood was formed largely in response to the fall of the last Caliphate, and the movement stressed the universal nature of Islam and the Ummah.¹⁶ Although Al Banna was focused on local issues, he also sought to spread his ideology and movement beyond Egypt, and he sent members to spread Da'wa. However, for Al Banna, Egypt was always the center and soul of the movement. Still, the Brotherhood was not averse to creating alternative centers of power whenever Cairo found itself under pressure (for example, the 1954 crackdown).

As the Brotherhood continued to develop internationally, Cairo came to act as a natural arbiter and leader, and intervened to resolve local issues. However, these interventions were spontaneous and lacked any real organizational formality until the 1970s, when a group of hawkish Brotherhood leaders sought to amplify Cairo's role. They emerged from prison to find that the Egyptian Brotherhood was dwindling, while others in the region were flourishing. The international environment was offering distinct opportunities that they could use to strengthen their clique and the Egyptian branch. This was the driving force behind the international Tanzeem.¹⁷

New insistence was placed on the obedience that other Brotherhood groups should display toward the Egyptian Murshid in order to strengthen control over existing branches in the Arab world. They began to harness opportunities in other countries where the Brotherhood had a presence. For example, Ramadan's opening of Islamic centers in Europe was seen by Egyptian leaders as an opportunity to harness media freedom. These activities were financed by Saudi Arabia and its Arab Gulf allies, who wanted to use the Brotherhood to shore themselves up against nationalist regimes in the region. The Brotherhood in Egypt wanted to bring all this activism in the Gulf, along with the petrodollars, under its control.

The Muslim Brotherhood's support flourished throughout the Arab world for most of the 1950s through the 1970s, primarily due to external political

¹⁶ Pargeter (2010).

¹⁷ Ibid.

tensions and transitions. From 1954 to 1970, the group remained the target of Nasser, who either imprisoned its members or exiled them. This provoked the rise of new schisms within the organization by encouraging the ideological radicalization of some of its members, who reached the conclusion that any regime that could inflict such suffering was irredeemably corrupt and could only be combated by arms.

One of these men was Sayyid Qutb, a leader of the Brotherhood, who often wrote from his prison cell. He developed the concepts of Jahiliyya (all systems based on manmade laws) and Hakimiyya (imposition of Islamic laws), exhorting youth to form a vanguard ready to launch a holy war against the modern Jahili system and all those who supported it, with the ultimate objective of developing a system based on the laws of God. Many of his thoughts and ideas spurred the emergence of several militant Islamic groups in the 1970s.¹⁸

By the early 1980s, the Brotherhood was under pressure to establish an international body because of Sadat and Mubarak's crackdown on the movement in Egypt. To that end, it published a document called *La Iha al-Dakhiliya (The Internal Statute)*.¹⁹ This document, which marked the official establishment of the international Tanzeem, formalized the existing relationships between Cairo and other branches. It also contained new international leadership structures comprising a General Guidance Office and General Shura Council, headed by the Murshid. Consequently, it put in place a system whereby national branches were formally bound by decisions made by the center. It created a highly centralized system that gave the Egyptians access to control and finances, which would feed their local and international ambitions. However, they discovered that doing so would be a greater challenge than anticipated. Cairo's insistence on running the show lost the Brotherhood some key thinkers who might have pushed the movement forward in a more creative way.

18 Wickham (2013).

19 Pargeter (2010).

The Arab Spring

When the so-called Arab Spring struck, new conditions arose for the Muslim Brotherhood. The Islamists did not initiate the Arab Spring, nor did it directly evoke Islam. Rather, it occurred across religious, political, and social lines. Many Islamists, in fact, stood on the sidelines of the uprisings. However, the MB was quick to take advantage of the unrest. In fact, Egypt's parliamentary elections of November 2011 and January 2012 found two-thirds of the popular vote going to Islamists—37.5% went to the Freedom and Justice Party, while the Islamist Bloc received 27.8%.

The Islamist parties made little mention of religious topics in their platforms during the Arab Spring elections. In the Al-Nour Party's 8,876-word platform, "Sharia" was mentioned five times; "Islam" was mentioned 25 times, and "economy" 58 times. The Muslim Brotherhood's 12,639-word platform contained "Sharia" 14 times and "economy" 35 times. Finally, Morsi's presidential campaign platform of 15,000 words consisted of "Islam" 36 times, "Sharia" eight times, "economy" 158 times and "development" 178 times.

As Olivier Roy stated in his article, "The Transformation of the Arab World" in the *Journal of Democracy*, "Islam as a theological corpus has not changed, but religiosity has."²⁰ For many—more than fifty percent—jobs and economic development were the top priorities. Because Egypt was relatively underdeveloped, its voting bloc of the poor did not look at long-term promises but instead looked at the short-term—i.e., the social services offered by Islamists that might make their day-to-day lives easier.

It would seem that another force at play is that the demographics of those following Islam have changed. Younger generations of Muslims throughout countries that partook in the Arab Spring were not focused on Islam or religion, per se; rather, they were concerned with getting jobs that they had believed would be attainable once they graduated from higher education schools. For example, 54 percent of college graduates in Cairo were jobless at the time of the Arab Spring.²¹

²⁰ Roy (2012).

²¹ Noueihed & Warren (2012).

Religiosity is also on the wane in younger generations. Social media has made them much more lenient in regards to dress, sex, and sexuality. According to a poll executed in Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Kuwait, and Yemen, less than 60 percent of people between the ages of 18 and 24 identified as religious, versus the roughly 80 percent of people 55 and up.²²

Even so, while Islamism in its purest form is not necessarily as popular, its core values—which could be seen as fundamental human rights, essentially—remain intact. As political scientist Bassam Tibi has said, Islamism is a political ideology that is distinct from Islam and its teachings. It is more about core values than specific religious aspects. Because of this sense of Islamism being about basic human rights, Islamist parties have seen some success despite the fact that the majority of their constituents are younger men who are less pious than older generations and feel that religion should be kept separate from the social and political spheres. In fact, according to an Arab Barometer report, about 80 percent of the support for Islamist parties comes from the young; yet, nearly two-thirds feel that men of religion shouldn't have an influence on the decisions of the government, and less than 50 percent felt that Egypt would be better off with public office leaders who had strong religious beliefs.

According to Majzoub, “opinions regarding the political parties in Egypt do not seem to be linked to their religious platforms.”²³ Furthermore, she says, “it would appear that religion is instrumental to the success of the Islamist parties only in as much as it is a required predisposition among the population. It is a necessary but not sufficient factor, making possible the existence and success of Islamist parties, but not guaranteeing it.”²⁴ The Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes & Trends found that there was a generally positive attitude toward the Brotherhood; more than 70 percent gave them a favorable rating.

Adding to the Islamist parties' appeal is what Majzoub calls social alienation. Such alienation has come at the hands of Western and colonialist influences, creating major class differences within societies. The petite

²² Hoffman & Jamal (2012).

²³ Majzoub (2013).

²⁴ Ibid.

bourgeoisie is made up of educated youth, who have found that a high level of education doesn't improve job opportunities or income. This petite bourgeoisie has thus become disillusioned with the status quo. "As a result," Majzoub says, "economic hardships were politicized, as they were seen to be grounded in the deliberate actions of the regimes rather than created by demographic changes."²⁵

Generally Islamists, rather than governments, were big on social changes bringing forth services like schools, health clinics, business enterprises, mosques, and community centers. Further, the increase in Western consumption, as well as the social and cultural ways of the West, directed people toward the more modest, attractive alternative of Islamism. Interestingly enough, countries that have not withstood a Western influence are not particularly strong breeding grounds for Islamism; i.e., the draw toward Islamism is often stronger when fostered by a move away from something less traditional.

Overall, its organizational capacity played strongly into the MB's hands. Islamism was seen as a familiar, deeply entrenched element of society. It is hypothesized that Islamists are more disciplined, competent, and cohesive than their secular counterparts. They are thought to run better election campaigns, or at least that they expend more effort to purchase the loyalties of voters with social services and other goods. Thus, it could be presumed that Muslims aren't necessarily voting for Islam, but responding to Islamist effectiveness or expressing gratitude for services.

On the other hand, secular parties weren't properly organized and were therefore not a viable alternative. They lacked the message, even if the alternative offered by the Islamists lacked structure. The secular leaders were unfamiliar and untested, whereas the Islamists had already established reputations for themselves via television, pamphlets, and other modes of communication. Particularly in Tunisia, secular parties also lacked a common goal; votes were often scattered among their parties, denying any one party a victory. Similarly, the leftists were considered somewhat less organized than the Islamists, whose organizational head start was much easier to accept. Following the removal of Mubarak, it was believed that

25 Majzoub (2013).

a leftist group would fill the void in Egypt, particularly since Egyptians sought a redistribution of wealth. Left-leaning parties like the Egyptian Social Democratic Party and the Popular Socialist Alliance emerged. But the Islamists dominated, not because people were prioritising religious and moral concerns, but because they thought the Brotherhood would mend the sins of Mubarak.

In short, although full of contradictions and sometimes unfulfilled promises, the Islamists were considered more dependable, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to social change. As Majzoub has said, “deconstructing the success of the Islamist parties in the post-revolution Arab world has shed light on the political demands of the Arab populations: freedom, justice and equality. There is nothing Muslim about these demands.”²⁶ As long as there is economic unrest and there is an attractive, willing party that pledges to address this unrest, it is quite likely that this party will be at least somewhat successful.

Ties to Terrorism

No overview of the Muslim Brotherhood would be complete without discussing its links to Islamic extremist terror. Much of the Muslim Brotherhood’s reputation as an extremist group has come from the influence and writings of Sayyid Qutb in the 1950s and 1960s. Following the overthrow of King Farouk’s pro-Western rule in 1952, Qutb was initially on good terms with Gamal Abdel Nasser and supported his Free Officers Movement. However, Qutb and the MB quickly realized that Nasser’s pan-Arab nationalist and secular views did not align with their idea of an Islamic society. Tensions developed between Nasser and the Brotherhood, and in 1954 Nasser dissolved the group and imprisoned Qutb for several years. His imprisonment and torture are said to have radicalized him and resulted in his extremist publications.

Qutb’s radical views invoked global jihad and stressed the difference between “jahiliyya,” or the ignorance that is at the heart of manmade laws, and “hakimiyya,” or the imposition of Islamic laws in order to realize God’s

²⁶ Majzoub (2013).

sovereignty. He urged the youth to be vanguards against the modern jahili system and its supporters, maintaining the ultimate goal of establishing a legal system that revolved around Sharia. From Qutb stemmed Qutbism, which, along with other youth-led movements, divided those who belonged to and supported the Islamist cause from those who did not. One of these youth-led movements included Organization 65, which was accused of conspiring to overthrow the government. This incident led to a concentrated extermination of Muslim Brotherhood members through various trials and executions. Inevitably, Qutbist thought also influenced al-Qaeda, which employed his ideas of waging holy war against secular government as a way of achieving their ends.

Qutb was executed in 1966 by the government. The 1970s saw a resurgence of Qutbist thought under Anwar Sadat, although not without contest. Hassan Al Hidaybi, Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood until his death in 1973, took issue with the turn away from the gradual reformist approach in the Islamist movement, with his arguments being outlined in his 1971 book *Preachers, Not Judges*. For obvious reasons, the increased militant presence of members of the Brotherhood who favored a more aggressive stance resulted in a crackdown by Anwar Sadat and subsequently culminated in Sadat's assassination at the hands of Egyptian Islamic Jihad in 1981.

The 1980s and 1990s saw something of an improvement in relations, with the Brotherhood entering Parliament and attempting to solve problems from within the establishment. However, the existing divisions grew even deeper among its members between those who thought they should work within Egypt's system and those who believed that cooperating with non-Islamists was compromising Islamic values. The small number of reformists—those who followed the “moderate Muslim Brotherhood narrative” of the West—was shut out of the Brotherhood by the radicals, who were inclined to maintain a more aggressive political approach.²⁷

The Egyptian government has banned the Muslim Brotherhood and its Palestinian offshoot, Hamas, claiming they are terrorists. The Egyptian president, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, has criticized the U.S. for primarily looking

27 Trager and Shalabi (2016).

at ISIS and al-Qaeda rather than focusing on the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria.²⁸ As a result, nationalist media has seen el-Sisi's onslaught of the Brotherhood, "imprisoning thousands and killing hundreds during street protests," as "the rescuer of Egypt from Islamic militancy."²⁹ Egypt's President of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Dr. Mohamed Mokhtar Gomaa, has called the Brotherhood "harmful to Islam," claiming that it is "the progenitor of the Islamic State and similar terrorist groups" and is "disrupting education at Egyptian universities."³⁰ Gomaa has also made the case that religion should be separate from politics, stating that Egypt "should advocate a centrist form of Islam, especially that of Al Azahr, which is the center of Islamic learning in Egypt and across the Islamic world."³¹

28 Mauro (2014).

29 Dearden (2015).

30 Mauro (2014).

31 Younes (2014).

Origins of the Main Muslim Brotherhood Affiliates in the Arab World

The Muslim Brotherhood believed that a necessary prelude to a truly Islamic renaissance was not only the liberation of each Muslim land, but also the unification of the Arab world, starting with Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia, and Morocco. In serving their definition of Arabism, the Muslim Brotherhood believed they were serving Islam.

Syria

There are pronounced differences between the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria and that of Egypt. First, unlike some other Muslim Brotherhood sister organizations, the Syrian organization was on all points independent from the Egyptian center.³² Second, the Syrian Brotherhood was formed by the Ulama class, rather than against the religious establishment as in Egypt. Further, it remained a small, elite organization that never reached the same level of mass appeal that its counterparts in some other Arab countries did. Finally, up until 1958, the Syrian Brotherhood was a parliamentary body that participated in Syrian politics. This stands in contrast to the Egyptian Brotherhood, which remained divorced from parliamentary politics until the 1980s.

The Syrian Brotherhood does, however, have an Egyptian connection. The mother movement in Egypt provided Syrian Islamic activists with inspiration and an organizational model. When the Egyptian Brotherhood delegation visited Syria, it found associations there to be similar to what existed in Egypt. Furthermore, many of the Syrian Brotherhood's founders had studied at al-Azhar and were acquainted with the Egyptian Brothers.

32 Teitelbaum (2011).

The group rose indigenously in the wake of the failed Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-1927.³³ A loose network of religious associations, referred to as the “Jamiyyat al-Gharra,” sprang up to counter the French Mandate’s secularizing influences. Islamist youth movements also emerged alongside the Jamiyyat, which organized a series of all-Syrian conferences that brought about the formation in 1945-1946 of the Muslim Brotherhood with Dr. Mustafa Sibai as Secretary General. The Egyptian Ikhwan provided ideological and organizational inspiration to Dr. Sibai. However, although the Syrian Brothers considered Hassan al-Banna to be the spiritual leader of the movement, the group retained its operational independence, unlike the affiliate in Jordan.

Syria witnessed rapid socioeconomic change post-independence. The rates of urbanization increased, leading to sectarian and ethnic mixing in the cities. This provided fertile ground for the development of ideologically based political parties, such as the Baath, Communists, and the Brotherhood.³⁴ Further, the increased availability of education without the economy to handle it led to the rise of a disgruntled proletariat. In this context, socialism became an attractive ideology. In order to compete with other ideologically based parties, the Syrian Brotherhood adopted Socialism in the early stages of its formation. For example, in 1959, it participated in elections as the “Islamic Socialist Front,” seeking to emphasize the socialist elements of Islam.

The MB competed with the Baath and Communists for the same urban lower and middle class constituencies, but the traditional Sunni middle class, including Ulama, were also attracted to it. Because leaders were competing heavily with the Communist Party for sentiment among the populace, they focused a great deal on workers. For instance, they did well with unions, sports clubs, and social welfare groups. They also established a number of workers’ schools that helped provide schooling for both workers and their children, thus combating illiteracy.

When the neo-Ba’athists seized power in 1966, they began a process of secularization.³⁵ The aim was to replace Islam with Arab nationalism. The

33 Weismann (2010).

34 Teitelbaum (2011).

35 Zisser (2005).

main losers in this purge were the urban populations in which the MB had its roots. Hafez al-Assad attempted to open a new page in relations with Islamic forces to widen his coalition's base, so he actively tried to gain religious sanction and affiliation. These efforts led to prominent Lebanese Shia Cleric Musa Sadr handing down fatwa saying that Alawis were Shias. But this was too little, too late.

In 1976, militant Muslims who had broken away from the MB mounted a violent struggle against the government. The rank-and-file MB had to decide whether or not to join. From 1976 to 1982, it waged a violent campaign against the Baath regime, and they succeeded in mobilizing significant backing. In 1979 the Ikhwan launched an attack on the Aleppo Artillery School and massacred 33 Alawis. The MB then took partial control of several Syrian cities in 1980. In June of that year, it attempted to assassinate Assad. This resulted in a major punitive campaign against the movement that included the murder of one thousand inmates who had been members of the MB. Emergency Law 49 was passed in late 1980, which enacted the death penalty for any member of the MB. Then, in February 1982, the government attacked the city of Hama in order to quell an MB uprising, and—while figures differ—many thousands of Syrians were killed.³⁶

With the Hama massacre, the violent uprising ended. In retrospect, the rebellion was not an organized movement but instead a number of interconnected acts of popular protest that lacked a guiding hand and were not accompanied by any kind of political or propaganda activity that might have moved Syrian public opinion to the side of the rebels. A new opposition coalition was formed called the National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria, which then became the National Front for Saving Syria in 1990. Its main objective was toppling the government.

Throughout the 1990s there was a recognizable improvement in relations between the MB, other Islamic circles, and the government, much of it due to the latter's responding more positively to Islamic groups in the post-violent uprising phase of 1982-1990. For example, the government began demonstrating more openness to manifestations of religious faith

³⁶ Wright (2008).

among its citizens (scarf, preaching, religious schools, Islamic textbooks, etc.). It released most members of the MB who had been in prison since the early 1980s and continued to Islamize the Alawite community by establishing a relationship with Iranian Shia clerics.³⁷ It also permitted, and even encouraged, moderate clerics, including those outside the official religious establishment, to stand for elections as independents (indeed, several were elected to the People's Assembly). Finally, it allowed many of the leaders of the Ikhwan who were exiled in the early 1980s to return.

When Bashar al-Assad came to power in 2000, it was unclear what his stance toward the Islamists would be. On the one hand, he showed signs of reconciliation with Islam. On the other, his actions stressed his secular outlook. For example, he did not say the customary Bismillah (in the name of God) at the beginning of his inaugural speech, but he did repeal his father's law against the wearing of headscarves in educational institutions. The Syrian media stressed Bashar's Islamic credentials and he passed a law that allowed MB members to return to Syria as individuals. This seemed to indicate that Bashar was willing to reach a compromise between the government and the MB.

The MB exploited the death of Hafez Al Assad to try to forge a new beginning in its relations with the government.³⁸ This was partly due to the need to make peace with Bashar in the face of their irrelevance to current Syrian realities, but they also hoped to exploit Bashar's inexperience to establish a new status for themselves in Syria. However, Bashar rejected the Brotherhood's advances, and relations with them remained fraught.

Despite the MB failing to reconcile with the Ba'athists, the government did improve its ties in the 1990s to radical Islamic movements throughout the Arab world. Damascus became a site of pilgrimage for the leaders of these groups, largely due to the misleading perception that Syria was the only state still committed to the struggle against Israel. The government's closeness to other Islamist groups was a harsh blow to the Ikhwan, and they lost the support of other Arab Islamist movements. Nevertheless, the closeness between the government and these radical Islamist movements backfired

³⁷ Zisser (2005).

³⁸ Ibid.

when many of them became implicated in terror attacks around the world (including 9/11).

Jordan

Like its Egyptian parent organization, the Jordanian Brotherhood began as a socially oriented organization that subsequently shifted to politics and international affairs—especially with the conflict in Palestine. This political involvement resulted in the running of candidates in the 1950s and 1960s, a twenty-year hiatus, then again in 1989. Since its formation, the IAF has built impressive structures internally by way of electing party leaders, having free regular turnover in top positions, and selecting its candidates through a process that begins with its branches holding primaries before forwarding names to the party leadership.³⁹

The Jordanian Monarchy's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood is an uneasy one. Periods of accommodation and co-optation are occasionally punctuated by periods of open conflict. Unlike in Egypt, the Jordanian Monarchy never sought to suppress the MB. As a result, some have seen the relationship between the government and the Muslim Brotherhood as a sign of tacit cooperation. However, others believe their relationship to be guarded but not overtly hostile.⁴⁰

The Muslim Brotherhood has largely operated within the framework of Jordanian law. The government has shifted that framework to contain the MN, often merely steering it toward new fields of activity rather than suppressing it altogether. When the government confronted its most severe challenges during the 1950s and 1960s in regards to Palestine, the Muslim Brotherhood stood aloof, a position that allowed it to retain its operations in many social spheres and even run for Parliament.

Mindful of its limited ability to affect the composition of government or pass legislation, the IAF has been active in using Parliament as a platform to raise issues regarding Palestine, the economy, corruption and waste,

39 Brown (2006).

40 Ibid.

political reform, and social, cultural, and religious issues. The chief reward of parliamentary participation has been the ability to raise concerns and gain visibility.

Shortly before the 1993 election date, King Hussain changed the electoral law to disadvantage Islamists.⁴¹ After the liberalized political party law was passed, the Islamic movement did not try to repackage the Muslim Brotherhood as a political party but rather formed what is now known as the Islamic Action Front (IAF) and ran under that banner. A few years later, in 1997, it assembled a coalition of opposition parties to threaten to boycott elections if the law was not changed. Though no change came, the party ran again in 2003.

In its early years, the IAF placed great stress on internal reform and political freedoms. However, more recently, it has lagged behind other Islamist movements in focusing on internal issues and has instead concentrated on external issues, such as Palestine and Iraq. Overall, however, the ideology of the IAF is remarkably restrained for an Islamist organization. For instance, it modified its law to be consistent with the Islamic Sharia but used gentle terminology, pointing to the “supreme goals” of Sharia. This terminology is a common tool for Islamist movements to emphasize ways in which the pursuit of the Sharia is consistent with public welfare and not an imposition of a set of burdensome restrictions.

Two major international developments have conspired to sharpen the contest between the Jordanian Monarchy and its Islamic opposition, transforming a source of domestic tension into a potential crisis. One is the rise of Hamas, which Jordan has been concerned might draw on its sympathizers in the country for support, pulling it back into conflict with Israel and potentially threatening to damage its ties with the U.S. The second international development was the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003; the Brotherhood opposed Jordan’s cooperation with the U.S. By 2006, in the wake of the Amman hotel bombings and the Hamas electoral victory, the IAF and the authorities were engaged in open confrontation.⁴²

41 Clark (201).

42 Brown (2006).

The assumed popularity of the IAF lies in the Muslim Brotherhood's ability to mobilize its supporters and get them to the voting booths, something that was done greatly by means of patronage—especially from the Islamic Center Charity Society (ICCS).⁴³ Further, their success reflects the weakness of the Jordanian opposition, as well as low voter turnout, to a greater degree than it does the inherent popularity of the IAF.

While the IAF can present the Islamic movement with many accomplishments, it may have trouble moving beyond what it has already achieved in the current Jordanian environment. The IAF's freedom to maneuver continues to be circumscribed by its institutional links to the Muslim Brotherhood, preventing it from pursuing its platform purely on an electoral calculus. The Jordanian government seems to have realized that the alternative to a legitimate Islamist opposition might be the emergence of a splintered movement, but one that is also much less restrained.⁴⁴

In short, the Jordanian MB is currently undergoing a critical transitional phase because of regional challenges, including ISIS and being designated as a terrorist organization by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE. It faces four prominent challenges: overlap between the political party and the MB; female membership; ongoing ideological shifts and reorientation of the movement's political discourse; and tensions between younger and older generations. There has been limited success in addressing these four areas, which has contributed to the current crisis and the overall restrictive nature of the organizational structure of the Brotherhood.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

Palestine

In Palestine, the rising tide of Islamism as a framework of national liberation remained a particularly powerful political option in the absence of a sovereign and independent state.⁴⁵ The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's connection to Palestine dates back to 1935, when Hassan Al Banna sent his brother to establish contacts there. In 1945, the group inaugurated its first branch in Jerusalem and subsequently established several more offices.

Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, who moved the group increasingly toward confrontation, maintained an ideology that points to the distinctive history of the Brotherhood in Gaza. From 1948 until 1967, Egypt administered the Gaza Strip. Nasser's crackdown on Egypt's Islamists extended to Gaza, where the organization was outlawed and many Brotherhood members, including Yasin, were persecuted and arrested. The experience of the Gaza Brothers would later bring to Hamas the radicalizing experience of incarceration, along with an expertise in building decentralized and clandestine organizations.⁴⁶

In the West Bank, on the other hand, the MB was legal.⁴⁷ After the creation of Israel, relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and Hashemite Kingdom in Jordan—which had annexed the West Bank in 1950—were generally smooth and cordial despite periodic tensions. Jordan did not permit cross-border violence against Israeli targets, so there was no tradition of armed militancy against Israel. The MB in the West Bank and the MB in Gaza never formed a common organizational link, even under a common occupation after 1967. The activity of the Brotherhood in the West Bank was social and religious, not political.

In the eyes of the Brotherhood, the loss of Palestine was God's punishment for turning away from Islam, so the natural first step was the re-Islamization of society. But that meant that the Brotherhood was on the defensive from attacks by the nationalist groups. In the years following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the Brotherhood continued to

45 Euben & Zaman (2009).

46 Ziad (1993).

47 Robinson (2004).

operate as a social organization seeking to establish an Islamic generation, which had little relevance for a population seeking liberation from foreign occupation. Thus, the emerging Palestinian nationalist resistance movement had greater appeal. However, Israel's victory in the Six-Day War (1967) was a severe blow to the stature of secular nationalist and Arab socialist governments, as well as the popular appeal of ideas they claimed to embody, and encouraged a return to Islam.

Influential to the Brotherhood's strength were the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat by Islamists, and the emergence of Hezbollah as a major force in Lebanon.⁴⁸ The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon forced the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to move its headquarters to Tunis, placing even greater physical distance between the organization and the Palestinians. All of the aforementioned domestic, regional, and international shifts lent an increasingly religious cast to the conflict, laying the groundwork for a decisive turn in Palestinian politics toward Islamism and influencing the creation of the Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

The Islamic Jihad was founded in 1980. It advocates an armed struggle against Israel and rejects coexistence with Arab countries, especially those that have strong ties to the West. Because of its focus on liberating Palestine, the group shares a common objective with the PLO factions. It has launched military operations against Israel with the participation of certain Fatah elements. It opposes the gradualism of the Brotherhood and the PLO's strategy of "occupation management." It weds Islamism to patriotism, insisting that the restoration of Palestine requires the annihilation of Israel. It also performs high profile attacks against Israeli targets. Arguably, the Islamic Jihad set the stage for the 1987 Intifada. The Islamic Jihad's prominence, however, did not last; it remained small and never commanded nearly the following of the Brotherhood, which criticized Jihad for concentrating on political issues at the expense of Islamic education.

With the eruption of the Intifada, the Brotherhood was confronted with an ideological dilemma. Given the unprecedented events, it could not remain on the sidelines; however, it was difficult to justify joining the Intifada

48 Ibid.

when its previous positions regarding violence were well known. To avoid this dilemma, it created an ostensibly separate organization to take responsibility for its participation in the Intifada. A Hamas Charter was drawn up in August 1988, proclaiming Hamas to be a wing of the Brotherhood and calling on the people to stand up against Israeli occupation. As Hamas became more popular, the Brotherhood began to deliberately equate the two organizations.⁴⁹

Hamas's charter contains the philosophy of the movement, its rationale, and its positions on central issues, such as social welfare, the role of women, and other Islamic movements like the PLO. Its position on most of these questions does not differ from that of the Brotherhood, but it pays less attention to transforming society and much more to the Palestinian cause and jihad. With regards to Palestine, Hamas believes the land of Palestine is a Waqf upon all Muslims until the Day of Resurrection; therefore it is not right to give up any part of it. According to Hamas, there is no solution to any amount of enemy occupation on Muslim land but jihad. It seeks to uproot Israel from lands that have been occupied since 1967 and establish an Islamic state in its place. Since the 1990s, it has depicted the struggle as a form of resistance to an occupying power.

Hamas refers to the PLO as a “father, brother, relative, or friend” of the movement, and stresses the fact that both have a common plight and destiny and face the same enemy.⁵⁰ At the same time, Hamas criticizes the PLO's secular course and its leadership, as well as its political program calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state that would coexist with the State of Israel and its acceptance of UN SC resolutions 242 and 338. Hamas makes no explicit claims to being an alternative to the PLO, but its repeated references to Islam as the alternative to the failed nationalist and secular ideologies would seem to imply a certain projection of itself as an alternative to an organization embracing such failed ideologies.

Hamas has remained relatively simple and lacks the complex bureaucracy of the PLO. The leadership of the movement is entrusted to a Majlis Shura whose members live inside and outside the occupied territories.⁵¹ From

49 Ziad (1993).

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

the beginning, the leadership has been plagued by repeated losses in their ranks through deportations and imprisonment, necessitating periodic reorganizations both at the central leadership and committee or branch levels. The mass deportations of 1992 removed most of the frontline leaders. However, the devastating effect of this event was mitigated by the fact that the leadership has always relied on strategic decisions to come from its extended leadership abroad, especially the Brotherhood in Jordan and Egypt.

As a branch of the Brotherhood, Hamas has been able to build on the mother organization's extensive infrastructure in expanding its public base of operations, facilitating useful vehicles for spreading Hamas's ideas and influence, and enlisting supporters. Hamas's non-participation in the political process has led it to concentrate its efforts on Intifada activity. It has become the party most engaged in armed actions against Israeli targets. Hamas's military strikes are also intended to embarrass the negotiating factions and bolster its own position as a major Palestinian force that cannot be ignored and without which no agreement can be reached.⁵²

Tunisia

One of the most important issues in post-revolution Tunisia concerned the relationship between Islam and politics. Should Tunisia allow religious political parties, or should the country maintain its longstanding practice of separation of religion and politics?

The Six-Day War heavily influenced Sheikh Rachid Al Ghannouchi while he was studying in Damascus. He believed that the nationalist way was wrong; even though his heart was perfectly reassured of Islam, he realized that what “[he] had been following was not the right Islam but a traditional and primitive version of it. The traditional model was not ideological, nor did it represent a comprehensive system. It was a conventional and religious sentiment, a set of traditions, customs, and rituals that fell short of representing a civilization or a way of life.”⁵³

52 Ibid.

53 Jebnoun (2014).

In 1970, Al Ghannouchi returned to Tunisia and formed a small grassroots Islamic movement with Abdel Fattah Mourou. They initially concentrated on social and cultural issues instead of explicit political messages. “Our work focused on the development of ideological conscience and consisted essentially of a critique of the Western concepts which dominate the spirit of youth,” Al Ghannouchi said.⁵⁴ They brought together conservative Tunisians who felt disillusioned by and excluded from the secular authoritarianism of Presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali.

During the 1970s, the Islamic movement developed in Tunisia because of internal and external factors. Internally, Tunisia witnessed a crisis within the ruling party and a conflict between its liberal and conservative wings. In 1978, there was a violent clash between the leftist trade union and the government. The Islamic movement, which had previously only talked about social issues, started writing about politics—in particular the conflict between the government and the union. It backed the government, as Islamists regarded the left to be the traditional enemy of the Islamist movement.⁵⁵

Externally, the confluence of two factors, namely the decline in the appeal of nationalism throughout the Arab world and the 1979 Iranian Revolution, created the conditions that enabled the rise of Islamism in Tunisia. Al-Ghannouchi went to great lengths to associate the Muslim Brotherhood with the Islamic Movement in Iran.

The Tunisian Islamists benefited from siding with the government during the conflict with the union. They found that they were granted more space for political activism. Their writings, influenced by the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, began focusing on the West and its attendant evils. As the organization grew, they decided that it was necessary to organize a founding congress.

In 1980, the congress decided it would openly apply for official registration as a political party, and in 1981 it became the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI).⁵⁶ The group’s program opposed modernization, secularism, and the

54 Ibid.

55 Allani (2009).

56 Jebnoun (2014).

Western world. This ushered in a period of confrontation with the government, which, fearing an Islamic Revolution à la Iran, immediately cracked down on the party. Bourguiba imprisoned many members and rejected MTT's directing of the mosques, believing that they were set on seizing power. The crackdown quickly degenerated into a full-blown attack on Islamists and against expressions of religion in the public square. Praying, mosques, veils, and beards were all banned.

However, Al Ghannouchi had a political ideology distinct from his Iranian counterparts. He held an open commitment to democracy as a viable “method of preventing those who govern from permanently appropriating power for their own ends.” It was a “system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.” He also believed that if “by democracy, one means the liberal model of government that prevails in the West, a system under which the people freely choose their representatives and leaders, and in which there is an alteration of power as well as freedoms and human rights for the public, then the Muslims will find nothing in their religion to oppose democracy, and it is not in their interest to do so anyway.”⁵⁷

Al Ghannouchi asserted that a violent, Iranian-style revolution was not the answer. Rather, change would be most successful if it came from the bottom up—a slow process that gradually transformed society and used increased political participation and democratic principles to bring about a desired goal: a state that was both democratic and Islamic in nature.

The government's stance on Islamists changed in the second half of the 80s as conflict with the labor union resurfaced. The Bread Uprising of January 1984 caused Prime Minister Muhammad Mzali to fire the minister of interior and engage in a hostile confrontation with the union. To counter-balance, he tried to reestablish relations with the Islamists. In a gesture of goodwill, the government began releasing imprisoned members from jail.

Mzali and Abdel Fattah Mourou held several public meetings, and the Islamic movement was allowed to reenter discussions regarding politics.

57 Ibid.

Mzali tried to include the Islamists, though President Bourguiba was hesitant. However, the radical wing of the MTI severed their newly formed relations with the government, opting for a confrontation strategy. They believed that the end of the Bourguiba government was coming. Therefore, when Prime Minister Mzali's government fell in 1986, a new wave of Islamist persecutions emerged, culminating in a death sentence for Al Ghannouchi in 1987.

President Bourguiba was deposed shortly afterwards. However, Ben Ali's accession to power ushered in a new period of participation. The initial months of the Ben Ali presidency looked promising. Ben Ali tried to reposition himself as a reformer and released political prisoners. Until late 1989, the Islamists played their cards carefully, intent on maintaining their dialogue with the government. Further, in response to Ben Ali's requirement that no party try to monopolize Islam, MTI agreed to change its name to Ennahda.

The Islamist independents failed to win any seats in Parliament, yet they still won 17 percent of the vote, displacing the secular left—their main opposition. However, Ennahda's participation in the parliamentary elections spelled the end of the period of participation. It put forward a few extremist proposals denouncing women's rights and exploiting religion in political life. President Ben Ali deemed Ennahda too dangerous for public order, reversed his strategy and reneged on promises to initiate a democratic "change" in Tunisia.⁵⁸ Many Ennahda members fled. Some split to form a moderate group, while others formed a radical branch. The 1990 Gulf War particularly pitted the Islamists against the government, resulting in more imprisonments and exiles of Ennahda leaders. It was not until 1996, when Ennahda held its first Congress in Belgium that it finally decided to adopt a more moderate stance.

In 2003 in France, representatives from four of Tunisia's major non-government parties (Ennahda, Congress for the Republic (CPR), Ettakatol, and the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP)⁵⁹ met to negotiate and sign a "call from Tunis." They endorsed two fundamental principles: any future elected

58 Marks (2015).

59 Stepan (2012).

government would have to be founded on the sovereignty of the people as the sole source of legitimacy; and the state—while showing respect for the people’s identity and its Arab-Muslim values—would provide guarantee of liberty of beliefs to all and the political neutralization of places of worship. In 2005, the same parties reaffirmed the “18 October Coalition for Rights and Freedoms in Tunisia,” which included an existing liberal family code, a civic state, and no compulsion in religion.⁶⁰

Following Tunisia’s 2011 Arab Spring revolution, Ennahda reentered Tunisian politics after a long hiatus. Al Ghannouchi and Ennahda had a history as the primary opposition to Bourguiba and Ben Ali. They bore the battle scars that gave them popular legitimacy, despite returning to politics amidst deep suspicions that their democratic claims were not credible.

Ennahda’s electoral platform reflected Al Ghannouchi’s long-held progressive views about reform, democracy, equality, the civil state, pluralism, and human rights. The 2011 political transition gave the group the opportunity to test this commitment, creating a tension between the theoretical combination of Islam and democracy and the practice of democracy (which had to be the same for all opposition parties). Overall, in interaction with other groups, the leaders of Ennahda insisted on democratic commitment.

Morocco

Though the Justice and Development Party (PJD) was founded in 1967 by Abdelkrim Al Khatib, it did not participate in elections until 1997, when it gained nine seats. From 1997 to 2002, it focused on corruption and ethical and religious issues. There has been a great deal of antagonism between the PJD and the leftist and secular parties in Parliament, with the latter scrutinizing the party’s relationship with the al-Tawhid movement and orchestrating an anti-PJD media campaign following the 2003 terrorist attacks. The party participated in politics according to the dictates of the constitution and at the same time maintained links with al-Tawhid. Some al-Tawhid members felt their political participation compromised the

60 Ibid.

religious and social character of the movement. Other members felt that Islam was all- encompassing, but this functional separation made sense.⁶¹

In the early 2000s, the PJD refashioned itself into a party less concerned with purely theological issues and more involved in social and economic problems. The party made a breakthrough with its 2005 endorsement of a new, more liberal *Mudawwana* (the code regulating marriage and family life), which indicated that, “the PJD was looking to become a pragmatic player committed to political participation.”⁶² It made tremendous efforts to present itself as an exemplary bloc in Parliament (i.e., implementing attendance, questions, training, and legislative initiatives). It also fiercely opposed the 2006 election law, demanded accountability, and complained about unconstitutional activity. The pillars for its vision of constitutional reform included the institution of necessary mechanisms to secure independence of the judiciary; the expansion of supervisory and legislative prerogatives of House of Representatives and review of those of the House of Councilors; and the guarantee that the executive branch was accountable to Parliament.⁶³

In 2007, the party’s platform, called “Together to Build a Just Morocco,” addressed additional economic and social policies. Instead of referring to the Sharia, it mentioned “the protection of Morocco’s Islamic identity” as its main religious-based priority. It promoted a healthy, competitive, and open economy, as well as a generous redistribution of wealth to combat poverty, deal with the negative consequences of unemployment, and cover the costs of a universal health care system. There was a strong positive relation between education and the PJD votes in the 2002 and 2007 elections, thus concluding that support for Moroccan Islamists was not driven by a clientelistic rationale in either election.

The 2003-2009 municipal mandate thus constituted a phase of political apprenticeship. The PJD modeled themselves as “the good men”—pragmatic managers of local issues fostering good neoliberal governance.⁶⁴ The religious references became less marked, and instead the needs of the

61 Hamzawy (2008).

62 Hamzawy (2008).

63 Ibid.

64 Catusse & Zaki (2010).

local population were emphasized. They promoted the “politics of doing” in a context of competitive clientelism through management discourse, euphemization of the relationship with Islam, and moral clientelism. This accommodation and integration strategy, however, turned out to be politically costly for the party and led to the disappointment and disaffection of its supporters. It lost a lot of votes in the 2007 legislative elections.

From 2007 to 2012, the PJD’s concerns were similar to those of the previous few years. They mostly opposed the 2008 budget law, believing that it showed the government’s lack of concrete strategic plans to resolve the country’s economic ills, and suggested that the influence of big business over the parliament had pushed legislation in the wrong direction. The fact that the PJD only added four seats (but lost 100,000 votes) surprised many. This was due to the appeal of the Independence Party to traditionally religious constituencies in Morocco (so the religiously minded did not necessarily vote for the PJD).

Though the party has always preached democratic principles, the 2008 Sixth National Convention of the PJD concretely demonstrates the democratic character of the party. The convention displayed the PJD’s commitment to the representation of women and youth, as well as collective decision-making. It introduced its future political platform, which was centered around questions of democratization of governance, institutional and constitutional reforms, and integration of the masses within the national developmental plans. This was the most sophisticated program to be presented by any Islamic movement to date.⁶⁵

The Arab Spring worked in favor of the PJD, as the Monarchy learned that it needed to broaden its democracy to include the Islamists. The PJD’s official statement depicted Moroccan politics as displaying worrisome signs of an entrenched authoritarianism that employed the judiciary, bureaucracy, and the Sahara Cause. But, the PJD did not participate in the February 20, 2011 protests, rather choosing to support them from a distance.

This approach resulted in the PJD winning a plurality in the elections and obtaining the prime ministership, making Morocco the first Arab country

65 El Sherif (2012).

to have an Islamist head of government. PJD won a plurality and was elevated from an opposition party to a key partner in national political decision-making. In essence, the PJD succeeded because it played it smart. It displayed similar behavior as other Islamist actors in neighboring countries; however, while it benefitted from the indispensable angry streets, it was not controlled by them. It pressured the key political actor in the country (the Monarchy), yet refrained from clashing with it by making alliances with other opposition movements to facilitate such pressures and avoid isolation.⁶⁶

The Moroccan model of political Islamism is one that is “characterized by molding specific state religious policy, deploying Islam selectively and strategically, resetting the power relationship between political party and allied religious wings, and proactively navigating domestic and international competition.”⁶⁷ Morocco’s Islamists have carved their own path and countered the predictions that mainstream political Islam is on the wane. In certain ways, the Egyptian coup and rise of ISIS have given Morocco’s Islamists “a new lease on life,” as it has changed expectations and vindicated their accommodationist approach.⁶⁸ The PJD is intent on showing that it represents its own unique mode, but it does not seem to have a long-term vision beyond survival. In essence, it works well within the existing system, so it has an interest in retaining it.

Conclusion

Because they emerged from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist movements of Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia, and Morocco all share similar issues with regards to their struggles to gain footholds in their respective countries and combat outside influences. Many of these governments, such as those of Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco, have expressed interest in incorporating some form of Islamic democracy. Each sister organization has also faced the difficult decision of working either within or against the system and focusing on either a social reform of society

66 Ibid.

67 Spiegel (2015).

68 Ibid.

(bottom-up) or a politically-oriented approach (top-down), yet each has often sought both. Finally, all of these parties have faced tensions and conflict within their own cadres, oftentimes resulting in the splintering off into smaller, more charged movements.

In the case of Syria, its MB was not much different from the Egyptian one ideologically. Like the Egyptian MB, the Syrian Brotherhood resisted opposing Western influence—particularly, France’s secular education policies. However, unlike the Egyptian MB, which formed in opposition to the established religious clerical establishment, the Syrian MB included members of the Ulama. Therefore, the Syrian MB and Ulama maintained a relatively symbiotic relationship, each body supporting the other. This changed with the rise of the Baath regime in the 1960s, whose attempts to abolish Islam from Syrian society and replace it with Arab nationalism was logically not welcomed by many Syrian MB members.

The IAF of Jordan, similarly, had a relatively easy relationship with the Jordanian Monarchy in the beginning. The IAF did not fight with the royal authority and was not suppressed by it because of its inclination toward operating within the established framework. The IAF was a complicit and relatively gentle organization. Even so, the relationship between the IAF and the Jordanian state has become steadily more adversarial since the party’s founding at the height of Jordan’s experiment with political liberalization in the early 1990s. Jordan currently faces the challenge of not knowing whether to treat the Islamic movement as a security threat or a political party.

The relationship between the Islamic movement in Palestine and the central authority, on the other hand, has been filled to the brim almost solely with conflict, particularly in Gaza. The loss of the Six-Day War to Israel sparked a renewed interest in Islam. Prior to this, Egypt’s administering of the Gaza Strip meant the outlawing of many Brotherhood members, whose experience would later influence those of Hamas. Hamas’s pushback against the political process has led it instead to focus on Intifada and armed actions against Israeli targets.

The success of Tunisia's Islamist movement has also fluctuated and declined throughout the years. Like Egypt and Syria, it dismissed the effects of colonization on the part of the French, whose presence severely fractured the role of Islam in Tunisian life. In the 1978 clash between the leftist trade union and the government, it picked the government side. It moved from talking about social issues and started writing about politics—in particular the conflict between the government and the labor union. Al-Ghannouchi wanted to work within the system rather than toppling it, dismissing the idea of violent revolution.

In the case of the PJD in Morocco, they have found a way to operate within the system. The group has secured a foothold in government through an accommodationist posture toward the Moroccan Monarchy. When the PJD assumed office, it did so under the King's auspices. The new constitution mandated that the party that won the majority of votes would be guaranteed the prime ministry position, but it also gave the Monarch a significant veto and other powers. PJD officials still evoke religion but almost never do so when in opposition with the state. The PJD also abided by a 2013 state edict that prohibited religious leaders from running for office.

Islamic movements have also faced internal disagreements, which were often the result—and cause—of splinter groups. In Syria, the change in tactics represented by the move to armed struggle against the Baath regime was partly due to a generational shift. The younger generation, which was influenced by Sayyid Qutb, was willing to act independently once it became clear that the older leadership of the MB was not willing to adopt their notions of the importance of violent confrontation to bring about change. In Jordan, tensions arose between old and young generations following the success of the protests in Egypt and Tunisia. A project called "Political Memoirs" began, which consisted of events during which older members of the MB wrote about their experiences. A Student and Youth Congress also developed in order to better integrate young people into their structures.

Hamas in Palestine was initially created as a wing of the MB in the 1980s in order to address social problems and focus on jihad without compromising the Brotherhood's own message; however, many MB affiliated members

who support the Palestinian cause, such as Jordan's IAF, are divided over their willingness to identify with Hamas. Members of the IAF are also torn on how large a role Islam should play in one's life. While they have had a relatively stable relationship with the government and many seek membership in the loyal opposition, numerous members oppose conceding their principles.

Inevitably, all of the Muslim Brotherhood sister organizations in Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia, and Morocco had to either compromise or take more forceful action against their respective governments to promote their social and political causes.

Why Did The MB Ultimately Fail in Achieving Its Objectives?

Egypt

When Hassan Al Banna's Muslim Brotherhood first started, it was poised to be a highly adaptive political creature, weathering the permutations of ordinary parties and surviving the usual crises. Countless party organisms will modulate their organizational and ideological features to align with changing environmental cues and incentives, regardless of ideology. Islamist parties are no exception. In fact, given the sensitivity of politics in the Middle East, it can almost be expected that Islamist movements will alter their methods in some fashion even if they risk compromising their original intent.

One of the driving forces motivating political parties is the institutional rule of participation, rather than the commandments of ideology. Even the most ideologically committed and organizationally stalwart are transformed in the process of interacting with competitors, citizens, and the state. Setting out to win the Egyptian hearts and minds for an austere Islamic state and society, the Brotherhood has always been a flexible political party that is highly responsive to the unforgiving calculus of electoral politics. The Brotherhood's most significant strategy has been its willingness to work within the existing political system for the advancement of its goals; as early as 1941, the MB advocated participation in the system through contesting elections, knowing they had to do so if they were going to have any real influence. Yet this often had the effect of compromising Brotherhood values.⁶⁹

The group's oft-times conflicted internal dialogue suggests that its stress on *Amal* (action) and *Tandhiim* (organization) over *Fikra* (ideology) muddled

⁶⁹ Wickham (2013).

the vision of the Islamic order it sought to create, subsequently denying any interpretation as the sole “correct” one.⁷⁰ This led to fragmentation within the party, affecting the Brotherhood’s overall coherency and instead portraying it as an in-between entity constantly in suspension: not enough for some, and too much for others. Such lack of coherency caused the formation of the breakaway Wasat party as well as Qutbist thought, which in turn influenced al-Qaeda’s organizational and theological underpinnings.

Likewise, over the years, the Brotherhood’s flexibility on certain matters has driven members of its target audience to look to other opposition groups whose positions have been a bit more solid. One such group is the Salafis. The Salafis were able to gain ground because the Brotherhood made compromise after compromise, diluting the purity of the Islamic components of its message in the process, while the Salafis claimed to be the true and pure purveyors of God’s word and, just as importantly, God’s law. In other words, the rise of the Salafis coincided with the Brotherhood’s moderation on Islamic issues.

The factions and differences in opinion among the Egyptian Brotherhood are quite likely the result of a discourse that exhibited a number of unresolved contradictions and ambiguities, which stretch all the way back to the group’s formation. The absence of literature on the Brotherhood’s relationship with Sharia reflects the vacillation of its ideology with regard to Sharia and its followers. For one, there was tension between the ultimate authority of God as expressed by Sharia and the authority of the nation’s elected representatives in Parliament or local councils in accordance with the popular will. In the early days, the Brotherhood was not concerned with the precise nature of how the Islamic state was organized, save for the fact that it was built on Sharia. Its position on the rights of those who did not subscribe to its agenda was also unclear—for example, its stance on the right of the private citizen to choose his or her own values and lifestyle. Following Hassan al-Banna’s death in 1949, it was deemed necessary by many to formalize specific characteristics that would realize the Muslim state, but the Muslim Brotherhood still limited itself to generalities.

70 Ibid.

Contributing to the Brotherhood's incoherency was its ambivalence toward formal political institutions such as Parliament and political parties. Its indecisive policy toward participating in elections led to charges of political duplicity. The Brotherhood tried participating in electoral politics as early as 1941, but because of disappointing election results, its members decided to stay away from politics for the time being. This would change in the years to come, particularly in the 1970s, when President Anwar Sadat held power and many Brotherhood members were elected to Parliament.

However, throughout its years, the Brotherhood has had a mostly adversarial relationship with the Egyptian regime. Under President Nasser, the Brotherhood was suppressed and dissolved in 1954, spurring the creation of the "secret apparatus."⁷¹ This group attempted to assassinate Nasser, who retaliated by putting on trial, exiling, and hanging members of the Brotherhood—a purge that lasted until 1970. The imminent threat of the Nasser reign caused a split within the organization, resulting in the ideological radicalization of many members and inspiring Sayyid Qutb's call for holy war against the system and its supporters. Once again, Nasser harshly punished Brotherhood members and executed Qutb. The period of ease between the Brotherhood and the later-elected Sadat, too, would wear thin, and again the Brotherhood would call for holy war. These constant pressures tested the group, forcing members to alter their thinking and redirect their message.

The Brotherhood sought to survive Presidents Sadat and Mubarak's attacks in the 1980s through the creation of an international body and the publication of *La Iha al-Dakhiliya* (*The Internal Statute*). This document formalized ties between Cairo and other Brotherhood branches across the Arab world. Even though this formalization allowed the Egyptian Brotherhood more control and access to finances, it also meant that the international branches were formally bound to the center and had to answer to Cairo. The document, which is considered to have put in place the international organization, "Tanzeem al Dawli,"⁷² consisted of new international leadership structures comprised of a General Guidance Office and General Shura Council. This cost the Brotherhood many members,

71 Ibid.

72 Pargeter (2010).

as those who did not wish to be at the mercy of Cairo decided to exit the movement.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 plunged the Brotherhood into disarray, challenging its administrative and ideological unity. Some members' loyalties lay with Iraq; others, Kuwait. The Brotherhood ended up condemning the invasion, but rather mildly. It very strongly objected to the presence of U.S. troops in the region and Arab troops working alongside the West. The Kuwaiti Ikhwan split from the international Tanzeem in 1991 was a major blow and caused serious financial implications given Kuwait having been an important source of funds.

This episode demonstrated the difficulties of being an international movement. While the Ikhwan could broadly agree on theological issues, politics were a different matter. In spite of the dream of the Ummah, nationalist priorities and interests ultimately continued to dominate. Transnational Islamism proved to be just as flimsy a concept as Arab nationalism before it; many Islamist movements have been uninterested in linking with the international Tanzeem. For instance, the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood, under Turabi, refused to have its independence circumscribed by the international Tanzeem; the Libyan Brotherhood, found only in exile in the UK and the US, followed suit. The inflexibility of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leadership and their unwillingness to accept anyone with a different political or intellectual approach has meant that they never allowed any space for personalities to develop inside the movement.⁷³

In short, the story of the international Tanzeem highlights the Ikhwan's never-ending difficulties of reconciling its role as both a local organization with local branches and priorities on the one hand, and an international body and school of thought on the other. The decline of the international Tanzeem may have started in 1991, but 9/11 was its death. Post-9/11, the Brotherhood wanted to downplay its global Islamist image, actively trying to give the impression that the Tanzeem was simply a coordinating body with no power in decisions over the local level. Nevertheless, there is still an informal hierarchy, and Cairo is still considered the movement's

73 Ibid.

spiritual home.⁷⁴ These facts will always provide it with some moral authority.

In the end, regardless of moral valuations, the rules of political engagement hold powerful sway over the behavior and make-up of political actors who must answer to cultural and moral issues of importance. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was no exception. As it sought to impress a theological agenda, which itself was never fully agreed to, on a variety of local and national actors, it experienced near-crippling paradoxes that seriously compromised most of its major objectives.

Syria

Problems for the Syrian Brotherhood arguably began in the 1960s in the face of ideological opposition from a substantial segment of the Syrian people. While the quickly moving socioeconomic change occurring in the country influenced the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology, it also fanned the fire of other movements that were not necessarily in the same ideological category as the Brotherhood—Communists and the Ba'athists, for example. When the latter acquired power, the Ba'athists refused to allow Islam to play a role in Syrian society, repressing the Islamist movement and replacing it with Arab nationalism. Most affected by the Ba'athists' erasure of Islam were the urban populations in which the Brotherhood originated.

The Ba'athists' authoritarian tendencies forced the Brotherhood to emphasize the importance of a staunchly opposing view: democracy. By necessity it has had to espouse the advantage of the rule of the people, representative government, and free elections. Yet this vision of democracy was to differ from the Western version in the sense that it appointed men of religion as the supervisors of the election process and state legislators; this, in a sense, was its Achilles heel. Unfortunately, the plan as envisioned by the Syrian MB leaders was that there would be no supervising system put in place to monitor the men of religion who were supervising everyone else. So while the MB sought to differentiate itself from the Ba'athists' tyrannical

74 Ibid.

methods, it still delegated a tremendous amount of power to a particular group of people, with little accountability.

The presidency of Alawite Hafez Al Assad, which started in 1971, made the situation even more difficult for the Syrian Brotherhood. At first, Al Assad led the regime in attempts to open a new page in relations with Islamic forces in the country.⁷⁵ Al-Assad wanted to widen his coalition's base, so he actively tried to gain religious sanction and affiliation. Religious minorities were tolerated more than they had been previously; however, political dissidents like the Brotherhood—mostly because the Sunnis represented the overwhelming majority of Brothers—were not. In 1974, under heavy pressure from Al Assad, Lebanese leading Shia clergy Musa as-Sadr handed down a very controversial Fatwa saying that Alawis were Shiites, thereby linking al-Assad more directly to a recognized denomination in Islam, but this was too little, too late, and the above-mentioned period of violence occurred.⁷⁶

Following this phase, the MB knew it had to placate the Alawi regime or be exterminated.⁷⁷ Thus, in March of 1982, the National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria, which later became the National Front for Saving Syria in 1990, was formed with the goal of toppling the Al Assad government. According to the Ikhwan's narrative, the government rested on a narrow sectarian basis and acted on behalf of an external conspiracy to destroy Syria from within by instigating a civil war and oppressing "true" Muslims. Therefore, it believed that overthrowing the government and saving the nation was imperative. In fact, the Ikhwan has long accused the government of compromising the Islamic nature of the Syrian people from within through a policy of erosion and disintegration.

Despite this, the Ikhwan scaled back its attacks in the 1990s because of the prospect of conducting talks with governmental representatives. But an examination of Ikhwan publications shows that engagement in talks was merely a tactical response to changing circumstances, rather than an abandonment of their cause. At the same time, adversarial relations with the government lessened as it developed ties to other Islamist movements

75 Zisser, E. (2005).

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

throughout the Arab world. Members of the Brotherhood who had been imprisoned years earlier were released. Leaders of the Ikhwan who left in the 1980s were allowed to return, and the open practice of Islam—headscarves, religious schools, and preaching—was permitted. As noted earlier, Damascus became a site of pilgrimage for the leaders of radical Islamic groups, largely due to the perception that Syria was the only state still committed to the struggle against Israel. This closeness between the government and these Islamist groups was a harsh blow to the Ikhwan, as they lost the support of other Arab Islamist movements.

Still, the Brotherhood's unwillingness to compromise on its principles rendered the government's changes relatively insignificant. In the end, it became clear that the government's absurd conditions for reconciliation with the Brotherhood leaders—repenting, confessing guilt, and refraining from any MB activity—were impossible for them to accept. The efforts thus fell through.

As was also noted earlier, when Hafez Al Assad's son, Bashar Al Assad, came to power in 2000, he did not say Bismillah at the beginning of his inaugural speech, but he did repeal his father's law against the wearing of headscarves in educational institutions.⁷⁸ The Syrian media also stressed Al Assad's Islamic credentials, and he passed a law that allowed MB members to return to Syria as individuals. This seemed to indicate that Al Assad was willing to reach a compromise between the government and the Ikhwan.

In 2001, the Brotherhood published the "Covenant of National Honor for Political Activity," which outlined the basis for joint activity with other opposition groups in Syria. But it was unsuccessful, as Bashar al-Assad rejected it. Once again, the Brotherhood's hope of turning over a new leaf with a Bashar-led government proved over-reaching.

The failure of the Islamic rebellion in Syria bears witness to several limitations of political Islam in the Arab world today. The radical religious groups failed to break out of the traditional circles of support and gain it from other sectors of the population. Further, the government was able to create the image of positive state-religion relations, with a Syrian

78 Ibid.

ethnic-Alawite secular state dressed up in Islamic symbols and gestures of cooperation.

In April 2009, then-leader of the Syrian MB, Ali Sad al-Din Al Bayanuni, announced an end to the Brotherhood's participation in the National Salvation Front (NSF), a coalition of various opposition groups founded by former Syrian president Abdul Halim Khaddam committed to overthrowing the Baath government. Some viewed the announcement as a decision on the part of the MB to cease actively opposing the government.⁷⁹

Other Muslim Brotherhood experts had a different view. The withdrawal from the NSF did not represent a fundamental shift in the Brotherhood's long-standing stance against Assad. Rather, the Brotherhood had always said that it would not be able to reach any fundamental understanding with Assad unless the latter accepted the basic conditions for a true reconciliation: the allowance of leaders to return to Syria and operate in the MB movement. Al Bayanuni's announcement of the Brotherhood's separating itself from the NSF, therefore, was a continuation rather than a rupture in the Ikhwan's history in Syria.

Jordan

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Islamic Action Front, Jordan's branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, has built exceptional internal structures by electing party leaders, having free regular turnover in top positions, and selecting its candidates through a process that begins with its branches holding primaries before forwarding names to the party leadership. Yet while it has developed such structures, the IAF has also developed its own internal faults, which have led to the decline of the Islamist movement in Jordan. Many of these faults have come as a price the group paid for shifting its focus from social issues to political affairs, particularly Palestine. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood also made this transition, which undoubtedly affected the vagueness of its precise policies.

⁷⁹ Porat (2010).

Overall, the IAF's very loose embrace of Islamist ways has led it to be considerably timid for an Islamic organization. It used gentle, non-radical terminology that would not alienate too many people.⁸⁰ As with the Brotherhood in Egypt, the issue of Sharia became a pivotal one. Some members of the IAF felt that Sharia law should have a much greater role in society; others did not. The IAF altered its message in order to comply with the Islamic Sharia. But instead of being direct, it employed soft terminology that is often a common tool for Islamist movements seeking to emphasize the ways in which the pursuit of the Sharia is consistent with public welfare. This message was seen as much more palatable compared with imposing a set of burdensome restrictions.

In earlier years, the IAF placed great stress on internal reform and political freedoms, but it now lags behind other Islamist movements in focusing on internal issues (Palestine and Iraq, for example, in the 2005 reform program).⁸¹ Complicating the IAF's success is its platforms. It has developed a series of platforms that have stood little chance of implementation and are instead indicative of the state of disagreement within the party, as well as its willingness to test the limits of loyal opposition.⁸²

There are various areas of division—first and foremost, its attitudes toward the Jordanian system. Some wish to be members of the loyal opposition, while others admonish the concession of principles. There are also divisions in opinion regarding the role Islam should play in one's life—some believe Sharia law should play a greater role in Jordanian law than it does. Finally, many members of the IAF support the Palestinian cause but are divided over their willingness to identify with Hamas. Because of the significance of these topics, the IAF's inability to have an internal consensus has resulted in a weakness and incoherence that has muddled its message.

There are four prominent challenges and areas for reform where the IAF has been lacking. These include overlap between the political party and Muslim Brotherhood, female membership, ongoing ideological shifts and reorientation of the movement's political discourse, and tensions between younger and older generations. As mentioned previously, the lack of

⁸⁰ Brown (2006).

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Bondokji (2015).

clarity on the legal status of the Muslim Brotherhood led to confusion regarding the political role of the IAF and the preaching role of the Muslim Brotherhood, causing it to be difficult to differentiate between the Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF. It has sought to address the problem of female membership by reserving 11 of 80 seats within the IAF Consultative Council for women; the Muslim Brotherhood has yet to formalize this arrangement.

There have been accusations that the party members are not the sole decision-makers, as the IAF has made critical decisions after consulting and deferring to sister organizations in Egypt and Palestine. Its deferential attitude toward these two countries proves that it has not quite established a separate identity from the Muslim Brotherhood—a particularly important part of the IAF's ability to be independent and have Jordan's best interests at heart rather than juggling other priorities. Also splitting the party is its participation in elections; each round of parliamentary elections has set off divisive debates over whether the party should participate in a skewed process.

In 2006, the Muslim Brotherhood again found itself divided upon the death of Abu Musab Al Zarqawi.⁸³ Even though the Brotherhood refused to apologize for the visitation of four of its members to Al Zarqawi's funeral tent, it did issue two statements clarifying its positions. Some saw this as an attempt to pacify the government, and this led to 18 out of the 40 of the Muslim Brotherhood's consultative council members submitting their resignations. Deeply divided internally, the IAF held a poll of its members before its leaders decided against withdrawing from Parliament.

83 Brown (2006).

Palestine

Much of the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine rests in its unsettled ideology and the controversial trajectory of its splinter group, Hamas. Hamas's radical Islamist approach has not only divided Palestinians but also many other members of the movement throughout the Arab world, like the IAF in Jordan.⁸⁴

In the years following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the Brotherhood continued to maintain its role as a social organization that hoped to found an Islamic generation. But its social message was not enough for those who sought liberation from the foreign occupation. Since the Brotherhood never quite resisted the occupation in the way that the emerging Palestinian nationalist resistance movement did, it never became a mass movement. Thus, the more forceful Palestinian movement had greater appeal to the masses.

In the 1980s, a fissure developed along class and ideological lines within the Brotherhood.⁸⁵ It was the old elite of the Brotherhood—urban, upper-middle-class merchants—versus the activist middle stratum, who were lower middle class and university-educated. This latter group was mostly based in refugee camps, domains that were formerly bastions of Arab nationalism. The ideological fissure regarded tactics: should one seek to free the soul or the nation first? The overlapping class and ideological fissures, in addition to mounting social pressures, finally resulted in a palace coup by the middle stratum of the Brotherhood against its leaders, leading to the establishment of Hamas.

Hamas was established as a more attractive alternative to the Islamic Jihad, and a more effective, more forceful alternative to the Brotherhood. The Islamic Jihad had emerged in opposition to the Brotherhood's gradualist ways in 1980, yet they did not catch on the way its members would have liked; it remained small and could not garner a following resembling the likes of the Brotherhood. So, to address the criticisms that the Brotherhood was not doing enough to resist Israeli occupation, Hamas was established.

84 Roy (2003).

85 Robinson (2004).

With the eruption of the First Intifada in 1987, the Brotherhood was confronted with an ideological dilemma much like the Brotherhood in Egypt, when a faction of members decided to violently retaliate against Israel.⁸⁶ Just like the Egyptian Brotherhood, members of the Palestinian Brotherhood could not simply sit back and watch as Palestinians rose against the Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank. Still, it was not easy to justify joining the Intifada when its previous positions were well known. Therefore, the Brotherhood created Hamas to join the resistance in its stead.

Unlike the Jordanian Brotherhood, which was much more accommodating to its authorities, Hamas has stood by jihad as being the only solution to enemy occupation. Hamas felt that the supposed “peaceful solutions”⁸⁷ that sought to solve the Palestinian question conflicted with the doctrine of the Islamic Resistance Movement, because giving up any part of the homeland would be the same as giving up part of the religious faith itself. It opposed the Madrid peace talks that occurred in 1991 and subsequent Arab-Israeli negotiations.

During the 1993 Oslo Accords, the political and military wings of the Islamic movement—which Hamas predominated—were substantively weakened by a combination of factors. One was the intense pressure that was imposed by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Another was the end of Intifada, which was critical to Hamas’s thinking and action, and undermined the resistance component of the Palestinian struggle.

Further damaging to the Islamic movement’s political and military wings in Palestine was the Palestinian population itself. Among Palestinians, there was a growing alienation from politics in favor of cultural and religious practices. After some time, the economic costs of Hamas’s military operations and terrorist attacks became too high in an eroding socioeconomic environment, and widespread popular opposition to such attacks played an important role in ending them. At the same time, the younger of the Hamas cadres were disillusioned by Hamas’s failure to achieve any change and decided to desert the organization altogether.⁸⁸

86 Ziad (1993).

87 Ibid.

88 Roy (2003).

Finally, the Palestinian Authority succeeded in co-opting some parts of the military in newly established Islamic parties or groups. In response, Hamas steadily shifted its emphasis to the social sector, effectively providing a range of important services. It redirected its approach, searching for accommodation within the status quo. In the period before the Second Intifada in 2000, Hamas was no longer predominantly calling for political or military action against Israel, but instead shifting its attention to social works and the propagation of Islamic values and religious practice.

The definition of threats facing Palestinian society also changed. Threats were no longer confined to political and military attacks, but went so far as cultural aggression against Palestinian values, beliefs, and practices. Defeating the occupier became a matter of cultural preservation, the building of a moral consensus, and the development of an Islamic value system.⁸⁹ The Islamic movement was creating a discourse of empowerment despite the retreat of its long-dominant political sector.

On the one hand—in the five years preceding the unrest—the Islamists, particularly Hamas, were undergoing a process of de-radicalization and searching for political and social accommodation within the status quo of Palestinian society. It represented a pronounced shift away from emphasis on political-military action to social-cultural reform. Hamas slowly but steadily abandoned political violence as a form of resistance and a strategy for defeating the occupier. But on the other hand, the Intifada and Fateh's militarization of the conflict sidelined the role of civil society and supported re-ascendance of the political military wing as the defining and authoritative component within the Islamic movement. This has proved problematic to the Brotherhood's success in Palestine.

In 2006, elections in Palestine led to a major victory for Hamas over Fateh. 74 of the 132 Palestinian Legislative Council seats went to Hamas, with Hamas winning 44.45 percent of the vote and Fateh winning 41.43 percent.⁹⁰ The Near East Consulting firm conducted exit polls at the elections and found some two-thirds to three-quarters of the respondents felt that security, anti-corruption, and economic prosperity would greatly improve

89 Ibid.

90 Election Guide.

under Hamas, but also around three-quarters wanted Hamas to change its stance toward opposing Israel's right to exist.

Following the election, the Palestinian government split, with a Fateh government in the West Bank and a Hamas government in Gaza. While Gaza had long been a site for the Intifada and attacks against Israel had been common, they escalated with the ascendancy of Hamas. This has become known as the Gaza-Israeli conflict. Israel's response to Hamas taking control, and the subsequent escalation in violence that ensued, was to seal its border with the Gaza Strip, which prevented the flow of people and goods. When internal fighting broke out between Hamas and Fateh, and Hamas effectively took control of the Gaza Strip, Israel clamped down even harder, leading to further conflict and a marked increase in poverty due to a lack of economic trade.

The Gaza War, which involved everything from small skirmishes to full-scale battles, lasted up until August 2014 (its worst year), and left the entire area devastated. For this reason, Hamas has become intensely unpopular in Gaza. In fact, according to Nader Said-Foqahaa, director of the Arab Center for Research & Development, a public opinion survey firm based in Ramallah, if Fateh and Hamas were to face off in elections now, Fateh would garner 45 percent of the vote in the Gaza Strip. The Hamas leader, Ahmad Youssef, has himself recognized the need for change: "The Islamic movement in Palestine in particular needs to undertake intellectual and practical revisions regarding its role in the local and the international changes in the world."⁹¹

91 Wirtschafter (2016).

Morocco

Morocco's Islamist movement is comprised of the political group Al Tawhid (which formed the Justice and Development Party, or PJD) and the non-political group al-Adl Wal Ihsan. PJD's desire to remain valid within the Moroccan political sphere has led to the stripping away of any overtly religious aspects. It has pressured the key political actor in the country—the Monarchy—but it has refrained from clashing with it by making alliances with other opposition movements to facilitate such pressures and avoid isolation. The PJD has secured a foothold in government through an accommodationist posture toward the Monarchy, while the anti-Monarchical al-Adl Wal Ihsan has sustained its appeal and access through non-violent activism.⁹²

Like many Islamic parties, Morocco's PJD is still working to find a sustainable balance between the practical requirements it needs to fulfill in order to participate in elections and its own ideological Islamist values despite its electoral success. The very strict Moroccan governing body has forced it to adopt moderate political and social stances while also still trying to speak to those attracted to its Islamist framework. As a result, the Islamist movement has found itself remaining flexible—arguably, capitulating—to reach the mainstream.

In 2003, the terrorist attacks in Casablanca caused a great deal of antagonism between the PJD and the leftist and secular parties in Parliament.⁹³ The PJD was slammed with an anti-PJD media campaign; it adjusted its message to start focusing on management and administration decisions. It dropped unconditional support of Islamic identity themes, subsequently losing the blessing of the Movement of Unity and Reform (MUR), which ceased to lend a hand in the party's 2007 campaign. After the PJD split from the MUR, the PJD signaled that it would separate proselytizing from politics. The party would only be responsible for governance and administration, a somewhat shocking claim for an Islamist party.

92 Spiegel (2015).

93 Pellicer & Wegner (2012).

The election of Abdelilah Benkirane as Secretary-General of the PJD in 2004 sealed the party's identity as an accommodationist group, as he was known to advocate gradual reform and compromise.⁹⁴ In order to promote constitutional and legal reforms, the PJD had to form coalitions with other opposition forces. It also took to a mild approach in its platform. For example, instead of referring to the Sharia, the 2007 electoral platform mentioned "the protection of Morocco's Islamic identity" as its main religious-based priority. In 2007, its platform, which was "Together to Build a Just Morocco," detailed economic and public policy proposals without any mention of Sharia. It is important to note, however, that this shift away from religion actually caused it to lose votes between 2002 and 2007.

Overall, the PJD was instrumental in coordinating a unified opposition front that compelled the government to respond favorably to political pressure and change the constitution, though the new constitution didn't reduce the power of the Monarch. The party still supported the government's legitimacy, but it would not tolerate authoritarianism and political exclusion.

Tunisia

Tunisia is alone in being a bit of a success story for the MB, though it should be remembered that after they recently won power, accusations that they were lax on terrorism forced them to give it up again. Ennahda's overall success can be attributed to its partly unselfish, partly observational nature. It compared itself with models that worked and those that didn't, and vocalized its opinions about global events. It condemned the treatment of Morsi supporters who were killed in the Raaba Massacre of 2013 by the Egyptian government, professing solidarity with them and their struggle. It dismissed violence as a solution, aware that this was often the reason why other movements failed or became fractured.

When various Ennahda leaders, members, and supporters were asked what kind of Islamist party Ennahda aspired to emulate after the Arab Spring, none said the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, the majority said

94 Catusse & Zaki (2010).

Turkey's AK party; Ghannouchi, particularly, believed that the "AK Party will gradually make Turkey a more Muslim country through education, building the economy, and diversifying the media. That's our model—not law. Make people love Islam. Convince, don't coerce them."⁹⁵ According to Hamadi Jebali, former Secretary General of Ennahda and former head of Tunisian government from 2011-2013, Ennahda was "much closer to the AKP than to the Muslim Brotherhood. We are a civic party emanating from the reality of Tunisia, not a religious state." Most obviously, as exemplified by other movements in other countries, "internal fighting" was seen as a weakness, "a failure at its prime."⁹⁶

Others said Tunisia would carve its own model following its independence, possibly taking inspiration from the German Christian Democrats. In making the case to share power, Ghannouchi and Ennahda leaders frequently invoked the example of Algeria and the civil war. Its lesson was that the long-term politics of gradualism was advisable, especially at moments of democratic transition. According to Al Ghannouchi, "our priority is to participate...one party should not govern alone. A party alone cannot face these [transitional, post-authoritarian] challenges."⁹⁷

In Tunisia, various political parties worked together to prevent internal violence from occurring. Ennahda compromised, giving up its democratically earned power peacefully. It valued the end goal over preserving the party's power, wishing to "lay the foundations for freedom with a constitution based on consensus, opening the way to make Tunisian political life democratic and then to build a democratic system."⁹⁸ Had Ennahda refused to give up its power, as the Brotherhood in Egypt did, this may have led to a bloody civil war. Instead, the movement prioritized a democratic future for Tunisia rather than its own success.

Ennahda's concept of the relationship between state and religion did not differ much from the way in which previous post-colonial regimes had organized it. However, at the level of its strategic and political behavior as a party, it strived to behave democratically, in accordance with its official

95 Marks (2015).

96 Stepan (2012).

97 Marks (2015).

98 Jebnourne (2014).

declarations of commitment to democracy. Ennahda sought a peaceful rotation of power for the Tunisian government, protecting everyone from the temptation to hold onto the power. “At the same time,” Al Ghannouchi said, “power-sharing protects us from the threat of being subjected in the future to exclusion, marginalization, and torture.”⁹⁹

According to Al Ghannouchi, “the human genius lies in its ability to manage this difference and politics gives it the ability to manage it in a sound, peaceful, and civilized way, without using any brutality to enable the people to coexist despite their differences. This difference can enrich the diversity of life, not an element of destruction, and this is the difference between the civilized and backward people.”¹⁰⁰ Ennahda also wished to forge relations between Islamic thought and Western thought by taking part in academic and scientific settings at Western universities. However, this proved unfruitful because the West had been influenced by Ben Ali’s rejection of Ennahda’s political and institutional status.

Al Ghannouchi’s resistance to a violent revolution produced favorable results. During the uprisings, Tunisians did not represent the future as secular or Islamist, just as reconfigurable. The sudden absence of institutionalized politics made it ripe for radical change, allowing unification around the demand for a total rupture with the past. Once the president fled, this momentary exception ended and with it came “fugitive democracy,”¹⁰¹ a free society consisting of diversities that can nonetheless enjoy moments of commonality when—through public deliberations—collective power is used to promote or protect the well being of the collectivity.

In mid-May 2016, Ennahda held a three-day congress, the first of its kind since 2012, and emerged with the announcement that it would separate the religious (*al-da’awi*) from the political (*al-siyasi*).¹⁰² There appear to be three reasons for this new development. First, the group is attempting to synchronize itself with the “deep state,” or the political establishment created by Bourguiba that is modeled on French secularism. Second, the move professionalizes Ennahda, marking an important turn toward its goal of

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

101 Zeghal (2013).

102 Sadiki (2016).

being a fully legitimate political party. Finally, the group is becoming more democratic and less factional as it allows members to discuss its internal organization and positions. This has led to a broader and shrewder view of democracy as the inevitable forum in which Ennahda will succeed or perish.¹⁰³

103 Ibid.

Conclusion

The Muslim Brotherhood has witnessed numerous ups and downs since Al Banna's inception of the organization. Over the years, the group has been transformed from a highly secretive hierarchical organization led by anointed elders into a fragmented, multi-vocal political association. The group's moments of success have largely resulted from its attempts to remain relevant to changing political conditions. What is clear is that the Brotherhood is struggling to find a place in Arab political scenes due to its extensive history of blending religion with politics, infighting, and links to terrorism.

When comparing today's Islamist movement with Al Banna's Egyptian Brotherhood, it is difficult to say that it has ultimately succeeded in realizing the goals that the MB's founder set out to achieve. Yet it can also be said that the Muslim Brotherhood, from which the other organizations sprouted, was itself ideology-based, not fully practical and therefore unsustainable. Although Al Banna realized that political organization of the Islamic states demonstrated a move toward a united religio-political community, its definition of the powers that the modern nation-state would possess were not spelled out. However, Al Banna was clear about his intolerance of the notion of a separation between Islam and the state—a concession both the IAF in Jordan and the JPD in Morocco made in order to maintain a foothold in politics.

Ultimately, the Brotherhood is an oppositionist movement that has failed to transform itself into a system that can govern. Some claim its ideology has been at the heart of its problems, which have been exacerbated by its inescapable habit of fostering multiple and often contradictory beliefs. The timeless arguments of old versus young and conservative versus modern have consistently caused the Brotherhood to undergo numerous identity crises. Such crises, Khalil Al Anani says in "The Muslim Brotherhood After Morsi," have had a hand in the Brotherhood's inability to maintain power. As the Brotherhood was transitioning into ruling, it "ought to have made the transition from its world of ideas and ideological and organizational

prejudices to the world of politics and realistic programs that come with a need for political, social, and economic adaptation and balance.”¹⁰⁴

However, the Brotherhood has too often failed to follow this advice. The group now appears to be shifting toward a more conservative approach, assuming the classic tunnel vision that has prevented it from seeing the issues at hand. As Al Anani reports, “When I asked Dr. Mahmoud Hussein, Brotherhood general-secretary, what he thought of June 30 [2013], he answered that it would be a normal day and that the people would defend them... At that point, I realized that the Brotherhood leadership was living in another world with no connection to what was happening.”¹⁰⁵ In another article, Khaled Matei, a member of the Freedom Justice Party, says, “We don’t accept this government. This election, if they do it, is not legal because all of them are not legal.”¹⁰⁶ Arguably, this rigid refusal to accept the government as legal could hurt the Brotherhood’s image and any chance of it getting back into the political sphere.

In recent affairs, El Sisi has made it clear that he does not wish to stamp out Islam; rather, he opposes those who abuse it for their own best interests. His insistence on claiming Islam and redefining it has sent a positive message to many others who have grown tired of watching Islamists kill in the name of their religion. For instance, after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, El Sisi called for a “religious revolution,” suggesting that the “contemporary understanding of [Islam] is infected with justifications for violence, requiring the government and its official clerics to correct the teaching of Islam.”¹⁰⁷ El-Sisi has even exerted his control over the dissemination of Islam in Egypt by establishing imams in mosques who are aligned with the will of the government, and by dictating sermons.¹⁰⁸

El Sisi’s rhetoric has been aptly applied—much more aptly than the Brotherhood is generally able to do—and has been enhanced by convenient timing. From 1993 to 2008, Islamist militants were behind 60 percent of

104 Al-Anani (2013).

105 Ibid.

106 Lynch (2012).

107 Kirkpatrick (2015).

108 Ibid.

the terrorist bombings with the highest casualties.¹⁰⁹ For years, headlines have presented the Islamist extremists of the Taliban and al-Qaeda as the enemy, and the ties between the Brotherhood and such groups, even if tenuous, have been enough to create pushback against them. The Brotherhood has become a scapegoat for many of the violent attacks that occur in the country, notably the assassination of the Egyptian prosecutor Hisham Barakat who “oversaw a number of high-profile cases against officials and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood.”¹¹⁰ Although the Brotherhood condemned these attacks on Twitter and pointed the finger at the government for “provoking bloodshed,” there is hardly any denying the power that El-Sisi’s anti-Muslim Brotherhood narrative has over the main political conversation.¹¹¹

The July 3 deposition of Morsi demonstrates the Brotherhood’s unpreparedness to rule the people with set guidelines, despite the fact that it had waited years—over eighty—to put someone in power. But it also demonstrates the ease with which such a government could become corrupt. While Mubarak’s role as a puppet for the United States was widely accepted by Egyptians tired of the ruler’s abuse of power, Morsi and his ties to the Brotherhood did not present itself as enough of a contrast. The acquisition of power by the Brotherhood simply resulted in a continuance of the “systematic subversion” that Egyptians had endured for years, oppressing them with even more hegemony.¹¹²

Thus, when Morsi came into power, his consulting with the Brotherhood appeared to be questionable, and his later declaration of absolute rule affirmed the perception of the Brotherhood as overbearing. Had the group developed a less hegemonic approach, it could have perhaps maintained a more serious stance in the public’s eye. Further undermining its seriousness was the Brotherhood’s constant reconstruction of its viewpoints. For example, during his oath of office in Tahrir Square in 2012, Morsi promised to work toward the freeing of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, an Islamist convicted of planning to bomb various NYC landmarks. “I see signs for Omar Abdel Rahman and detainees’ pictures,” he said. “It is my duty and

109 Ibid.

110 Kholaf (2015)

111 Ibid.

112 Al Anani (2013).

I will make all efforts to have them free, including Omar Abdel Rahman” (Kirkpatrick, 2012). Following this, however, a Brotherhood spokesman said that Morsi “intended to ask federal officials in the United States to have Mr. Abdel Rahman extradited to Egypt on humanitarian grounds. He was not seeking to have Mr. Abdel Rahman’s contradictions overturned or calling him a political prisoner.”¹¹³

The verbal redaction made by the Brotherhood member was just one more representation of an Egyptian ruler being inconsistent. As Al Anani has said, “the Brotherhood interfered in the presidency, issuing statements and adopting positions that conflicted with it.”¹¹⁴ This was harmful to the image of Morsi, and rendered him, in the people’s eyes, as “subordinate to the Brotherhood. In a country where the office of president has historically enjoyed considerable prestige, the Brotherhood made many political and strategic errors that helped to prematurely bring their rule to an end.”¹¹⁵

Clearly, the range in its opinions on acts committed by radical groups is eclipsing its overall function. Shadi Hamid says part of the problem is generational: “If you’re a 60-year-old Brother, you’ve had the nonviolence doctrine drilled into you for decades, but if you’re 22 and have only been in the Brotherhood for three years, you feel less bonded to it.”¹¹⁶ Obviously the Brotherhood needs to be much more vocal in its stance against extremism, picking a side and following through. And picking the radical side of ISIS and even Hamas would be problematic, considering this is the narrative that El-Sisi has constructed since his acquisition of power following Morsi’s deposition. This would merely confirm the widely growing reputation of Islamists as a violent, staunch oppositional force that ignores the government and even, in some cases, the will of the majority.

Al Anani has argued that it is this mentality that cost the Brotherhood Morsi’s presidency; that “vicious campaigns of incitement and distortion significantly contributed to turning public opinion against the Brotherhood, and led to a large turnout for the demonstrations of June 30, 2013

113 Kirkpatrick (2012).

114 Al Anani (2013).

115 Ibid.

116 Giovanni and Elisson (2015).

demanding an end to the Morsi's rule."¹¹⁷ In short, there is little room for ambiguity in a political sphere whose stakes are raised higher and higher with each passing day.

The inability of the Muslim Brotherhood and its sister organizations to have a truly successful run throughout the Arab world is reflective of both external and internal factors, many of which have been mentioned in the previous chapters. At the same time, externally, the MB and its sister organizations were receiving conflicted messages from dominating rule. Relations with republican governments and monarchies have proved crucial to the Islamist movement's reach. The sensitive, ever-changing political climate of the Arab world meant governments could be friends to the Islamic movement in one season and imprisoning its members in the next. Chaotic forces coming from without and within severely damaged the movement's chances of thriving. Although many Arab dictatorships have allowed opposition parties to function, this leniency has mainly fed those leaders' own self-interests. They have managed to keep tight control of the political spectrum.

For all Islamist groups, no matter how progressive or conservative, the fundamental problem is that they are neither movements nor parties, but an often confusing mixture of both. On the one hand, a reason for joining the movement may be to get into heaven. On the other, the temptation of power, the distortion of Islamist priorities, and the undermining of the delicate balance between preaching and partisan politics have persisted for decades, degrading the essence of the very project that the Islamist groups have set out for themselves.

In conclusion, the rise of Islamic extremism in the media has been particularly damaging to the Brotherhood's image, causing it to be furtively stamped out in Egypt, although in some places other than Tunisia Islamism has managed to hang onto a modicum of legitimacy—like the IAF in Jordan and the JPD in Morocco. Still, if history is any guide, the expectation that the MB will think realistically seems facile in the face of a litany of perpetual “ifs.” If it can indoctrinate its youth members against violence. If it can convince its members to patiently overcome the frustration that

117 Al Anani (2013).

the Egyptian government might incite within them. If it can convince the public that it is not engaged in or supporting terror. If it can return to its roots and win people over through peaceful social programs. With so many “ifs” that never seem to fully come to resolutions acceptable to populations increasingly demanding of democracy, the Muslim Brotherhood appears stuck, and is, in the opinion of this author, likely to continue to dwindle in power as the Arab world transforms itself into a region intolerant of, and working in international collaboration to destroy, those who engage in politically motivated violence.



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Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs
Harvard Kennedy School
79 John F. Kennedy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

www.belfercenter.org