Egypt's Arab Fall: Understanding the Organization and Policies of the Muslim Brotherhood

Mısır'ın Arab Sonbaharı: Müslüman Kardeşlerin Örgütlenmesi ve Politikalarını Anlamak

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Öz

Mübarek rejiminin çöküşünden kışa bir süre sonra Müslüman Kardeşler milletvekili ve cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimlerinde kazandığı zaferle birlikte beklenmedik bir siyasi güce kavuştu. Müslüman Kardeşler büyük ölçüde yardım etkinlikleri ve sosyal hizmetleri sayesinde geniş çaplı bir halk desteğine sahipti, fakat halk desteği Mursi'nin göreve başlamasından kısa bir süre sonra ciddi bir şekilde azalmaya başladı. Mursi'nin iktidara gelişimin birinci yıldönümünde, milyonlarca Mısırlı Mursi'yi ve onun yönetimini protesto etmek için sokaklara döküldü. Yoğun sokak gösterileri Mısır'ın demokrasiye geçiş beklentilerini ortadan kaldıran bir askeri darbe ile sonuçlandı. Bu makale Müslüman Kardeşler hareketinin Mısır'da derin devlete karşı izlediği politikaların örgütü 2013'teki kitlesel sokak protestoları karşısında nasıl savunmasız bıraktığını analiz etmektedir. Makale öncelikle Müslüman Kardeşler hareketinin tarihsel evrimini ve Mısır'ın geçiş süreci esnasında örgütün liderleri tarafından alınan kritik kararları ve bunların sonuçlarını ele almaktadır. Son olarak, makale 2013 askeri darbesinden sonra Müslüman Kardeşler'in izlediği politikaları incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap isyanları, 2013 darbesi, siyasi İslam, Müslüman Kardeşler, Mısır.

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Abstract

The Muslim Brotherhood witnessed an unexpected political power with its electoral victory in legislative and presidential elections soon after the fall of Mubarak in Egypt. Although the Brotherhood enjoyed high popular support, to a great extent, thanks to its charity activities and social services, soon after Morsi took office, this popular support began to diminish dramatically. On the first anniversary of Morsi's inauguration as president, millions of Egyptians took to the streets to protest against his administration. Massive street protests ended up with a military coup that eliminated the prospects for Egypt's transition to democracy. This article investigates how the Brotherhood's policies vis a vis the deep state in Egypt made the organization vulnerable in the awake of street protests in 2013. First, the article makes a brief overview of the historical evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood and then, it explores critical decisions taken by the Muslim Brotherhood leadership during Egypt's transition and their implications. Finally, it examines the organization's policies in the aftermath of the coup.

Keywords: Arab uprisings, 2013 coup, political Islam, Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt.

Introduction

When the decades long rule of Mubarak came to an end in 2011 following a wave of street protests that shook several Arab states, Egypt found itself in a protracted conflict between the military tutelage that ruled the country behind the curtain for decades and the revolutionary forces and the Muslim Brotherhood which demanded democratic change. On the societal level, thanks to its extensive charity activities and social services the Brotherhood has enjoyed the largest grassroots support and highly sophisticated organization. Despite successive crackdowns starting in 1948 till now, the organization remained as a prominent aspect of the Egyptian politics. The Arab uprisings, which came to be known as the Arab Spring in 2011, brought the Muslim Brotherhood legalization and gained the organization significant political power initially, however, Egypt's short-lived democratic experience suffered severe reversal.

Immediately after the fall of Mubarak, Egypt moved into electoral politics and Egyptians were called to the polls for a total of five national elections or referenda, some of which had multiple rounds between 2011 and 2013. On the other hand, none of the elections or referenda paved the way for designing the country's political transition according to the popular will. Each election and referendum only helped to magnify the polarization between supporters of the old regime and the Muslim Brotherhood which has a very complex and extensive organization with more than 750.0000 working and regular members - a figure that is far greater with the inclusion of affiliate membership categories and lower level supporters (Ashour, 2015). In addition, between 2012 and 2014 Egypt's new political forces drafted and ratified two constitutions, neither of which was an outcome of an inclusive and participatory process and consensual politics that truly reflected popular will.

Egypt failed in every single step that is regarded as a condition for democratic transition. The deep state, that is, military, judiciary and bureaucracy that have ruled the country since the Free Officers Coup in 1952 with an iron fist, didn't allow a real regime change to take place. While the Muslim Brotherhood was officially in power, it was still the deep state that ruled the country behind the curtain. Morsi government didn't have full control over the intelligence services, the military, police, judiciary, banking institutions, the diplomatic corps which were staffed under Mubarak. As David Kirkpatrick noted, "Morsi was sort of perched on top of the machinery, of the old regime, the bureaucracies of the old regime and security forces of the old regime- and he was gradually trying to change that... But there was always an element of at least foot dragging in every part of bureaucracy and open revolt among the security forces" (NPR, 2013). The eventual outcome was Egypt's reversion to a fully-fledged military authoritarianism. The Freedom and Justice Party, the Brotherhood's political

arm and Morsi as the first freely elected president in the country were overthrown by a military coup in 2013. The group was banned in Egypt and declared as a terrorist organization immediately after the military coup. The coup that forcefully ousted Egypt's democratically elected president and party eliminated the country's long awaited aspirations for a democratic change and amplified the existing gap between the Muslim Brotherhood members and the secular forces in the Egyptian society. The coup and the military regime under Sisi will have several implications for Egypt's political life for a long time to come.

Given that the Brotherhood is the oldest and the largest political Islamist movement with several branches across the Arab world, it is important to grasp the peculiar characteristics of the organization along with its longstanding political role in Egypt. To this end, this article struggles to answer two critical questions: (1) how the Brotherhood emerged as a dominant political force after Mubarak's removal from office (2) why the organization lost when in power. This article first sheds light on the Brotherhood's evolution as a political Islamist movement over time linking its past to its current policies. Second, it traces the key political events in the period that led up to the coup and analyzes how the organization's policies during the critical junctures of Egypt's transition strengthened the military's hands vis a vis the revolutionary forces. Third, the article sheds light on the Brotherhood's policies in the post-coup era along with their potential implications.

The Historical Evolution of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

The Society of Muslim Brothers (Jamiyyat al-Ikhwan al Muslimun) was founded by Hasan Al-Banna in the city of Ismailia in Egypt in 1928. During his higher education in Cairo, Al-Banna reacted firmly to the British colonial forces on the Egyptian land and British interference in Egyptian politics. He was deeply disturbed by the secular orientations of the new Egyptian universities and print media, which he believed, weakened the influence of religion. Therefore, in his last year of education, he took on a personal mission to educate youth Islamically and transform the society into devout Muslim community by preaching and teaching them and their parents (Wickham, 2013: 21). To this end, after he received his first teaching position at a primary school in Ismailiyya, Al-Banna spread his call for a return to Islam in mosques, coffeehouses and private homes and became a reputable preacher. In 1928, the Society of the Muslim Brothers was formed by Al-Banna and some of his followers. The name was given by Al-Banna himself who stated "We are brothers in the service of Islam; hence, we are the Muslim Brothers" (Mitchell, 1993: 8).

To the Muslim Brotherhood, the real threat to Islam was posed by the infiltration of Western values and lifestyles. Therefore, the only way to free the country from foreign control and to struggle against the country's social

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and economic malaise is through a return to Islam. According to the Brotherhood's vision of Islam, religion and state (*din wa dawla*) are interconnected. Islam doesn't only guide private belief and life but also politics and governance that considerably differ from secular political systems (Wickham, 2013: 23). Hence, the Brotherhood was a symbol of opposition against the established political order that was intrinsically secular in Egypt.

The history of the Muslim Brotherhood is a history of brutal repression under the authoritarian regimes from Nasser to Mubarak. The Brotherhood leaders welcomed the Free Officers coup of 1952 and saw the new regime as a fulfillment of its aspirations. Yet, new regime's strict socialist policies and secular orientation ran counter to the Brotherhood who repeatedly called for the application of Sharia and supported General Mohammed Naguib in the power struggle that followed the coup. Having perceived the Brotherhood's popularity as a threat to his own position, Nasser decided to take a tough stance against the movement. Meanwhile, Nasser's signing of the evacuation treaty with Britain making various concessions to British interests was severely condemned by some Brotherhood members. On the same day of the treaty, the assassination attempt that targeted Nasser by a Brotherhood member at an open rally gave him much-needed pretext to crush the organization despite condemnation of the attack and denial of any prior knowledge of it by the Brotherhood leadership (Wickham, 2013: 27). From this incident onwards, the Brotherhood became the primary target of the regime and thousands of Brotherhood members were subject to brutal acts and torture in prison while six senior leaders including Sayyid Qutb were tried and executed for treason in 1966. The organization was officially dissolved and forced to operate underground. Nasser regime's harsh crackdown on the organization brought about new schisms within the organization's ranks and some branches of the Brotherhood moved towards ideological radicalization. Upon mass arrests, executions and brutality faced in prisons, they came to the conclusion that such a regime could only be combated through using force and violent acts.

The brutal crackdown on the Brotherhood emerged an irreconcilable division between the two wings of the Brotherhood. On the one hand, followers of Sayyid Qutb embraced the concept of revolutionary Islam which propagated an extremist ideology of armed Jihad, legitimized the use of force and rejected any cooperation with the *jahili* (ignorant) state system. On the other hand, a moderate wing existed under the authority of the Brotherhood's Murshid (Supreme Guide), Hasan Al-Hudeibi who advocated gradualist approach to Islamic reform. In his work, *Du'at la Qudat* (Preachers not Judges) Hudeibi emphasized that Sharia, by nature, is flexible and human interpretation has played an important role in its development. He rejected the idea that the Islamic government could be reduced to the implementation of Sharia under the pretext of God's sovereignty. To

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Hudeibi, committed Muslims could live in line with the divine law even in the absence of an Islamist state (Zollner 2007: 411-33). Du'ah La Qudah constituted the main ideology and strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood as several of close associates of Hudeibi were appointed to the position of Murshid in later years. Hence, though the rigid ideology following Qutb's ideology existed over decades, it was the moderate line adopted by Hudeibi and his successors that prevailed in the Brotherhood's organizational ideology.

Sadat was uneasy with the radical social and economic policies Nasser initiated under the guise of Arab socialism and shortly after he came into power, he called for a complete rupture from the rigid socialism and a political and economic opening to the West. As part of new policy orientation, Sadat granted general amnesty to thousands of Brotherhood members in prison from 1971 to 1975 and called Brotherhood members living in exile in the Gulf countries to return home. Beneath Sadat's urge to the Brotherhood was his hope that the organization would counter the political and social clout of the Nasserist left, which then had posed the greatest challenge to Sadat's authority. Meanwhile, the Brotherhood pursued a moderate ideology under the new Supreme Guide, Umar Al-Tilmisani, who was the successor of Hudeibi after his death. Under Al-Tilmisani, the Brotherhood leadership were convinced that any direct confrontation with the regime and use of force would bear catastrophic consequences for the organization (Kepel, 2003: 125).

Al-Tilmisani placed greater stress on gaining legal status for the Brotherhood and continually expressed the need for official recognition by the regime. Brotherhood leaders, at the time, predicted that they would be allowed to establish a political party, yet their hopes were dashed by the political parties' law of 1977 which forbid the formation of political parties on the basis of religion. By the late 1970s, the Brotherhood's strategic alliance with the Sadat regime came to an end as reflected in the organization's rigid criticism of Sadat's policies. The Brotherhood opposed to the growing social and economic inequality that originated from the *infitah* (opening) of the Egyptian economy to market forces and reacted most severely to Sadat's state visit to Israel in 1977 and criticized his signing Camp David Peace Treaty with Israel. Sadat's alignment with the US and the peace treaty with Israel also drew strong opposition from ordinary Egyptians who viewed the peace treaty as treason (Wickham, 2002: 114). In 1979, the regime cracked down on the Brotherhood culminating in mass arrests of more than 1500 Brotherhood members including Al-Tilmisani and other senior leaders (Wickham, 2013: 33). In 1981, Sadat was assassinated by a member of a radical Islamist group, Islamic Jihad.

Hosni Mubarak's inauguration as Egypt's new president after the assassination of Sadat opened a new phase in the evolution of the Brotherhood. In his first decade in office, Mubarak initiated a brief period of political liberalization and gradually opened more space for public

freedoms. The Brotherhood reaped the benefits of the limited political openings initiated by Mubarak to achieve political gains and maintain its social and religious activism. In the mid-1980s, the Brotherhood started to enter in various spheres of public life and ensured its presence in the political life of Egypt. Opposition activists including Brotherhood members were released from prison and regular, albeit flawed multiparty elections were held while press organizations were granted with a certain degree of freedom (Wickham, 2002: 114). In this era, radical and violent Islamists groups such as Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Group (al-Jama'a al- Islamiyya) posed a severe security threat to the Egyptian state. By mobilizing moderate groups like the Brotherhood, the Mubarak regime aimed to curb the political and ideological influence of radical groups.

In the first decade of Mubarak's tenure, the Brotherhood expanded its presence in the public sphere in two ways: First, the organization was involved in formal politics through forming alliances with the secular parties and participating in parliamentary elections. Second, the Brotherhood dominated several professional syndicates and student unions which allowed the group to expand its political clout. The Brotherhood's increased political participation enabled the organization to embrace the language of democracy and led to an increase in the organization's reference to global norms of democracy and human rights (Wickham, 2013: 46). However, the organization's increased visibility in the political arena brought about some internal conflicts within the movement. The old guard were opposed to women and Coptic Christians' being nominated for presidency while the reformists believed that the authority lied in the *umma*, or the community of believers (Soage and Franganillo, 2010: 49). The death of the Supreme Guide, Al-Tilmisani brought the old guard with a conservative view to the leadership of the organization and thus, the organization was divided between the more liberal and conservative factions, which continued up to the present.

Under Mubarak, though the organization was prohibited from running in elections as a party, it participated in both 1984 and 1987 parliamentary elections by entering in alliance with the secular-nationalist Wafd Party in 1984, and with the Socialist Labor Party and Liberal Party to form Islamic Alliance under the motto "Islam is the solution" (Al-Islam huwa al-hall) in 1987. The Brotherhood was able to gain a significant political weight through these elections (Soage and Franganillo, 2010: 45). Besides, during the 1980s, the Brotherhood gained direct political experience by participating in student unions and professional syndicates. The new generation in the Brotherhood were eager to be involved in the organizations which were ostensibly secular through elections in order to consolidate their influence and attract greater numbers of people to the movement (Pargeter, 2013: 35). Numerous syndicates were brought under the Brotherhood's control such as the Doctor's Union in 1985, the

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Pharmacist's Union in 1985, the Engineer's Union in 1986, and the Lawyer's Association in 1992 (Tessler and Brand, 1995: 9). The increased political participation of the Brotherhood together with its organizational capacity allowed it to emerge as the country's leading opposition force.

In this era, the Brotherhood expanded its network of social charities and services ranging from setting up free clinics to provide medical treatment and schools to educate children and young people to providing bread, food supplies and other basic life needs. Through its charity work and social services, the Brotherhood was able to reach to its core support base of lower income populations. Besides, these social services also served to address to the basic needs of the impoverished and compensate for the inadequacy of the Egyptian state in reaching out to the lower classes of the society.

In the 1990s, the Brotherhood started to challenge Mubarak's authority more openly. The organization boycotted the 1990 parliamentary elections undermining the legitimacy and the liberal veneer Mubarak had constructed. More importantly, in 1995, the assassination attempt against Mubarak in Ethiopia exposed the Brotherhood to accusations as to its cooperation with radical Islamist groups though the organization's leadership condemned the attacks. The assassination attempt, just like under Sadat, was used to legitimize the restrictions on party status for Islamist groups and harsh repression on the movement with mass arrests and detentions. Moreover, the regime quickly adopted a new strategy against the Brotherhood which involved associating the organization with militant Islamist groups and isolating the Brotherhood completely from the political process. To curb the Brotherhood's political influence, a legislation was passed bringing professional syndicates under state authority. Meanwhile, a fervent media campaign was initiated by the regime and official press to discredit the organization by branding it a terrorist organization that coordinated with radical Islamist groups.

In 2004, the organization issued a "political reform" initiative that defined democracy, pluralism and political reform as the movement's key objectives marking a milestone in the movement's ideological and political evolution (Al-Anani, 2015: 229). To promote more political and constitutional reform and to hinder Mubarak's attempt to hand power over to his son, Gamal Mubarak, the movement collaborated with other political forces such as Kefaya movement. In the first multi-candidate presidential elections in 2005, the Brotherhood gained a historic electoral victory with twenty per cent of the seats in the parliament despite violence, intimidation and electoral fraud perpetrated by the regime (Sullivan, 2009). The Brotherhood's electoral participation enabled the movement to acquire growing flexibility to adopt and shift in the face of changing constraints (Blaydes, 2011: 150-151).

By the turn of the new century, the Brotherhood was exposed to competition and at times conflict between the two factions in the organization; the old guard headed by the General Guide's second deputy, Khairat al-Shater and

the reformist and revolutionary youth led by Abdel-Moneim Abu al-Fotouh. The old guard were known for their uncompromising loyalty to al-Shater and highly centralized authoritarian decision-making structure. They were a well-disciplined group who were inward-looking and focused on internal capacity building and empowerment. Decisions were taken in rather centralized manner with little transparency and open discussion. As this faction was highly dominant, the organization was sometimes called as "iron organization" (Ashour, 2015: 26).

On the other hand, the reformist youth demanded reforms for less centralization and more democratic, transparent decision-making process within the organization. The new generation of Brotherhood members embraced democratic values and chose to operate within the established system in the belief that the organization would prevail in free and fair elections. Thus, promoting political reform for change lied in the core of the group's agenda. This faction played an important role in raising issues related to political reform in the parliament following the 2005 elections whereas only 10 per cent of the issues raised were related to cultural issues (Blaydes, 2011: 153). In addition to the electoral participation of the Brotherhood members, the reformist youth were vocal critic of the organization's internal structure pushing for organizational reforms that would gradually transform the Brotherhood into a more open, modern and democratic organization. They were also tend to engage in cross-ideological cooperation with other political forces (El-Ghobashy, 2005: 373).

The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Political Transition

During the Egyptian uprisings in 2011, the Brotherhood members clearly avoided using Islamic slogans and any overt sign of ideological affiliation. They also assured other groups that the Brotherhood didn't aim at a religious state akin to the Islamic Republic of Iran but a civil state and Islamic democracy where the people are the source of authority and sovereignty (Wickham, 2013: 167). Likewise, when Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, described the Egyptian uprising as a sign of the Islamic awakening and linked it to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the Brotherhood immediately rejected Khamenei's statements and stated that the uprisings were not linked to Islamist tendencies. Khaled Hamza, the editor in chief of the Brotherhood's website noted that "protests in Egypt were not part of an Islamist uprising, but instead were a mass protest against an unjust, autocratic regime including Egyptians from all walks of life, all religions and all sects" (Saad, 2011). In a similar manner, in his address to the public Dr Mohamed Badie, the chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood, reassured that the group sought participation not domination (Ikhwanweb, 2011). The Brotherhood's support of protestors' demands for constitutional and political reform did not only emanate from its long

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decades of marginalization and exclusion but also from an understanding that democracy would serve its own interests.

Though the Brotherhood didn't lead the uprisings, the ouster of Mubarak left the political scene to a number of political forces among which the Muslim Brotherhood stood out as it was the best organized political group. It was also the most credible opposition group that was in no way associated with the corrupt figures of the Mubarak regime. The Brotherhood sought eagerly to fill the political vacuum created by the fall of Mubarak. On the other hand, young revolutionary movements that sparked and led the uprisings eschewed party politics in principle and focused on politics of protest rather than party organization (Brown, 2012). The disunity among the leftist political groups and the fragmentation and lack of experience of the young revolutionary movements offered the Brotherhood with the long-awaited moment to take its place in the country's political scene.

A closer outlook into the first months following Mubarak's ouster reveals that the MB took pains to ensure its political opponents that it would be committed to compromise, political pluralism and inclusiveness. To this end, the Brotherhood established Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) whose initial membership reached to nearly nine thousand members including one thousand women, one hundred Copts as founding members. The Brotherhood also struggled to show that it embraced all Egyptians by appointing a Coptic Christian vice president, Rafiq Habib and almost a third of the founding members didn't have Brotherhood membership (Al-Anani, 2011). Besides, the organization demanded its members who would hold key positions in the party to leave the Muslim Brotherhood. In a similar vein, Morsi resigned from the chairmanship of the FJP when he was elected as president in an attempt to show that he was a president for all Egyptians.

The Brotherhood introduced several amendments to the draft party platform it unveiled in 2007. The 2011 party platform omitted the controversial provision granting a body of religious scholars a formal role to review draft constitution to be in compliance with Sharia and to advise the parliament and the president, thus creating a system akin to that of the Republic of Iran. Moreover, the Brotherhood removed the article in 2007 party platform that ruled out the election of a non-Muslim or woman from becoming head of the state although Morsi and other senior leaders continually expressed their personal view opposing to the election of women and non-Muslims to senior political posts (Al-Anani, 2011). By discarding those illiberal features from its official documents, the movement aimed to display its moderate stance and support for democratic transition based on a constitution adopted by the free will of the people.

In line with its rhetorical support for inclusive government, the Brotherhood made a number of promises to assure opponent political groups that it didn't aim to dominate the new political order. To this end, the movement pledged it would seek to build a government that would be representative

and inclusive; thus, it would compete for only half of the seats in the parliament, with the goal of winning roughly one-third of the total seats and it would not nominate a candidate for presidential election in order to stave off fears as to Brotherhood's intention to control both the legislative and executive branches (Rutherford, 2008: 18). The senior leaders in the organization continually expressed their goal to work toward inclusion of all social and political groups in decision making.

As the political transition unfolded, the Brotherhood reneged on each of these promises running candidates for almost all of the seats in parliament (eventually won 42 per cent in the lower and 58 per cent in the upper house) and running a candidate for presidency who ultimately won the election (Ibid.). During the six months when the MB was in power, the Brotherhood pushed its political agenda at the expense of other political groups, which many regarded as domineering. Besides, the formation of the constituent assembly which would draft the new constitution was highly controversial since the Brotherhood used its upper hand in both the lower and the upper houses to establish an assembly which was made up of 70 per cent Islamists and had little representation of minority groups including liberals, Copts and women. The Brotherhood leadership justified their shift in political maneuverings despite their initial pledges by pointing to the efforts of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and the judiciary to restrict the political power of the elected authority. Nevertheless, the Brotherhood's actions to consolidate its power while paying little attention to the sensitivities of the minority groups and liberals reinforced mistrust between Islamists and leftist groups in the political and public sphere while raising the latter's suspicions as to the future intentions of the Brotherhood.

The fall of Mubarak created a political vacuum which could only be filled by two political forces, the military as the strongest institution of the country and the Brotherhood as the most important social movement deeply infiltrated into the conservative, religious and the impoverished segments of the society. The Brotherhood made a strategic decision by calculating that it was only the military that would prove as a rival to the Brotherhood, thus, a power-sharing agreement with the military would empower it in the political sphere as power would be divided between the military and the organization while marginalizing the revolutionary forces (Selim, 2015: 185). The Brotherhood leaders believed that the real power lied in the hands of the old state and the military while undermining the power of the street and the revolutionary forces. They attempted to ally with the SCAF and secure support from the patronages of the old state in the belief that seeking compromises with the military and the old state would enhance the Brotherhood's political interests in the long term more than confronting them by mobilizing the street for constitutional and democratic reforms (El-Sherif, 2014).

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The Brotherhood's senior leaders might have also fallen into a fallacy that the new military leadership would be more interested in preserving its power and privileges without being in charge of the day-to day governance of the country, which would be sufficient for a sustainable power-sharing agreement (Pioppi, 2013: 58). Thus, the Brotherhood didn't give precedence to a transition to civilian rule exerting control over the military. Instead, the Brotherhood's attempts to restrict the army's role in politics became apparent only after the SCAF took legislative steps that evidently sought to render the president's decisions null. Therefore, the Brotherhood gave full support to military' constitutional amendments soon after the fall of Mubarak and ensured the economic and political interests of the military in the 2012 constitution. On the other hand, from the SCAF's perspective, the Brotherhood and other Islamists could mobilize the street in favor of SCAF's policies and mitigate popular pressure for democratic reforms and swift transition to civilian rule. In that regard, a tacit alliance with the Brotherhood would both eradicate any possible coalition between the Brotherhood and the revolutionary factions and isolate the Brotherhood from other political forces, thereby alienating it in the face of growing social and economic crisis.

The tacit alliance between the SCAF and the Brotherhood was first seen in the March 2011 referendum for constitutional amendments when the Brotherhood carried out a massive campaign for a 'yes' vote. The organization members warned that refusing the amendments would mean rejection to Article 2 of the 1971 constitution defining *Sharia* as the principle source of legislation (Selim, 2015: 186). The SCAF-Brotherhood alliance was also apparent when the Brotherhood boycotted protests against the SCAF including protests that demanded investigation and fair trials for individuals killed by security forces during the January 25 uprisings. When pro-democracy groups opposed the military's constitutional declaration in March 2011, the Brotherhood legitimated military's role in constitution writing calling protestors as some foreign agents who wanted the division of the country. In addition, the Brotherhood organized pro-SCAF demonstrations and chanted in favor of the SCAF (Ibid.). The Brotherhood and other Islamists remained silent when military cracked down on civilian protestors and tried over ten thousand civilians in military courts or conducted virginity tests on the detained female protestors (Wilson, 2012; Maghraoui, 2014). The Brotherhood's siding with the military junta soon after the fall of Mubarak led to an irreversible rift between the Brotherhood and the liberal and leftist opposition groups who felt alienated and betrayed.

The SCAF-Brotherhood alliance came to an end with the SCAF's issuing of supra-constitutional principles, known as Al-Selmi document. Those principles sought to grant the SCAF autonomy from any oversight and broad powers over the upcoming political processes. The Brotherhood mobilized thousands of demonstrators to protest the document demanding the transfer of power to civilians marking a break-up of the tacit alliance.

When Morsi became the president gaining the executive power, the deep state stroke back and in June, 2012 the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) dissolved the parliament ruling that parliamentary elections were unconstitutional, which was interpreted by the Brotherhood as the military's plot to overturn their electoral gains. Only a few days later, the SCAF issued a supplementary constitutional declaration that significantly restricted the powers of the presidency and granted the SCAF the power to establish a new constitution assembly if the current one failed to complete its work on time. Therefore, in a short while after coming to power, Morsi dismissed SCAF's most senior leaders, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi and the chief of staff, Sami Anan. Furthermore, Morsi annulled the constitutional declaration by the SCAF in an attempt to dissolve the constituent assembly.

In confrontation to the SCAF and opposition groups, Morsi took the most critical step in November 2012 when he issued a controversial constitutional decree that granted himself sweeping powers and placed himself above other institutions including judiciary. While Morsi and Brotherhood supporters struggled to legitimize this move by displaying it as an attempt to protect and immunize the Constituent Assembly and the Shura Council from dissolution by the SCC, the decree raised many suspicions as to the intentions of the Brotherhood among the opposition groups. The opposition groups united under a loose umbrella organization, National Salvation Front (NSF) and they declared the decree as an attempt by the Brotherhood to monopolize power. Eventually, the constitutional decree issued by Morsi led to widespread discontent and opened the way for street protests that gave the SCAF and other elements of the deep state much- needed pretext in launching a counter-revolution process that would end up with a violent ouster of the Brotherhood from power.

The Brotherhood's alliance with the military had several negative consequences for Egypt's transition to democracy from its inception. First, when there were several political forces that were eager to put an end to the Mubarak style autocracy, the Brotherhood tied its destiny to the goodwill of the military junta that was the beneficiary and an integral element of the former authoritarian regime. (Wilson, 2012). Siding with the SCAF in the initial phase of the transition, the Brotherhood lost trust and goodwill of the liberal and leftist groups and could no longer seek their cooperation when the deep state struggled to overturn the elected authority. Besides, the alliance with the military discouraged the Brotherhood from building political coalitions and seeking support from the political forces that aimed at inclusive government and participatory democracy (El-Sherif, 2014).

Eventually, the tacit alliance paid off for the military and the old state. The revolutionary mood in the country and the radical reformist factions of the revolution faded away and the opposition groups including liberals, leftists, seculars and Salafists became hostile to the Brotherhood, which made it

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much less costly for the military to confront the self-isolated Brotherhood (Ibid.). The Brotherhood also lost the support of average voters who were severely affected by fuel shortages, power blackouts and rising crime rates as the deep state could easily sabotage the delivery of social services. Growing security problems, worsening economic conditions and longstanding street protests deepened the existing polarization in the society and turned the public opinion against Morsi.

A distinctive feature of the Brotherhood's policy making in post-Mubarak Egypt was that the movement firmly believed that its electoral victory was irreversible and it would be sufficient to acquire it dominant political position and popular legitimacy. This strategic miscalculation made the senior leaders within the organization highly reluctant to make concessions to the secular and liberal forces when necessary. The Brotherhood's takeover of Egypt's parliament, presidency and the constituent assembly with its swift and exclusivist approach on the verge of policy-making and constitutional drafting raised fears among the already-suspicious secular elite. Moreover, Morsi underestimated and struggled to discredit the opposition as being simply "Mubarak's holdovers" and he denounced anti-Morsi protests as a "counterrevolution" led by the remnants of the Mubarak regime (Hellyer, 2012; Esposito *et al.*, 2016: 223). Nonetheless, there were important distinctions and variations within the opposition and many of the protestors were left-wing figures, human rights advocates and civil society activists.

The political situation got bogged down when Morsi turned a blind eye to the demands of the opposition groups pointing to the electoral legitimacy of the FJP and the "will of the majority". Behind his unilateral decisions such as the November decree and attempts to consolidate power lied Morsi's majoritarian mindset through which the Muslim Brotherhood understood political life and democratic politics. By this perspective, winning elections entitles the winner to decide unilaterally and govern unchecked by the concerns of the losers (Hanna, 2012). At the foundational moment when Egypt was on the verge of establishing a political and constitutional order and many concessions needed to come to a compromise, the Muslim Brotherhood depended on a distinctive conception of winner-takes-all politics and denigrated the political opposition.

Under Morsi, Egypt's national unity was challenged by an unprecedented division which generated a fight between the Islamists and opposition groups who viewed each other as an existential threat and each claimed to be "the people" (*ashaab*). While Islamists demonized the opposition groups as "immoral" and "hostile to Islam" in their television channels sympathetic to the Brotherhood and in the opposition media, the Islamists were casted as "incompetent", "inferior", "unfit to rule" and also as "un-Egyptian" whose loyalties were to their party and to foreign forces like Hamas and Qatar, not to the Egyptian people (Mogahed, 2013).

Morsi failed to adequately demonstrate that "the new Egypt" was a nation state politically and religiously inclusive to all citizens with equal rights. Morsi's failure to guarantee diverse representation in the key institutions shaping Egypt's transition and the Brotherhood's divisive and sectarian rhetoric to rally its more right-wing supporters legitimized the opposition charges that it was a Muslim Brotherhood government rather than the Egyptian government. The use of religion in a divisive manner was also denounced by popular religious authorities such as Habib Ali Al-Jifri of the Tabah Foundation and the Grand Mufti of Egypt Ali Gomaa and their statements were widely approved in Egyptian society (Hellyer, 2012). While sectarian accusations and the hate speech by the Brotherhood members were tolerated by the government, prominent figures such as Bassef Youssef, an Egyptian satirist and Ala Abdel Fattah, a blogger were summoned for investigation when they criticized Morsi's policies. These policies were very much reminiscent of the suppression of the political dissent under Mubarak.

At the root of the problem with the Brotherhood's rule lied the movement's lack of technocratic and bureaucratic experience and skills that would enable them to foresee and cope with the challenges lying ahead of Egypt's transition. Though the Brotherhood has been praised for its robust and competent organizational structure for decades, its ability to convert this organizational experience into a competent governing body was significantly weak and limited (Al-Anani, 2015). The Muslim Brotherhood emerged as a proselytization movement and therefore, it aimed to shape individuals' identity to become devout Muslims and loyal members to the organization. To this end, mechanisms of socialization and advancement within the movement operated through the organizational norms of allegiance, obedience and commitment which were essential to ensure the Brotherhood's survival and integral unity. Moreover, since its foundation the organization operated as an opposition movement and its members were trained on how to counter repressive policies of the regime, to oppose and challenge the regime but not on how to govern and rule (Ibid.). Likewise, for many decades the Brotherhood members were excluded from important positions within state bureaucracy, which precluded them from gaining governing experience and gradually adapting themselves to Egypt's political environment. Not surprisingly, following the fall of Mubarak regime, the movement couldn't adapt to the new political setting which casted it a role as a ruling party.

Another challenge facing the Brotherhood on the eve of the uprisings was the balance of power favoring the conservative wing of the movement. Over the last two decades, the conservative leaders consolidated their grip on power and in the aftermath of Mubarak's ouster, they were able to dominate the Brotherhood's whole decision-making process. Under the domination of the conservatives, the Brotherhood's internal functioning remained non-transparent and decisions were taken by a small group of senior leaders in

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the guidance bureau, imposing their rigid ideology and narrow-minded political views on the Brotherhood's political arm, the FJP (Pioppi, 2013: 60; Ashour, 2015: 26-27). Furthermore, the domination of the conservative senior leaders over the organization led to the suppression of the reformist wing's attempts to modernize the movement's organizational structure to transform it into a more democratic, inclusive and transparent organization were suppressed and eventually, prominent reformist figures including those young reformists who took an active role in the uprisings were alienated and expelled from the organization. Thus, the organizational structure of the Brotherhood which was plagued by a rigid hierarchy offering little participation for its members and isolation of the reformist youth from the organization in the aftermath of the uprisings rendered the movement vulnerable in the face of rapid social changes and the conservative senior leaders remained incapable of adjusting themselves to the new conditions of the Egyptian politics which required flexibility and fresh talent and ideas.

The Muslim Brotherhood's Post-Coup Politics

Since the military overthrow in 2013, the Muslim Brotherhood has faced a systematic repression that had no parallel to the former oppression policies. The level of repression is unprecedented and in no way comparable to the level and scale of repression under Sisi's predecessors. Thousands of the Brotherhood's members and leaders were put into prison, their financial assets were frozen, and their social associations along with medical and educational centers were confiscated by the regime. Worse still, several hundreds of Brotherhood's members and supporters were killed by the regime forces either by random shooting during the protests and sit-ins, or by torture and excessive brutal force. Anti-Ikhwan campaign run by the regime also included Al-Azhar, the most prominent Sunni Muslim organization in Egypt, which introduced the condition for any imam to work in a mosque to be approved by Al-Azhar forcing Muslim Brotherhood affiliated imams to leave their positions (Telci, 2016: 2).

The interim government that was under Sisi's control after Morsi's removal and the Sisi regime which officially took office in 2014 pursued two principal strategies in dealing with the Brotherhood. First, the regime aimed to dissolve the lines of command within the organization in order to put an end to the leadership's control and bring severe internal divisions. Second, the Sisi regime adopted a heavy handed policy against the organization in an attempt to uproot it completely from public and political sphere. With this move, the main motive of the military regime has been to undermine political activism of the organization so that it won't be a competitive political force in the future. To achieve social and political isolation of the Brotherhood, Sisi regime developed a narrative associating the organization with violent or radical Islamism. To this end, the Brotherhood was declared a terrorist organization for the first time in its history leading thousands of its members to escape and live in exile abroad, particularly in Turkey, Qatar and the UK.

Immediately after the coup, the Brotherhood mobilized its thousands of members and supporters into the streets. The organization was apparently motivated by two goals. First, it aimed to create anti-coup alliance to change the status quo for its favour. Second, it prioritized maintaining unity and cohesion among its rank and file. To this end, the Brotherhood established the "National Alliance to Support Legitimacy" which was a coalition of Islamist parties and groups that condemned Morsi's overthrow and called for his reinstation. (Al-Anani, 2019: 1333) However, the coalition failed to achieve its objectives and many of its member parties withdrew from the alliance. Meanwhile, daily protests were organized by the Brotherhood members to condemn the military coup while the military regime perpetrated several mass killing during those protests. On August 14, 2013, the military backed government ordered the dispersal of the protest camps in Raba'a Al-Adawiya and Al-Nahda which envisioned opening fire and large-scale and disproportionate use of force on largely peaceful protestors. Human Rights Watch documented 817 people killed in the August 14 dispersal of the Raba'a Al-Adawiya sit-in camp alone, and given the strong evidence of additional deaths without accurate record or known identity as well as individuals still missing, it is very likely that more than a thousand civilians were killed in a single day. Security forces detained more than 800 protestors from the sit-in, some of whom were beaten, tortured or executed. Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch pointed to the scale of ferocity of the incident with these words (Human Rights Watch, 2014):

> "In Raba'a Square, Egyptian security forces carried out one of the world's largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history. This wasn't merely a case of excessive force or poor training. It was a violent crackdown planned at the highest levels of the Egyptian government. Many of the same officials are still in power in Egypt and have a lot to answer for."

Upon this massacre, the Brotherhood members developed a powerful narrative of martyrdom and several young members vowed for revenge against the regime and its people. As Ashraf El- Sherif stated Raba'a massacre "closed of the possibility of reconciliation between Islamists and the state and of national cohesion and stability" (Project on Middle East Democracy, 2017). Though violent suppression and mass killings of the Muslim Brotherhood members has been prevalent under the military rule in Egypt, the Raba'a massacre, given the extent of mass killings, is probably the most iconic and will continue to be a tragedy whose legacy would not erase over decades.

The Brotherhood's General Guide along with members of the Guidance Bureau and Shura Council were arrested. In addition, the Egyptian court banned all Brotherhood activities in September 2013, apparently aiming to

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force the movement underground. The ban allowed the security forces to mount its violent behavior against the Brotherhood. Coupled with the brutal crackdown in Raba'a Square, this increasing repression on the movement led to deep divisions within the organization on whether to be confrontational or protest peacefully. In response to the regime's attempt to link the Brotherhood with violent Islamism and terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda and the ISIS, the official Egyptian Ikhwan website released a statement calling for non-violent resistance to the regime repression. Since then, the organization has consistently stressed on the need for non-violence. The movement's leadership ordered its members and supporters to stay home if they couldn't protest peacefully (Al-Anani, 2019: 1334). However, as several senior Brotherhood leaders were imprisoned, young members started to fill the vacuum created by their arrest. These young leaders have become responsible for running the organization's daily activities, organizing protests and monitoring its educational and social networks for the first time in the organization's history.

Disputes have mainly revolved around the clash between an old and traditional leadership who were reluctant to give up their positions and a new leadership that is mainly composed of young members and rose to prominence after the coup. The young members of the Brotherhood hold the movement's leadership accountable for the political failure of the organization and lack of a clear roadmap on how to deal with the post-coup regime. They seek to implement various changes in leadership and organizational culture. The new leadership differed from the old one in that it refused to take a compromising position towards Sisi regime's oppressive policies. They opted for more confrontational discourse which gained widespread support among the rank-and-file of the movement. Additionally, the young and the old leadership differ as to whether to seek power now or in the distant future, as well as how to achieve Islamist rule. Sisi regime intentionally pushes young Brotherhood members toward violence, so that it could brand it as a terrorist militant organization and use this discourse as a shield against his regime's brutal repression. The senior leaders, on the other hand, aware of the severe consequences of retaliation against the regime, reject the younger generation's confrontational stance and prioritize survival strategies and maintaining cohesion within the movement.

The biggest challenge that the Brotherhood faces during the post-coup era is lack of organization, vision, political agenda and strategy to follow. The old leadership in exile has little control over the organization in Egypt. Members have little opportunity to contact senior leaders such as the Brotherhood's acting supreme leader Mahmoud Ezzad since most of them are either in exile or arrested. With the formation of a new committee called "The Supreme Administrative Committee" in 2014, young leaders indeed became the *de facto* leadership of the movement and began to act independently from the senior leaders. (Ibid.) The announcement of this new committee was met

with frustration and rejection by the Guidance Office. They declared this committee illegitimate. The old leadership managed to consolidate its power and control over the movement after Mohammad Kamal, the leader of the Supreme Administrative Committee, was assassinated by security forces in 2016 (Hamama, 2016) and the committee was dissolved. Nonetheless, the internal rifts between the young leadership of the organization based in Cairo and the Guidance Office in exile, mainly based in Istanbul have continued up to date.

While Sisi regime expected that Muslim Brotherhood would marginalize and go underground, given the historic record of the Brotherhood's survival of the earlier waves of repression, this assumption seems to be unlikely. The adoption of violence has been in conflict with the organizational culture and the major trend within the Brotherhood for decades. The groups that attempted to resort to some form of violence have remained marginal with little appeal. During the earlier waves of oppression, particularly under Nasser, the movement had ample opportunities to marginalize, yet they were able to maintain their position regarding commitment to peaceful political action. In addition, the Brotherhood as an organization is quite an expert in running an opposition by demonstrating an absolute flexibility. During its history, the Brotherhood successfully managed to move from the ideological center to periphery and vice versa, adapted its interpretations of concepts such as party politics (*hizbiyya*) and *jihad* in accordance with the nature of its relationship with the former regimes (Holtmann, 2013: 2). The Brotherhood has also traditionally been successful in operating despite the broken leadership structures thanks to its system of semi-autonomous branches in which the leadership is decentralized. By taking the past as a prologue, we can assume that the organization could exist as a social network engaged in charity and social service if not a political party.

Recently, the organization came to an understanding that it must work with other political forces which can make up a broad national front to reject the policies of Sisi regime. The opposition to Sisi regime became united under the Egyptian National Action Group (ENAG) garnering the support of a wide range of the Egyptian opposition. The group released the Egyptian Consensus Document announced by Mohamed Ali, a vocal opponent of Sisi regime living in exile in Spain. The document called for a civilian democratic system including the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers, equal citizenship rights for all and freedom of association. To this end, it highlighted four key areas for action: a comprehensive national project including all the Egyptian streams to achieve the goals of the Egyptian revolution of 2011, removal of the ruling regime, release of all political prisoners and review of external agreements signed by the current government concerning the transfer of Egyptian territory, the waste of Egyptian natural resources and the Nile waters (Middle East Observer, 2020). The Brotherhood was the first to officially support the document

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announcing that the document was an appropriate basis to carry out the duty of the national struggle to remove the military coup (Egyptwatch, 2019). In September 2019, Egypt was shaken by a new wave of protests demanding Sisi's ouster and an end to corruption within the state. Protestors accused Sisi of wasting taxpayers' money on vanity projects like multi-million presidential palaces. President Sisi claimed that the Brotherhood was behind the anti-government protests. According to many analysts, the recent wave of protests was not ignited by the Brotherhood, but rather the everyday youth most of whom were economically marginalized while the Brotherhood sought to take advantage of a new wave of dissent (England, 2019; France24, 2019).

The Brotherhood's influence still prevails over a sizeable part of the religiously conservative population. The organization now depends on senior leadership in exile and with all its rank-and-file structure broken, it struggles to survive amid harsh crackdowns against its members and supporters. The extent to which Sisi regime could repress the growing dissent with brutal force remains to be seen, however, the economy is in dire straits with nearly one in three Egyptians living below the poverty line. Given the upsurge in the unemployed and marginalized youth population, Egypt is likely to witness a new wave of uprisings mainly due to economic reasons. The growing discontent and opposition against Sisi regime might open a window of opportunity to the Brotherhood to reposition itself in the country's political life. If the Brotherhood achieves staying united and forming alliance with other political forces irrespective of the old ideological battles, the organization will continue to act as a crucial component of the Egyptian politics for years to come.

Conclusion

The Muslim Brotherhood witnessed an unexpected political surge in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings in 2011 in Egypt. The first post-Mubarak elections culminated in an electoral victory for the FJP which won nearly half of the seats in the People's Assembly. This was followed by the Brotherhood's victory in the presidential elections which brought Mohammed Morsi to power. However, soon after Morsi became president, strong public opposition began to emerge against his administration. According to his opponents, Morsi lacked the skills of a farsighted leader with vision and experience to move the country towards democracy and economic development.

A number of political decisions by the Morsi administration led to public rage and the opposition against Morsi to mount, which eventually ended up with massive street protests on the first anniversary of the inauguration of Morsi. First, with the victory of the FJP in the parliamentary elections and the election of Morsi to presidency, the Brotherhood swiftly moved to take a more domineering stance over its opponents and adopted a more conservative discourse often referring to Islam and *sharia* in the

constitutional- drafting process. Instead of taking the concerns and interests of diverse political and religious groups into account, Morsi interpreted the electoral victory as a warrant to impose the Brotherhood's political agenda despite the growing outcry of opposition groups.

Second, under Morsi, little effort was made to take an inclusive approach while building new institutions and deciding on the new rules of the democratic game. Despite mounting criticism against the process in which the constitution was drafted and boycott by the left-leaning groups in the assembly, the Brotherhood-dominated constituent assembly approved the constitution. Liberals, secularists and Copts among other groups complained about the monopolization of power under Morsi. Adding to their worry was Morsi's granting himself far-reaching powers with the November Decree which awarded Morsi total immunity to his decisions until the ratification of the new constitution.

Third, the Brotherhood failed to build alliances or cooperate with other groups whose political views and preferences were completely different from those of the Brotherhood. Considering the military as the only powerful political force in the country, the Brotherhood leadership engaged in a tacit alliance with the military in the belief that this alliance would gradually consolidate the rule of the Brotherhood. Eventually, when the military decided to overthrow Morsi and the Brotherhood-led government, the group was isolated and didn't have any ally to turn to. On the other hand, such an alliance with the revolutionary groups would add to the legitimacy of the Brotherhood and make it much more difficult for the military to crack down on the Brotherhood.

Morsi's failure to pave the way for a democratic culture and consensual politics led people to believe that they replaced one authoritarian leader with another. The post-revolution politics in Egypt necessitated the evolution of the Brotherhood from an opposition movement into a political party in power that internalized the principles of democratic governance with inclusive, transparent and participatory processes. However, the Brotherhood had been isolated from Egyptian politics and was prevented from founding a political party for decades. In the aftermath of the uprisings, despite the revolutionary spirit and liberal norms of values promoted by the revolutionary forces, the Brotherhood continued to operate with the same code of norms and values as it had done as an underground movement. With no prior experience of party building and gradual integration into party politics, the Brotherhood found itself in charge of running the country in the midst of mounting pressure. Eventually, the deepening polarization in the society and Morsi's inability to resolve the crisis effectively provided the necessary political ammunition for the military to oust the Brotherhood from power.

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In the aftermath of the coup, the Brotherhood has been struggling to find a strategy of survival. Given that most of its prominent members are jailed and the senior leadership are in exile, the organization has difficulty in developing a unified strategy to counter the military regime which aspires to force the organization underground and radicalize it. Assuming that the Brotherhood as a whole would go away is unlikely. The historic record is an indicator that this latest wave of repression will by no means be the organization's end like the earlier waves of repression. The Brotherhood's future in Egyptian politics largely depends on how far the organization will remain united in the face of the regime's divisive policies, adopt pragmatic strategies and build alliance with other opposition groups against the current regime.

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