

THE RISE OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN SEVERAL MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES

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Abstract:

The Muslim Brotherhood is a very influential organization throughout the Middle East, with Members and branches in more than eighty countries. They had been able to remain intact throughout the years from the day the organization was founded more than eighty years ago and after so many years of prosecution by regimes throughout the Middle East. The upspring or what came to be known as the Arab Spring that took place throughout the Middle East eliminated some of the old regimes in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya which allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to rise to power after being a banned organization and gain the benefit of political power of these revolution which had started out as a secular movement. This had led to speculation that the Muslim Brotherhood stole the revolution. And now that they are in power, there are speculations that they are seizing control with their fundamentalist ideology. The United States as a key international player is trying to figure out ways to deal with the Muslim Brotherhood out of fear for creating more instability in a region that is already instable. The United States is trying to ensure that the organization would not seize control over these countries and make it difficult for other secular political groups to compete with them making it difficult to move the organization from power if the people are not satisfied with its performance.

Islamist political parties in the Middle East now form an important part of the political landscape. The political involvement of such Islamist parties such as The Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafies comes with a price, but the inclusion of such Islamist parties is a crucial in the development of the democratic system. The Muslim Brotherhood is considered the parent of many of the Islamist political parties in the region

Introduction:

The Muslim Brotherhood is a very influential organization throughout the Middle East, with Members and branches in more than eighty countries such as Hamas in Palestine, Ennahda in Tunisia, and The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. They had been able to remain intact throughout the years from the day the organization was founded more than eighty years ago in 1928 and after so many years of prosecution by regimes throughout the Middle East. The upspring or what came to be known as the Arab Spring that took place throughout the Middle East which started in Tunisia and spread out through the Middle East eliminated some of the old regimes in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya which allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to rise to power after being a banned organization and gain the benefit of political power of these revolution which had started out as a secular movement. This had led to speculation that the Muslim Brotherhood stole the revolution. And now that they are in power which they had gained through free election, there is speculation that they are seizing control with their fundamentalist ideology. The United States as a key international players is trying to figure out ways to deal with the Muslim Brotherhood out of fear for creating more instability in a region that is already instable especially in the Palestinian – Israeli situation, and especially that the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood condemns the existence of the State of Israel. The United States is trying to ensure that the organization would not seize control over these countries and make it difficult for other secular political groups to compete with them making it difficult to move the organization from power if the people are not satisfied with its performance.

Islamist political parties in the Middle East now form an important part of the political landscape. Previously operating as opposition movements outside the formal process, parties stemming from these movements have succeeded in recent years in countries including Egypt,

Libya, Tunisia, and Palestine. The political involvement of such Islamist parties such as The Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafies comes with a price, but the inclusion of such Islamist parties is a crucial and a very important step in the development of the democratic system. The Muslim Brotherhood is considered the parent of many of the Islamist political parties in the region, Such as Hamas in Palestine, and The Ennahda party in Tunisia.

The Beginning and Founding of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization:

The Brotherhood began as a social-religious organization in 1928 and slowly Evolved into what looks in many respects like a political party then into a legitimate political party which is The Freedom and Justice Political party in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna, a school teacher stationed at that time in Isma'iliyya, the Society of the Muslim Brothers focused initially on serving the needs of the Muslim community and improving their levels of morality and religiosity, which can be referred to as the missionary activity of the organization. (STILT, Vol. 46:73, 76-77)

Within a decade of its founding, the ideology of the Brotherhood had solidified into three core beliefs which are: Islam as a total system, complete unto itself, and the final arbiter of life in all its categories, Islam formulated from and based on its two primary sources, the revelation in the Quran and the wisdom of the Prophet in the Sunna which are the normative practice of the Prophet, and Islam applicable to all times and all places. Early in its life, the Brotherhood took steps into two additional fields of activity, which created a conflict with the Egyptian state. First, the Brotherhood determined that political activity was part of its agenda and fielded candidates in the general elections of 1941 and 1945. Second, as Brotherhood friction with the government continued to develop, some members formed an armed wing of the organization called the Secret Apparatus, purportedly to defend both

Islam and the Brotherhood, as the monarchical period ended with the Free Officers who overthrew the Egyptian monarchy in 1952 in a coup d'état. (STILT, Vol. 46:73, 77)

The Brotherhood's initial good relations with the state soon became strained, culminating in the attempted assassination of Nasser in 1954 by a member of the Brotherhood. Even though the claim is controversial the regime arrested thousands of other Brotherhood members, and courts ordered a life sentence for General Guide Hudaybi of the Brotherhood, the execution of six members, and prison sentences for hundreds more. One of the Brothers arrested during Nasser's rule was Sayyid Outb, whose subsequent writings are considered to have inspired the Brotherhood's violent offshoot groups such as Islamic Jihad. (STILT, Vol. 46:73) With Al-Hudaybi the second murshid, the Brotherhood adapted a largely accommodations attitude which aims for democratic participation rather revolutionary objectives. (Akbarzadeh, 51-60)

When Anwar al-Sadat became President, following the death of Nasser in 1970, he initially treated the Brotherhood favorably, in part as a counterbalance to his predecessor's support among the leftists, and to counter the weight of militant Islamists groups (McCaffrey, 83). But the good relations between Sadat and the Brotherhood did not last long. In 1979, the Brotherhood took an openly hostile stance toward Sadat's agreement with Israel at the Camp David Accords. Sadat ordered mass arrests of Brotherhood members and other Islamist groups in September 1981. The Brotherhood's splinter groups, however, ultimately proved a far greater threat to Sadat: members of Islamic Jihad assassinated Sadat on October 6th, 1981. Hosni Mubarak succeeded Sadat and recognized religious extremism as the most immediate threat. He sought to mobilize moderate Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, against extremism, and released many from the Brotherhood from prison. Mubarak tried to distinguish

between violent Islamists, whom he wanted to punish, and some moderate Islamists, represented by the Brotherhood, whom he needed on his side. (STILT, Vol. 46:73, 77-78)

The Brotherhood wanted more political involvement than Mubarak was prepared to tolerate. In 1984, it entered parliamentary elections in the form of an alliance with the Wafd party and effectively ran on the Wafd ticket, winning eight seats. This early success was followed by another, when the Brotherhood won thirty-six seats in a 1987 alliance with the Liberal Party and the Socialist Labor Party. These wins were not enough to challenge Mubarak's National Democratic Party, but by the late 1980s, Mubarak recognized that the Muslim Brotherhood posed a serious threat to his legitimacy. As members of parliament, they criticized practices of the state as un-Islamic. The Brotherhood became heavily involved in syndicates and professional organizations, taking the lead in several of these associations. More significantly, in the 1990s, militant groups in Egypt targeted the regime directly and indirectly through attacks on the tourism industry, one of Egypt's main forms of income." The Brotherhood's status as the mother organization of radical splinter groups led to strong measures against it, even as actual Brotherhood involvement in these actions was unclear and controversial. (STILT, Vol. 46:73, 78-79)

The Brotherhood and other major opposition parties boycotted the parliamentary elections of 1990 because the elections were supervised by the Minister of Interior. The Brotherhood also opposed Mubarak's desire to seek a third term as president. While the Brotherhood condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, it also criticized the western-led efforts against Iraq, which Egypt joined, and the bombing of Baghdad. (STILT, Vol. 46:73, 78-80)

After the 1992 Cairo earthquake, the Brotherhood provided greater services to the people than the state, providing shelter, medicine and food further damaging the state's image by providing

a lot of the socioeconomic aid that the Egyptian government failed to provide. The political restriction of the recent decades led the Muslim Brotherhood to emphasize its social engagement as an outlet of political commitment. (Akbarzadeh, 51-60)

In 1995 the regime resorted to severe authoritarian methods of dealing with opposition, arresting hundreds of Brotherhood members and trying them in military, not civil, courts. Most of those tried in these military courts were convicted. In the 1995 elections, the Brotherhood won only one seat. The level of state coercion used to prevent success of the opposition was the highest during these elections, and at least fifty-one people were killed during two days of voting. At the same time, Islamist violence continued to rise and Mubarak was the target of an assassination attempt when he visited Ethiopia. Even though Jihad claimed responsibility, the regime made no distinction between radical and moderate Islamists, and Mubarak stressed the similarity between the Brotherhood and Jihad. Brotherhood members continued to attempt to run for the legislature, and ran as independents once the electoral law allowed independent candidates because their organization was banned. Running on the slogan "Islam is the Solution," independent candidates from the Muslim Brotherhood won seventeen seats in 2000 and went on to gain eighty-eight of 454 seats in the 2005 lower house parliamentary elections, many more than all of the other opposition groups combined. This was a great thing to happen in the politics of Egypt as their win created a real opposition in the Egyptian parliament which used to be a rubber stamp for the government. The potential for electoral success had been even higher in 2010, but the Brotherhood chose to run candidates in only a limited number of districts, and the state cracked down on the group and its candidates in particular before the elections. (STILT, Vol. 46:73, 79-80)

Mubarak allowed enough Brotherhood candidates to win to show the United States which was pushing for more political freedom in Egypt especially by the Bush administration what will result from increasing pressure to open up the political system, while not allowing them to obtain enough seats to affect the outcome of legislation. The United States subsequently seemed to back away from pushing Egypt for political reforms, in part due to a focus on bigger problems in Iraq. Mubarak regime has presented itself which presents itself as the only bulwark against radical Islamists. (STILT, Vol. 46:73, 79-80)

Ideology:

The Brotherhood offered some elements and mechanisms of political reform and implementation in Egypt through their ideology starting with free and fair parliamentary election, and their strategy to apply the Islamic Sharia in a way agreed upon by the Muslim community. They assume that officials elected in free and fair elections would carry out the wishes of the constituents, and consequently be more attentive to Islamic law. The second avenue of reaching tangible change in the Egyptian legal system is to reconceive the position of the President or the executive as a leader of the Muslim community while the Islamic state also has the responsibility for protecting non- Muslims in their belief and worship. The Brotherhood also recommended the creation of a Council of Scholars to advise legislators in lawmaking. While they think that the policy to implement the authority of the Islamic Sharia through elected members of the legislature, and they think that free and fair parliamentary elections should take place, the Platform states that "the legislature must request the opinion of a council of senior religious scholars from the Muslim community. They also called for a true separation of powers among state institutions and, notably, for judicial independence from the executive. (STILT, Vol. 46:73, 80-108)

Transformation from Prosecution to Key Political Player:

The political fortunes of the Muslim Brotherhood have changed dramatically after January 2011 with the Arab Spring. The protesters and demonstrators who led Egypt's revolt on the 25th of January were young, liberal, and linked-in. They were the bloggers who first proposed the demonstrations against Hosni Mubarak on Twitter, the Facebook-based activists who invited their "friends" to protest; and Wael Ghonim, the 30-year-old Google executive who, after Egypt's state security agency detained him for 12 days, rallied the crowds to hold Tahrir Square calling for civil liberties, religious equality, and an end to Mubarak's dictatorship. The protests were not started by the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood avoided the limelight during the revolt, they initially avoided direct involvement in the demonstrations, it was not after the protest started that they joined in. (Trager Sep/Oct 2011)

The political transition following the revolt has dulled this optimism of the iconic youths of Tahrir Square who are now deeply divided among nearly a dozen, often indistinguishable political parties, almost all of which are either too new to be known or too discredited by their cooperation with the previous regime. Concentrated within the small percentage of Internet-using, politically literate Egyptians, and their numbers are surprisingly small. Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood had seized a political momentum. The Brotherhood is Egypt's most cohesive political movement, with an unparalleled ability to mobilize its followers, who will serve it extremely well and who are strongly committed to the organization's purpose, enabling its leaders to mobilize its followers as they see fit in a country still unaccustomed to voting. Currently the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt is relying on its political party "Freedom and Justice". (Trager Sep/Oct 2011) The Muslim Brotherhood defines itself as a social movement

rather than merely as a political party that adjusts its policies to the will of its membership.

(Akbarzadeh, 51-60)

The Muslim Brotherhood Recruitment Process:

The Muslim Brotherhood internal cohesiveness and ideological rigidity derives from its highly selective membership process and recruitment system. Local members scout for recruits at virtually every Egyptian university. These recruiters begin by approaching students who show strong signs of piety. Certain members of the Muslim Brotherhood are supposed to meet and befriend new students and engage them in very normal, nonpolitical activities such as football, tutoring or things that appeal to everyone. The Brotherhood also targets children for recruitment, starting around age nine. It focuses on Muslim Brothers' kids in particular. (Trager, Sep/Oct 2011)

When an aspirant is first admitted into the Muslim Brotherhood, he becomes a muhib, "lover" or "follower." During this period, which typically lasts six months but can last as long as four years, the muhib enters a local usra, or "family," a regular meeting group where his piety and ideology are closely monitored. "At the muhib level, they try to educate him and improve his morals. After the leader of an usra confirms, through observations or written exams, that a muhib prays regularly and possesses basic knowledge of the major Islamic texts, the muhib becomes a muayyad, or "supporter." This stage can last for one to three years. The muayyad is a nonvoting member of the organization and must fulfill certain duties set by his superiors, such as preaching, recruiting, or teaching in mosques. He also completes a more rigorous curriculum of study, memorizing major sections of the Koran and studying the writings of the group's founder, Hasan al-Banna. (Trager Sep/Oct 2011)

In the next phase, an aspirant becomes muntasib, or "affiliated." The process lasts a year and is considered the first step toward full membership. A muntasib is a member, but his name is written in pencil, muntasibs can work in one of the official Muslim Brotherhood divisions, such as those that run programs for professionals, laborers, university students, or children.

Muntasibs also study the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and Quranic commentary and start giving a portion of their earnings, typically five to eight percent, to the organization. Once a muntasib satisfies his monitors, he is promoted to muntazim, or "organizer." This stage typically lasts for another two years, during which time the muntazim must memorize the Quran and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, and can assume a lower-level leadership role, such as forming an usra or heading a chapter of multiple usras. Before he can advance to the final level which is "amal" or "working brother" the loyalty of the muntazim is closely probed. They might test you him acting like state security and giving him wrong information, to see whether he would talk, Advancement to the final level also requires superiors' confidence that the muntazim will follow the directives of the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership. It is about knowledge, thinking, commitment to do duties, and how much ability to execute the orders.

(Trager Sep/Oct 2011)

After he becomes an "amal", a Muslim Brother can vote in all internal elections, participate in all of the Brotherhood's working bodies, and compete for higher office within the group's hierarchy. He continues to meet weekly in his usra and is tasked with fulfilling dawa which is the "call" to a more Islamic way of life, which is often done through the provision of social services, especially to communities in need.

The process and order of this recruitment system date back to the Muslim Brotherhood's founding in 1928. But this process started to be formalized only in the late 1970s, when it

became an important tool for ensuring that the state security services could not infiltrate the organization, which is precisely what happened to most other opposition groups and parties under President Anwar al-Sadat and Mubarak. Under President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who ruled from 1956 to 1970, domestic opposition groups were decimated and Brotherhood leaders were incarcerated for decades. It was possible for a state security agent to become a muhib, but he won't move up, you would have to be patient to become a muayyad. And if you're an agent, you won't be patient enough. The Muslim Brotherhood's recruitment system guarantees that only those who are deeply committed to its cause become full members, meanwhile, its pyramid shaped hierarchy ensures that these members dutifully execute the aims of its national leadership at the local level. (Trager Sep/Oct 2011)

The Structure and Hierarchy of The Muslim Brotherhood Organization:

At the top of the hierarchy is the Guidance Office (Maktab al-Irshad), which is comprised of approximately 15 longtime Muslim Brothers and headed by the supreme guide (murshid). Each member of the Guidance Office oversees a different portfolio, such as university recruitment, education, or politics. Guidance Office members are elected by the Shura Council, which is comprised of roughly 100 Muslim Brothers. Important decisions, such as whether to participate in elections, are debated and voted on within the Shura Council and then executed by the Guidance Office. Orders are passed down through a chain of command: the Guidance Office calls its deputies in each regional sector, who call their deputies in each subsidiary area, who call their deputies in each subsidiary populace, who call the heads of each local usra, who then transmit the order to their members. The chain also works in reverse. An usras can pass requests and concerns up to the Shura Council and the Guidance Office. (Trager Sep/Oct 2011)

This type of transmission system enabled the Muslim Brotherhood to communicate reliably and discreetly despite intense police scrutiny under the previous regime. And in the post-Mubarak political environment, the Brotherhood's unique organizational capacity allowed its leaders to communicate with its members nationwide with reasonable certainty that orders will be obeyed, given the immense commitment that becoming a Muslim Brother entails. No other Egyptian opposition group or political party can count on the type of breadth or depth of the Muslim Brotherhood's networks. (Trager, Sep/Oct 2011)

The efficiency of this system proved pivotal during the anti-Mubarak revolt. The Muslim Brotherhood initially avoided direct involvement in the demonstrations, which began on January 25, because the state security agency had threatened to arrest Mohammed Badie, the Brotherhood's supreme guide, if its members participated. But the following day, the Guidance Office yielded to the demands of its younger members and decided to make it obligatory for Brothers to join the protests on January 28 named The Friday of Rage by organizers who sent the message through the hierarchy. Joining late in the demonstrations may have been a calculated move on their part. Coming out onto the streets too soon would likely have played into the hands of the regime, who could then have claimed that it was an Islamic revolution. This in turn would earn the opprobrium of the West, with fears of Egypt following the path of Iran in 1979, where the Iranian clerical elite were able to hijack what started as a popular, not an Islamic revolution. (Trager, Sep/Oct 2011)

Although the overwhelming majority of the Egyptian demonstrators were not affiliated with any political movement, this order from the Muslim Brotherhood seems to have helped catalyze the revolt's early triumph over the Central Security Forces, which Mubarak reportedly removed from the streets after the successful protests of January 28. As noontime prayers ended at

mosques across the country that day, a handful of activists gathered at each entrance, and their numbers gave ordinary worshipers the confidence to confront Mubarak's police forces. Many of those activists were reportedly Muslim Brothers. (Trager Sep/Oct 2011)

Controversially Over the Current Position of the Muslim Brotherhood:

The long awaited Arab Spring sprung first in Tunisia, and then moved to countries such as Egypt and Libya. The Middle East would no longer be an autocratic exception in an increasingly democratic world. It was fueled optimism and determination of the young liberal protesters, and thinkers. The speed in which change came about was un-presented before, and the fact that the leaders of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt were not Islamic political parties was surprising, they were secular groups, the leaders of which were often young enough not to have voted in national elections. The leaders of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt were not Islamic political parties, but secular groups with young leaders. (Gearon, April 2011) Religion in Tunisia is more of a private affair than any other Arab country in the region.

Due to the Muslim Brotherhood rigid organization and disciplined hierarchy, and for many years, the Brotherhood has attracted members impressed by their role in providing for the poor in societies such as the Egyptian society, a role that the official organs of state gave up on a long time ago, and because the iconic youths who started the revolt are now deeply divided and often indistinguishable political parties, almost all of which are either too new to be known or too discredited by their cooperation with the previous regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, The Muslim Brotherhood was able to win the Parliamentary election in Egypt and gain many votes, and win the presidential election in Egypt. (Gearon, April 2011)

Many claim that the organization took advantage of the of these country's current fragile situation, while many who voted for them think that if they do well in government, more people

will vote for them, and if they fail they would be voted out again. They also tend to see no reason why Islam and democracy should not go together, and many see nothing wrong with the creation of Islamic republic in these two countries. Many also think that Islam is central to the Arab identity, and parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood have not only a right but an obligation to be part of this sociopolitical reality in the Middle East. (Gearon, April 2011) but an ongoing dispute remains that the Muslim Brotherhood ideological framework and more particularly whether the organization commits itself to democratic ideas or whether it endorses political violence and extremism and what is their true intentions. There are uncertainties about the brotherhood's theological basis and ideological interpretation. (Akbarzadeh, 51-60)

Islamist political parties in the Middle East now form an important part of the political landscape. Previously operating as opposition movements outside the formal process, parties stemming from these movements have succeeded in recent years in countries including Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Palestine. The political involvement of such Islamist parties comes with a price, but the inclusion of such Islamist parties is a crucial and a very important step in the development of the democratic system. The Muslim Brotherhood is considered the parent of many of the Islamist political parties in the region.

The Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza and Palestine:

The Muslim Brotherhood existed in Palestine since the 1940s. But before 1970 the Muslim Brotherhood was weak in Palestine, after 1977 they started to breathe life into the stagnated Brotherhood in Palestine recruiting more people. The Muslim Brotherhood grew and before long it had transitioned from an organization of the poor and refugee to include educated young people women and professional who gave out of their own pockets to build schools and charities such as clinics. Seeing this growth many young people especially in Gaza decided the

Muslim Brotherhood need to take stand against the Israeli occupation. These young people were tough and hard and spoiling for a fight, but a lot of the leaders in the Muslim Brotherhood were skeptical and disagreed with that. They didn't want to repeat the mistakes of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria, where the Muslim Brotherhood tempted coups and failed. (Yousef, 13-20).

They argued that the Muslim Brotherhood shouldn't fight and should have influence on society through participating in elections. They didn't think that they were in position to take Israeli military. (Yousef,13-20). For several years the debate with the Muslim Brotherhood continued and pressure for action increased but the Muslim Brotherhood was able to sustain the nonviolence approach for another decade. In 1986 a secret historic meeting took place in Hebron just south of Bethlehem with seven men including a wheel chair bounded man named Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. The Brotherhood leaders who attended this meeting were ready to fight, their objective was to mobilize the Palestinian people and make them understand their need for independence under the banner of Allah and Islam. During that meeting Hamas (Harkat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamiyya) was born as a political activist wing of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood during the first Palestinian uprising. (Akbarzadeh, 62-72)

Hamas was founded in Gaza at the beginning of the first Intifada in December 1987 by Sheik Ahmad Yassin, and Hamas is a direct extension of the Muslim Brotherhood which started in Egypt in 1928 by its founder Hassan al Banna. Although in the media Hamas tends to be identified with its military arm, Izzeddin al-Qassam, which is well known for its suicide attacks against Israeli targets, the organization's popularity in the occupied territories actually stems from its being seen as the voice of Palestinian dignity and the symbol of the defense of

Palestinian. Hamas won a landslide victory in the January 25 democratic elections. (Gordon, Feb 10, 2006).

Hamas was elected not only because it is considered an alternative to the corrupt Palestinian Authority, but also because Israel created the conditions that made it an indispensable social movement by the destruction of Gaza, and homes demolished by Israeli bulldozers. Israel's efforts to undermine the Palestinian Authority made existence in the occupied territories has made Palestinian life miserable, Hamas acquired much of its political credit from its charity and social service networks. It built kindergartens and schools that offer free meals for children, education centers for women, and youth and sports clubs. Its medical clinics provide subsidized treatment to the sick, and the organization extends financial and technical assistance to those whose homes have been demolished as well as to refugees living in substandard conditions. (Gordon, Feb 10, 2006).

People who voted for Hamas emphasize not only the heroic acts of its combatants but also its reputation for clean conduct, modesty and honesty, which have been pointedly contrasted with the corruption of the Palestinian Authority. Many of its followers do not subscribe to religious fundamentalism but rather support the organization's pragmatic approach characterized by support for the short-term objective of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem while still maintaining the long-term goal of establishing an Islamic state that would replace Israel and offer a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. In short Hamas carried out a socioeconomic social reform in the society similar to the one that was carried out in Egypt by the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas in Gaza, and The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt are social movements and that is why they are able to win the election. (Gordon, Feb 10, 2006). The

Muslim Brotherhood defines itself as a social movement rather than merely as a political party that adjusts its policies to the will of its membership. (Akbarzadeh, 62-72)

Hamas adopted a policy of providing assistance on the basis of socioeconomic need rather than religious or political criteria or affiliation so that families in economic distress did not need to be Hamas members or even practicing Muslims in order to qualify for aid. Its charitable Hamas rapidly became the second largest food donor in the occupied Palestinian territories after the United Nations Relief and Work Agency. (Gordon, Feb 10, 2006)

Hamas' triumph can be seen as the introduction of the religious dimension into the Palestinian side, thus strengthening the fundamentalist characteristics of the conflict. In many respects, the national clash over territory is being transformed into a religious battle between Jews and Muslims. The introduction of a fundamentalist or the Muslim Brotherhood worldview will no doubt affect Palestinian society as well. (Gordon, Feb 10, 2006).

The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria:

Unlike the parent organization which is the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, which often kept its ideological opponents at arm's length, the Syrian Muslim brotherhood has forged alliances with secular groups and even tried to secretly negotiate a deal with the Assad regime to allow its return from exile.

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was established by Mustafa as-Sibai as a branch of Hassan al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. When the secular, nationalist Baath party took power in 1963, it quickly moved to weaken the SMB and the urban, Sunni merchant class that supported the movement. The group was outlawed in 1964, and its leader Isam al-Attar was exiled. That same year, a revolt led by the SMB erupted in the city of Hama and was quelled by force. During

the 1970s, relations between the SMB and President Hafez Assad deteriorated into large scale violence. (Talhamy, spring 2012, Vol. 19 Issue 2, 33-40)

Armed elements of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood assassinated government officials and carried out bombings of government buildings, Baath party offices, and other targets associated with the regime. In 1979, the SMB carried out a massacre of eighty three unarmed cadets at an artillery school in Aleppo. In June 1980, it is said to have made an assassination attempt against the president, who allegedly retaliated by ordering hundreds of captured Syrian Muslim Brotherhood prisoners gunned down in their cells. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has always maintained that it had no connection to underground, armed factions responsible for violence. (Talhamy, spring 2012, Vol. 19 Issue 2, 33-40)

In 1980, the Assad regime issued a law making membership in or association with the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood a crime punishable by death. In December 1980, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood issued a manifesto that included a detailed program for the future Islamic state in Syria. It continued to work clandestinely in predominantly Sunni, urban centers outside of Damascus, particularly in the city of Hama, and it was there that the Assad regime is reported to have notoriously massacred tens of thousands of people in February 1982, effectively bringing armed resistance to a halt. (Talhamy, spring 2012, Vol. 19 Issue 2, 33-40)

After that The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was no longer able to work openly inside Syria, and its leadership was dispersed in exile. As its influence in the country diminished, The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leaders increasingly sought alliances with secular opponents of the Assad regime.

After the ascension of Bashar al-Assad, the regime released several hundred Brotherhood members from prison. Some Syrian Muslim Brotherhood figures were allowed to return to Syria,

and the regime also allowed the publication and sale of some previously blacklisted books by Syrian Muslim Brotherhood founder and ideologue Mustafa as-Sibai. (Talhamy, spring 2012, Vol. 19 Issue 2, 33-40)

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood began to rapidly shift its political platform. It firmly renounced violence, implicitly recognizing the legitimacy of Assad's rule. However, Assad refused to grant Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni The three core demands which were, First, the release of all Syrian Muslim Brotherhood members from prison, Second, permission for all exiles to return home, and Third, a lifting of the government's ban on the Brotherhood. In December 2004, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood published a program for the creation of a modern civil state and named it, "The Political Project for the Future Syria." It is characterized by the rule of law, pluralism, civil society, and the peaceful alternation of political power. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood emphasized that it was undergoing a process of self-revitalization through reconsidering the past, the present, and the future. In October 2005, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood joined five secular opposition parties and independent political figures in signing the Damascus declaration. But ironically the Syrian society was growing more religious while the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was growing more secular. (Talhamy, spring 2012, Vol. 19 Issue 2, 33-40)

During the 2006 Israel - Hezbollah war, when Syria and Hezbollah were winning plaudits in the Arab world, Bayanouni announced that The Syrian Brotherhood had decided to freeze its activities against the regime temporarily. A year later, however, he was back to calling on Assad to step down and threatening to launch a campaign of demonstrations and civil disobedience. In the wake of Israel's military campaign in the Hamas ruled Gaza during the winter of 2008 and 2009, As in 2006, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood announced that it would suspend its

opposition activities against the Syrian regime, which sponsored Hamas. (Talhamy, spring 2012, Vol. 19 Issue 2, 33-40)

In July 2010, the General Council of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood gathered in Istanbul and elected Muhammad Riad al-Shaqfa to succeed Bayanouni as supervisor general. Many expected Shaqfa to take a less compromising position toward Assad as he was from Hama and had played an active role in the SMB insurrection before leaving Syria in the late 1970s. His deputy, Muhammad Farouq Tayfor, is also from Hama and also took part in armed struggle during the 1970s. A month after being elected, however, the new general supervisor affirmed that the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood would continue to suspend opposition activities against the Syrian regime. There were several mediation attempts between Syrian Brotherhood and the Syrian regime by Turkey's Islamist Justice and Development Party , but they all failed due to the regime's refusal to fully lift restrictions on the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood . "Bashar is softer than his father, and he talks to mediators but he always says 'now we are busy,'" remarked Shagfa the General Council of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. (Talhamy, spring 2012, Vol. 19 Issue 2, 33-40)

The proliferation of popular protests across the Arab world during 2011 changed much in a way it was a game changer. When initial calls for demonstrations in Syria in February fell flat, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood remained cautious in its statements about the regime. By March, however, the contagion had hit Syria with a vengeance, and its streets swelled with citizens calling for freedom and democracy. The regime accused the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood of collaboration with Western countries in steering these demonstrations and fomenting armed attacks against the security forces. The Syrian Muslim brotherhood openly declared its support for the protests, but it denied responsibility for organizing them. "The demonstrations are not

led by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood or any other party or group," said Shaqfa. "We are supporters, not creators". (Talhamy, spring 2012, Vol. 19 Issue 2, 33-40)

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood believes that The Assad regime will collapse maybe even within month, and the regime days are over. Many secular opposition leaders distrust the Brotherhood because its long history of mercurial political shifts over the past three decades which destroyed their legitimacy because they changed positions so much without explanation over the past five years. But Shaqfa stressed that the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was sufficiently rooted in Syria. (Talhamy, spring 2012, Vol. 19 Issue 2, 33-40)

The Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia:

The Muslim Brotherhood branch in Tunisia was established in the 1970s by Rashid al-Ghannouchi and who by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Even though it was established by individuals influenced by the radical teachings of Sayyid Qutb and Abul A'ala Maududi, the movement's founders described it as a moderate Islamic movement and a development of Islam unique to Tunisia. The founders of the movement in Tunisia preached for democracy and a kind of Tunisian Islam that recognized political pluralism. The Tunisian society has always been more a secular society than a religious one. They rejected the commonly held Islamic opinions that Allah was the source of legitimacy, placing it instead in the hands of the people. They also supported dialogue with the Western world and liberal ideas. As in Egypt, the movement's influence in Tunisia was particularly strong among the urban middle class, university students but it did not enjoy wide support within the working class. In 1987 it members had been estimated to be around six thousand members. By the mid-1980s the movement had become part of the international Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia currently operates through the Ennahda party, the organization political party. The movement was

banned during the Zine Ben Ali regime and its leader, al-Ghannouchi, was exiled to London. After the Jasmine Revolution which started the Arab Spring he returned to Tunisia which reshaped the map of the Middle East, where he won a great deal of power.

At first the authorities encouraged the activity of the Islamic groups, mostly to counterbalance the left wing groups, but then the Tunisian authorities attitude changed and they changed their approach. The Muslim Brotherhood branch in Tunisia began with the Islamic Association, an organization established in 1976. To have the organization officially recognized as a party it turned itself into the Islamic Tendency Movement which was by Rashid al-Ghannouchi. But the authorities refused to recognize the movement and even persecuted it. Their fundamental objectives were to liberate Muslims from foreign influence and to implement the Sharia law, these were the same fundamentals of the Muslim Brotherhood through the Middle East. ("The Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia" Apr. 9, 2012.)

The leaders of the Islamic Tendency Movement were arrested six months after its founding, leaving the party with no chance to build public trust and prove its democratic path. In 1984, when al-Ghannouchi and other Islamic Tendency Movement were released from prison, a radical faction was formed which called for armed struggle, calling it preferable to a political struggle and after a series of confrontations on university campuses and lower class sections of the capital, as well as other cities in Tunisia, the Islamic Tendency Movement leaders were arrested again in 1987 on charges of incitement, and Al-Ghannouchi was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Late in 1987, Bourguiba the Tunisian president was removed in a quiet revolution led by Zine Al-Abidine Ben Ali, so there were hopes for new relations between the government and the Islamic opposition. The new authorities were willing to bring the movement closer to the political

establishment in an effort to moderate its oppositionist character. The Islamic Tendency Movement leaders reacted positively to Ben Ali's invitation. After Al-Ghannouchi release in 1988 he promised that the movement would abandon violence, pledging that it would not build itself into a military or security force. He also expressed his willingness to recognize the Code of Personal Status of 1956, a milestone in the modernization of Tunisia which guaranteed equal rights for women. The Islamic Tendency Movement representatives were invited to take part in formulating the national constitution, which was signed in November 1988.

In December 1988 The Islamic Tendency Movement renamed itself the Ennahda party, but it was prohibited from taking part in the 1989 elections, but its members ran as independent candidates, and the independent candidates received between 10 to 17 percent of the total votes. But the results made the authorities concerned about the growing power and influence of the Islamic movement. The relations between Ben Ali and the movement became sore after the 1989 parliament elections, and in October 1991 the authorities claimed they had exposed an attempt by the movement to stage a coup and topple the regime which is a controversial claim, so the government started to oppress and prosecute Ennahda party and they removed its members from positions with political influence. A lot of Ennahda party members were arrested and most of its leaders including Rashid al-Ghannouchi, went into exile. ("The Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia" Apr. 9, 2012.)

On March 2, 2011, after the Jasmine Revolution the point that ignited the Arab Spring, the Tunisian interior minister legalized Ennahda party and gave it permission to operate as a political party. The movement was thus able to take part in the parliament elections held in October 2011. The Ennahda party won the elections with 41 percent of the parliament seats, changing from the strongest opposition force into the leading government force. The current

Ennahda party leaders portray themselves as representatives of moderate Islam. (“The Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia” Apr. 9, 2012.)

The Muslim Brotherhood in Libya:

The Muslim Brotherhood’s presence in Libya dates back to 1949, but their first clear organizational structure was in 1968 which froze soon after in 1969 after the coup of Mummer Al Qaddafi, then the brotherhood organization was not allowed to operate openly and they suffered extreme repression and prosecution under the Qaddafi regime. In the mid-1980s the only time any new about the Muslim Brotherhood in the media was to show the bodies of their leaders hang from street lampposts, Qaddafi’s media called them “deviant heretics” and “stray dogs”. Fleeing the repression in Libya the Muslim Brotherhood was reborn in the United States where its members established the “Islamic Group-Libya”. In the later years of the 1980s some Libyan Muslim brotherhood members returned to Libya to reestablish the organization but they ended up in prison or executed under Qaddafi’s repression. But the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood was able to make a comeback in 1999 and entered into a new dialogue with the regime, but its real rebirth came in 2005 and 2006 by Saif al-Islam Qaddafi who is Mummer Qaddafi’s son who aimed to coopt and neutralize opposition groups, especially Islamist ones. The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood dialogues with the over thrown Qaddafi regime in Libya led to doubts about the Libyan Muslim brotherhood motivation during the revolution in 2011, these charges were rejected by the leaders of the organization and they said that they “were not playing double game with the regime. (Ashour, March 9 2012)

After the revolution the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood modeled its new party after Egypt’s Freedom and Justice Party which is the political front of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood party is much smaller than its Egyptian counterpart, and the

emerging Libyan political scene poses several challenges to The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennahda which is the Muslim brotherhood in Tunisia, the Islamists of Libya have little history of interaction with the Libyan public. The Libyan Muslim brotherhood was not involved socially as much as it's Egyptian, Palestinian, or Tunisian counterparts. For example during the 1970s the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt when it was allowed some freedom and during the last four decades it worked hard under hazardous conditions to build mass support in universities, unions, and in the street, and so was the Ennahda in Tunisia. But the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood did not have any similar chances to connect with the Libyan public for a long period of time, and they really didn't have the opportunity to build their organizational structures or institutions within Libya or create parallel network of clinics and social services. They also have to deal with persistent questions about their commitment to democratic values, women rights, minorities and religious group's rights, and their commitment to the implementation of sharia law. But the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood insists that their approach is inclusive. (Ashour, March 9 2012)

The Brotherhood and Politics:

The Muslim Brotherhood understand that in order to win in political free elections the party must have a political program that all members commit to with a vision of how to govern the country until the next election. Dissent within the party is a sure way of losing elections. Candidates must articulate not only what they will do for the country but also why the other party's program will be catastrophic for the nation. The party has to be embedded in as many communities as possible, regardless of social class, religion or even political views. Candidates must constantly remind potential voters of their party's record of success and the opponent's record of failure. The Muslim Brotherhood they have succeeded in embedding themselves in

society in ways that could prove crucial. The members who fill the Brotherhood's ranks are deeply committed to the organization and its goals. (Hiris, spring 2011)

The reason that secular democratic forces and political parties or groups in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Palestine are much weaker than the Muslim Brotherhood is that the secular democrats consist of very diverse elements: There are tribal leaders, free-market liberals, socialists, hard-core Marxists and human rights activists. They lack common ideological glue comparable to the one that of the Brotherhood. In addition there is a deep seated fear that opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood, whose aim is to install Sharia once they come to power, will be seen by the masses as a rejection of Islam altogether. What the secular groups fail to do is to come up with a message of opposition that says yes to Islam but no to Sharia. (Hiris, spring 2011)

The United States as a Key International Player Dealing with the Muslim Brotherhood and

Fears:

The United States now have to deal with the new elected force which is the Muslim brotherhood regardless of how radical they could be. Washington have no choice but to work with whoever comes to power in Cairo, Libya, Syria, or even Palestine. But the United States can help the secular groups with the resources and the skills necessary to organize, to campaign and to establish competing economic and civil institutions so that they can compete with or even defeat the Muslim Brotherhood at the ballot box or in the election because many fear that without effective organization, the secular, democratic forces that have swept one tyranny aside could easily succumb to another. The United States and progressive groups can only combat the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood by introducing liberal ideas and teaching people how to

organize politically, and people should speak up and protest if people of other minority faiths are attacked such as the Christians or even Jews through the region. (Trager, Sep/Oct 2011)

Many fear that history would repeat itself like what happened in Iran in 1979, the Iranian had opted for Sharia and then they lived to regret it. The 2009 Green Movement in Iran was a not a rejection of a strongman, but a rejection of Sharia. The reason the Muslim Brotherhood are feared is that they have been prosecuted from day one which made them so secretive and deceptive, and that is why many people don't feel that they are dedicated to democracy. Many fear that The Muslim Brotherhood will use the democratic process to come to power, only to destroy that very process in order to retain power and political dominance. Many don't believe that Islamist who uses the slogan that "Allah is our objective, the prophet is our leader, Koran is our law, and Jihad is our way" can accommodate themselves to democracy, they could be just saying the right thing about democracy in order to seize power. It's hard to believe that while they are trying to soften their image they still stick to their essential platform slogan which remains unchanged. The United States had tried to reach out for the Muslim brother hood through the years but older regimes in the Middle East such as Mubarak's regime in Egypt were afraid that talks with American diplomats would give the group legitimacy, but even then the American diplomats and The Muslim Brotherhood organization were wary of each other. (Lake, 3/24/2011).

While there is still a lot of doubt and controversy regarding Muslim Brotherhood organization seizing control over power through free election the Obama administration think that "We can't let ourselves driven by fear of change, particularly because change is coming. This is not fatalism. You have to step back and acknowledge that it's a good thing when people are demanding the same rights that we ourselves believe in. indigenous democratic movements are

what the United States wants, even if they create short term challenges and complexities” (The Atlantic, 6/2011, Danger Falling Tyrants by Jeffery Goldberg). This view of President Obama and his administration came after the Speech that he gave in Cairo, Egypt in 2009 when he declared “We will welcome all elected peaceful, peaceful governments, provided that they govern with respect for all their people”. (Lake, 3/24/2011)

The Arab Spring is fast becoming a winter of discontent for Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East. This is disappointing to many because the early signs seemed to be hopeful because Muslims and Christians protested alongside each other in unity. A lot of minorities are having a tough time now because the vacuums that were left by the older regimes are being filled with members of the brotherhood throughout the Middle East. The strange paradox is that some of the most repressive political regimes were protective of religious minorities such as Mubarak’s regime in Egypt, and Bashar El Assad regime in Syria. Christians had worshiped peacefully in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, now violence had drove a lot of them out of the country. So far there are sinister signs of Anti-Christian direction in which Islamism extremist want to take the Middle East region. Religious minorities in the Middle East are facing increasingly uncomfortable experience of discrimination. Now more than ever they have far less chance of employment in governmental positions such as the police, or military. Soon religious minorities will find themselves disadvantaging in many matters such as housing. At the beginning of the Arab Spring there was a mixed emotion of fear and hope by the religious minorities now they are left with fear. (McCaffrey, 28-30)

The long dreamed Muslim Brotherhood of ruling Egypt now had gained the opportunity to do so, but there are fear of The Muslim Brotherhood intention of monopolizing power. There is fear of their intend to put in practice the long term slogan of the “Islam is the Solution”. The Muslim

Brotherhood has been cautious about flexing its new found muscles, and showing anti-western resentment due to relying on a foreign aid that is heavily needed. The Freedom and Justice party which is the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization posted the manifesto of the group which indicated that it's only a matter of time before they put their slogan into practice. It's a matter of time before the liberal and left leaning or western leaning groups are marginalized, as well as women, and religious minorities. The fear of the long term group intend of implementing the Sharia Law. The fear is from the Muslim Brotherhood conflicting signal. The Muslim Brotherhood didn't take a leadership role in the eighteen day uprising that forced the Mubarak to step down until it felt confident that the protest movement had gained irreversible momentum. The fear is from lacking the ability to form secular political opposition even if its backed by the west, because the Brotherhood has honed to perfection survival tactics developed during decades of functioning underground to escape crack downs by successive governments.

Political experts fear that the goal of the Muslim brotherhood is expel foreign influence from Egypt and to reconstitute Egypt as an Islamic state ruled by sharia law. Yet there is a current lack of ideological clarity due to The Muslim Brotherhood adapting some contradictory positions to its original ideological position to prove to the mass public and the world that they are inclusive of all, puts some doubt in the theory that the political Muslim Brotherhood group rising to power would simply replace former secular regimes and dictatorships with theocracies. For example the newly elected Egyptian president and brotherhood member Mohamed Morsi has made it clear that his top priority is to stabilize the country's fragile economy. He had taken steps to liberalize Egypt's labor market and encourage stronger economic ties with other countries, he has been a strong critic of Syria's authoritarian regime, and has called on Iran to abide by the United Nations Resolution limiting its nuclear program. He also has tried to ally

with western fears about the future of the Egyptian Israeli relation by appearing willing to honor the Egypt peace treaty with Israel and Egypt had taken a generally cooperative approach toward relation with Israel, and the relation between the two countries continue to be friendly.

Engagement with the Brothers should understand the differences between the more pragmatic and more radical elements and ideology and should serve to strengthen the more pragmatic strands within the Brotherhood. The United States the international community also needs to engage with the broad Egyptian opposition to strengthen the secular, liberal and democratic forces. The fear is with time and after the Muslim Brotherhood monopolize the branches that guarantee that the separation such as the highest courts, the leaders of the military branch, the legislative branch such as the parliament they will start implementing sharia law and might reserve their friendly foreign political strategy. The fear is that they would marginalize women, and religious minority groups, they would reverse laws that women enjoyed under the old regimes. Under the old regimes in countries such as Egypt women were granted rights for divorce and re-marrying.

Some political experts recommend that The United States should use diplomacy to deal with the Muslim Brotherhood who is currently in urgent need for the foreign aid to get their countries back on their feet, especially after the Arab Spring had turned the economy of these countries on their backs. It's the policy of the carrot and the stick. So far president Obama and his administration had used the policy of the carrot and diplomacy such as continuing providing aid to countries such as Egypt. And forgive previous debt to the United States, allow the countries to invest in its debt payments in developing its internal infrastructure. The United States also is offering millions of dollars for American companies to invest in countries such as Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia. The Obama Administration had been criticized by some that it uses a too

cooperative approach to dealing with the new Islamists governments in the Middle East and they argue that this would show The United States position as weak and is trying to regain lost main allies in the region. Some critics think that the United States government should use more of the stick policy in dealing with the new Islamists leaders to show in order to prove that the United States is still powerful and sovereign as a key international player and to protect the values of American exceptionalism . But this stick approach could generate resentment in a region where anti Americanism is already present. So far the Muslim Brotherhood had been cooperating and adapting policies of inclusiveness to all so we don't want to jump into conclusions and prediction to which direction the organization is heading this way, Because a shift in policy could hinder the relation between Israel relation with its neighboring countries such as Egypt, Which in turn will affect the financial markets in both countries, and a shift in relation or a more aggressive approach between the united states and these middle eastern countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, or Libya could impact heavily the financial markets in these countries and all over the world. The attitude of the United States toward any of these countries will heavily impact the stock market and the Wall Street future performance. Especially that Libya is a main producers and exporter of oil in Africa, and Egypt is a main producer and exporter of natural gas and a key country in guarantying the stability in the region. Only time will tell if the Muslim Brotherhood are true to their new commitment to democracy and a policy of inclusiveness, or they are more true to implementing the Sharia law, and a political Islamism agenda as "Islam is the Solution".

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