Conference Proceeding: Going beyond the Exclusion-Radicalisation Premise in Understanding the Dynamics of the Muslim Brotherhood Transformation after the 2013 Coup d'État in Egypt

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The coup d'état on July 3, 2013 was a pivotal event in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)'s history in Egypt, and for political Islam movements in the region as a whole, to the degree that some have considered it to be the beginning of the end of the era of political Islam itself.[1] Since that day, the MB has been experiencing a real, existential threat. Many local, regional, and international actors have joined forces to eradicate the Brotherhood, disassemble its political, preaching, and charity institutions and its social network, and put pressure on its regional and international allies and supporters.

After the eruption of the Arab Spring revolutions, in which the MB played a vital and influential role, several parties agreed on the necessity of completely excluding the MB from Egyptian politics, starting with the institutional interest groups "or what is known as the deep state", at the heart of which are the military establishment, and the security and judicial apparatus; flowing through the secular political parties, social movements, and cultural and media elites that back the anti-Islamist campaign; ending at the official religious establishments like the Coptic Church and Al-Azhar, as well as some Salafi parties and trends, which compete with the MB on both political and religious fields. These local parties found generous political, diplomatic, and financial support from regional and international forces that have plans to oppose political Islam movements in the region. At the forefront of these forces are the Saudi, Emirati, and Israeli governments,[2] in addition to the right-wing, populist forces and Islamophobic Western groups, which were displeased by the political rise of the MB during the Arab Spring.

This exclusionary campaign has taken violent and bloody forms: the MB was declared a terrorist organisation in Egypt on December 25, 2013[3]; its party, the Freedom and Justice Party, was dissolved on August 10, 2014;[4] its funds and headquarters were dissolved, including 1,225 charity organisations, 105 schools, 83 companies, 43 hospitals, and two large medical centres.[5] Along with these aggressive measures, the security crackdown caused thousands of deaths and casualties of Brotherhood members and supporters on multiple occasions, especially during the period following the military coup d'état. Approximately 1,150 were killed in just two months according to international reports during the events of the Republican Guard and Al Manassa in

July 2013, the dispersal of the Raba'a and the Ennahda sit-in on August 14, 2013, and the clashes of Ramses Square on August 16, 2013.[6]

Tens of thousands of Brotherhood leaders, members, and supporters were also arrested, among them the deposed president Mohamed Morsi and most of his presidential staff, the Brotherhood's Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie, the former Supreme Guide Mohamed Mahdi Akef, and a great majority of the Guidance Bureau members. Detained under inhumane conditions, the detainees were subjected to torture, atrocious violations, and their trials lacked proper legal proceedings. According to a Human Rights Watch report, "Since the 2013 military coup, Egyptian authorities have arrested or charged probably at least 60,000 people, forcibly disappeared hundreds for months at a time, handed down preliminary death sentences to hundreds more, tried thousands of civilians in military courts, and created at least nineteen new prisons or jails to hold this influx. The primary target of this repression has been the Muslim Brotherhood, the country's largest opposition movement." [7]

This campaign of complete exclusion, and repression unprecedented in the MB's history, threw the group into turmoil. It also caused its social capital, its political and religious influence, and its local and regional weight to rapidly deteriorate. As a result, this paper strives to answer two basic questions: How did the violent political exclusion, which the MB was subjected to in the aftermath of the 2013 coup d'état, affect the Brotherhood's structure and ideology? What are the strategies used by the Brotherhood to deal with this targeting campaign and attempt to curtail its effects?

Theoretical Framework

Usually, one looks at the effect of political repression and exclusion on general social movements, and political Islam movements in particular, through "inclusion-moderation" theory. This theory assumes that a social movement becomes more moderate in its ideology and conduct when it is contained in official politics and legally allowed to work within a pluralist system. Moderation in this context includes ideological moderation, meaning that these movements adopt an ideological system that is open, more pragmatic, and accepting of pluralism. Moderation of political behaviour has many indicators, the most important of which are: acknowledging the current political systems and ceasing attempts to overthrow them, abiding by official and legal routes to political participation, renouncing radical political demands, refusing to practice violence, and being open-minded about cooperation and common actions with groups that have different ideologies.[8]

In contrast, the opposite of this theory is the "exclusion-radicalisation" or "repression-rebellion" hypothesis, which entails that political exclusion and violence against social movements usually stimulate radical transformation in the opposite direction. The many reasons for this transformation have been explained: that political exclusion makes the idea of overthrowing the regime more acceptable than the idea of working to reform it, and that the exclusion process itself does not leave the social movements any legal mechanisms or official routes to participate, making unofficial and unlawful political work the only recourse.[9]

Many criticisms have been levelled at this theory, considering it to represent a flawed simplification, as it reduces the factors influencing a social movement's political conduct to one basic factor, political containment/exclusion, resembling a causative relationship. Furthermore, the focus is on the organisation's collective and institutional nature in its reckoning with exclusion and repression, neglecting the role of human elements. This is what motivates Khalil Al-Anani to emphasise the importance of integrating other approaches when studying the effect of repression on social movements, such as social psychology. Likewise, it is important to consider what is called intangible or mediating factors, which concern individuals, their feelings, and their personal experiences.[10]

Jillian Schwedler suggests two other factors affect the response of a social movement to the containment/exclusion process. First, the degree and intensity of the repression; moderate repression is what could induce radical transformations in social movements, while harsh repression that leaves the opponent no room for action could force radical social movements to moderate.[11] Second, the institutional status and context; the gradual containment process resulting from a political opening initiated by a regime that still enjoys control of the institutions is what could lead to a moderation of social movements to take advantage of an available opportunity. Yet, if a political breakthrough comes as a result of pressure from social movements for democratic change, forcing the regime to initiate a transitional phase and change the rules of the game, the effects of inclusion on the social movements are uncertain.[12] Some social movements that were excluded previously and then integrated into the political process at the beginning of the democratic transition could seek an inflexible approach to better assert themselves and form institutions according their visions and interests.

Of the result, it could be said that there are a number of factors influencing social movements' response to the political exclusion and repression processes. The most important are: the level of repression and the degree of exclusion, and the political institutions' status, in addition to human-related factors.

However, sometimes it is impossible to predict the nature of the effect these factors will have on social movements' response to the exclusion process. For example, the level of violence used against the social movements—its severity could prompt radical movements to become moderate or could prompt them to become even more radical. Furthermore, moderate repression and partial exclusion could give social movements the opportunity to transform radically, or it could push them to moderate in order to adapt, just like the MB's response to the wave of moderate repression/exclusion it was subjected to in the mid-nineties. It was compelled to publish many documents affirming its commitment to democracy and political pluralism, and reinforced its directives to cooperate with other parties and entities,[13] possibly motivated by the desire to refute the regime's contentions and accusations of extremism and terrorism.

Thus, it is important to integrate rational choice theory in studying social movements' reactions to exclusion, that is, the simple and straightforward cost-benefit analysis could affect social movements' response. Also, according to the political opportunity theory, if a social movement deduced from the political context and power balance that the exclusion process would

not last and there would be an opportunity to reintegrate, perhaps exclusion influences it to appear more moderate. On the contrary, if the movement felt that it were facing an existential threat, then this could compel it to turn radical and violent.

In addition, as Al-Anani has suggested, when studying the effect of repression on social movements, you cannot limit yourself to structural factors and must focus on factors related to the human element or agency. Such factors include personal experiences, acquired memory, and psychological characteristics. The significance of these factors increases especially during crackdowns that usually weaken the institution's ability to control its support base, opening the door to more freedom for agents to make decisions individually or for groups to undertake separate initiatives.

According to this framework, the structural, strategic, and ideological transformations experienced by the Muslim Brotherhood in the aftermath of the coup of July 3, 2013 will be studied in four phases:

I: The phase of organisational disarray (from August 2013 until February 2014)
II: Under the leadership of the first Higher Administrative Committee (from February 2014 until May 2015)
III: During the organisational conflict (from May 2015 until May 2016)
IV: Resolving the conflict in favour of the Old Guard (From May 2016 till now).

Organisational Disarray (August 2013 - February 2014)

During the dispersal of the sit-ins of August 2013, the Muslim Brotherhood was subject to a violent and effective attack against the organisation's leadership, as the wave of arrests included the Brotherhood's Supreme Guide, Mohamed Badie, the Deputy Supreme Guide and the strong man of the organisation, Khairat Al-Shater, as well as the vast majority of the Guidance Bureau members.[14] The arrest campaign reached many other important leaders such as Saad Al-Katatni, the Speaker of the People's Assembly, while other members of the Guidance Bureau were forced to leave Egypt early, such as Deputy Supreme Guide Jum'ah Amin, and the Brotherhood's Secretary-General, Mahmoud Hussein. By the end of September 2013, only eight members of the Guidance Bureau in Egypt remained: Deputy Supreme Guide Mahmoud Ezzat, Mohamed Taha Wahdan, Mohamed Kamal, Mohamed Saad Elewa, Mohamed Abd Al-Rahman, Abd Al-Rahman Al-Barr, Mahmoud Ghozlan, and Abd AI-Azim Al-Sharqawi.[15]

Despite the disruption of leadership, the MB continued to be active on a wide scale through a string of decentralised actions rejecting the coup motivated by psychological shock, the feelings of anger, and a desire for revenge as a response to an unprecedented security crackdown. Among the remaining members of the Guidance Bureau, Mohamed Taha Wahdan, Mohamed Kamal, and Mohamed Saad Elewa played the most prominent role in directing events during this period, in coordination with Deputy Supreme Guide Mahmoud Ezzat; while the other remaining members

of the Guidance Bureau were unable to participate due to personal conditions or pressure from security. [16]

In this phase, the Brotherhood generally adopted a confrontational strategy, but it was primarily an expression of uncoordinated, impulsive reaction despite having a preliminary three-month plan ending in January 2014.[17]The general lines of this strategy consisted of two pathways:

The first was an attempt to reproduce the events of January 25, 2011 by reorganising a sit-in at Tahrir Square or one of the other main squares to force the military establishment to back down from the coup. Yet despite the continued momentum of demonstrations across the country, the continued security crackdown and arrests prevented them from staging sit-ins in any of the main squares.[18]

The second pathway was action at the international level to delegitimize the coup and expose human rights violations. Two groups of the MB's leadership overseas participated in this approach: the Association of Egyptians Abroad known as the London Office or "Al-Rabitah", an institution already in existence, headed by Ibrahim Munir, one of the Brotherhood's international leaders. Prior to this date, the Al-Rabitah had managed the Egyptian Brotherhood's affairs outside the country, and was not entitled to involvement in the internal political situation in Egypt. The Committee for the Management of the Egyptian Crisis File, which was formed by the MB leaders who left Egypt due to the coup, operated under the leadership of the Brotherhood's Secretary-General, Mahmoud Hussein, with the participation of many leaders: Amr Darrag, the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation and Yehia Hamed, the Minister of Investment, among others. This committee was involved in political communication with foreign governments and international institutions and organising mass gatherings abroad.[19]

During this phase, the violence used by demonstrators was spontaneous and uncoordinated, primarily for defensive purposes, to protect the demonstrators against assaults by security forces and the "Baltagiya" or the thugs hired to confront these demonstrations. Groups that practiced such violence usually used primitive weapons, such as fireworks, flares, or flashbangs. Yet on the other hand, from the fall of 2013 to the spring of 2014, several small groups believed to be made up of Brotherhood members or its supporters appeared, such as the Molotov Movement, Martyrs' Brigades "Kata'ib al-Shuhada", or Execution Movement "Harakat I'dam", which were lightly armed and intended to get revenge or retribution "Al Qasas" against security personnel who were involved in killing demonstrators.[20] However, according to some sources, there were clear directives from the leadership since September 2013 forbidding any armed activism and demanding internal investigations of any case reported within the Brotherhood's ranks.[21]

Accordingly, in this phase, the MB did not give permission or provide cover for violent acts by its members, which would change in the next phase.

Leadership of the First Higher Administrative Committee (February 2014 - May 2015)

In February 2014, those left of the Muslim Brotherhood's General Shura Council members were called upon for a meeting to discuss forming a new leadership after the three active members of

the Guidance Bureau members, Mohamed Taha Wahdan, Mohamed Kamal, and Mohamed Saad Elewa, sensed that they were not able to accomplish the tasks of leadership under those circumstances. These meetings generated what became called the Higher Administrative Committee (HAC) or the "Crisis Administrative Committee" headed by Mohamed Kamal. Sources disagreed regarding the members of this Committee. It was indicated that it was comprised of nine members, the three aforementioned members of the Guidance Bureau in addition to six others from outside the office including Abd Al-Fattah Al-Sisi—who was chosen as the Secretary-General for the HAC, Hussein Ibrahim, and Ali Bateekh.[22] Meanwhile, the older leaders indicated in one of their internal correspondences that the committee was composed of twelve members; six were from the Guidance Bureau (Abd Al-Rahman Al-Barr, Mahmoud Ghozlan, and Abd Al-Azim Al-Sharqawi, in addition to the other three active members), and six members from outside the Bureau. The correspondence also indicated that the decision to exclude three members of the Guidance Bureau from managing the Committee was not because of issues of communication and security concerns but rather a deliberate exclusion that aimed to neutralise their role.[23]

Under the new leadership, the MB's priorities were focused on restoring the organisation, restructuring it, and bringing in new blood. As a result, some sources indicated that the Brotherhood's committees were restructured in order to meet the requirements of political action under these exceptional circumstances. For example, the Charity Committee, which was responsible for the Brotherhood's charity work, changed to the "Committee for those Affected" to provide care for the families of "martyrs" and detainees and ensure their social welfare. Moreover, the committee responsible for religious education and awareness, which was in charge for spreading and preaching religious values in society, changed its name to be called the "Awareness Committee", a committee responsible for communicating with communities to spread and promote the MB's vision regarding the political situation and garner an anti-coup public opinion. In addition, a new committee for activism was created to oversee the anti-coup demonstrations, and the Student Committee became incorporated into the Youth Committee,[24] and the committees for preparatory and high schools students were abolished. Moreover, the role of the Sisters' Committee became more prominent as a result of their significant involvement in the mobilisation.[25] Later, according to some sources, the so-called "Revolutionary Units" were created, which we shall tackle at another time.[26]

With regard to empowering youth members, there was an increase in the administrative promotion of the youth (under the age of thirty-five) in the membership of the governorate offices. It was even recommended to appoint a youth to be the deputy of the head of the Brotherhood in each governorate and to make him in charge of revolutionary activism.[27] Since the educational promotion did not match these administrative arrangements, levels of membership— "affiliated, organiser, and worker"—were merged in order for the members to have the same legal rights and assume different administrative positions.[28]

Organising the activities of the Egyptian Brotherhood members abroad required a longer period of time, as what came to be known as the Crisis Management Office Abroad "CMOA" was formed on January 19, 2015 to replace the Committee headed by Mahmoud Hussein. Ahmed Abd

AI-Rahman was appointed to lead it, and the office was comprised of representatives of Egyptian Brotherhood members who fled the country after the coup: three representing those who live in Turkey, three representatives of those living in Qatar, one representative of those living in Sudan, and one representative of those living in Malaysia, in addition to leaders of the technical committees.[29] These committees were assigned in six action areas: politics, legal advocacy, media, international relations, organising activities abroad, and staff training and recruitment.[30] The old leaders were pushed out of responsibility when the new leadership was formed, such as the Brotherhood's Secretary-General Mahmoud Hussein, who was in charge of the Egyptian crisis portfolio abroad before the formation of this office, and Deputy Supreme Guide Jum'ah Amin, who was also excluded from the executive positions completely. Moreover, the role of the Al-Rabitah or London Office, which was under the administration of Ibrahim Mounir, was neutralised. Shortly before the January 25th anniversary, the HAC had appointed a young man under the pseudonym "Mohamed Montaser" as the MB's official spokesperson.[31]

With the election of the HAC, this leadership confronted a pressing question: what is the action strategy at this phase? In March/April 2014, the new leadership seemed to rush the release of an "operational" plan called the "six-month" plan. In sum, it set a series of goals related to raising the awareness of citizens about the coup's crimes, mobilising people, and protesting to put pressure on the regime. However, this plan unleashed a wave of widespread anger within the MB membership because, according to them, it was detached from reality, as unprecedented repression against Brotherhood members and supporters was intensifying. It also stirred anger because it presented general and traditional ideas without any innovative solutions that could help resolve this critical situation. Most importantly, the plan was problematic because it was not in line with the revolutionary spirit that was predominant among the MB youth at the time.[32]

As a result, the Planning Committee started preparing a new plan, which took several months—including many meetings and intensive workshops that involved the members of the HAC and the organisational structures. The atmosphere during that period of preparation was tense because of the failure of the six-month plan and the continuous pressure from the MB's rank-and-file, especially its youth members, because of the intensifying crackdowns and the limited effect of peaceful activism as demonstrations had declined significantly.

The proposal was devised as a three-phase plan, later known as the "Exhaustion and Confusion - Frustration - Termination" plan, and proposed resorting to what is called Qualitative Action Committees (QACs) or "innovative non-violence", which involved using advanced levels of violence, more systemic than the limited and random violence practiced by Brotherhood members in the previous stage. The violence as included in the plan is characterised by two important features: first, it would not only be used for defence (i.e. defending demonstrators against the security crackdowns and Baltagiya gangs), but for punitive measures as well, i.e. to respond to liquidations and rape, targeting the security personnel involved, after definitively confirming their involvement. Second, the plan endorsed the use of small arms, not the primitive tools that were used in the first phase to confront the security apparatus assaults on demonstrators.[33]

When this plan was proposed to the HAC, the division between the twelve members was clear; seven members voted in favour of the plan, and five voted against it.[34] Therefore, the HAC made three decisions to overcome this division. The first decision was to intensively communicate with the intermediate leadership and work on the endorsement of the plan by the twenty-six administrative office leaders and the seven sectors secretaries. Twenty-seven out of thirty-three had endorsed it,[35] which indicates that the radical transformations in the intermediate leadership were more intense than among the senior leadership.

The second decision made by the HAC to overcome the division in its leadership over the issue of violence as a strategy was to form a committee comprised of the MB's religious scholars and associates to research the issue from a jurisprudence standpoint. This committee was formed in September 2014 and was known as the "Sharia Commission of the Muslim Brotherhood Scholars".[36] In the beginning of 2015, it issued a publication titled "The Jurisprudence of the Popular Resistance against the Coup," which debunked the idea of the conqueror's mandate, disavowed the legitimacy of the ruling regime, acknowledged the necessity of resisting and overthrowing it, and outlined the Sharia criteria for targeting individuals and public facilities."[37] This document is considered significant as it was the first document published by the MB as an institution in decades that established the illegitimacy of the ruling regime and the possibility of resorting to violence.

The third decision made to overcome the division in the Higher Administrative Committee over the "Exhaustion and Confusion" plan was a promise by the HAC to evaluate the plan after three months, while simultaneously working on creating new by-laws and base-level elections to select the MB's permanent leadership.

Despite the fact that the plan was adopted, the dispute was postponed rather than resolved. At any rate, the implementation of the plan started in August/September 2014, slated to continue till January 2015, to be evaluated after the end of the fourth anniversary of the January revolution's activities.

In the meantime, according to the account of one student leader, a structural amendment was intended to be introduced to form what became to be known as the "Revolutionary Units". It was entrusted with implementing the "Exhaustion and Confusion" plan and led by members under the age of forty. Those leaders were not known to the Brotherhood's members because they used pseudonyms.[38] The educational curricula were also amended, where "revolutionary Islamic" literature, Sayyid Qutb's writings, and the values of patience, sacrifice, endurance, and unity became the focus.[39] It was mentioned also that some MB members started to read other non-Islamic literature related to the history of revolutions, such as the Iranian Revolution and the Chinese Revolution, and the literature of revolutionary action.[40]

These revolutionary units, which were also known as the QACs Committees, communicated with the HTC and governorate offices, but it was decentralised. Its activities were associated with the eruption of an unprecedented wave of violence during the first anniversary of the Raba'a massacre in August 2014 and the fourth anniversary of the January 25 Revolution. This wave appeared to target some government facilities, electrical towers, and cell phone services, setting

fires in the streets, ambushing the police, and even targeting some security forces, informants, or individuals who cooperated with them.[41] While the sources with which the researcher verified this information indicated that these activities were not undertaken by an independent body and that the word "anonymous" was used to describe the perpetrators,[42] it should be noted that the beginning of these activities (between August 2014 and January 2015) coincided with the announcement of the establishment of armed organisations such as the Revolutionary Punishment, the Popular Resistance Movement, and the Helwan Brigades. That said, the latter were armed with automatic guns and accused of multiple assassinations.[43] It is likely that these organisations were either groups that defected from the MB or independent agents that operated under no leadership,[44] and that the symbolic choice of the Raba'a massacre's anniversary or the January 25 revolution is the reason for this coincidence.

Outbreak of Organisational Conflict (May 2015 - May 2016)

Although the organisational conflict did not surface until May 2015, its signs began to appear within the organisation during the evaluation period of the events of January 2015. The causes of the dispute in this period are attributable to several causes, the most important of which are:

I. The group from the HAC, who rejected the "Exhaustion and Confusion" plan, held its position despite the majority decision.

II. The dissatisfaction of Deputy Supreme Guide, Mahmoud Ezzat, in the way that Mohamed Kamal ran the HAC. Moreover, a group of the former leaders and some members of the HAC close to them felt that they are deliberately marginalised and even mistreated by the new leaders.

III. The confusion of the members of the HAC and the leadership of the governorates' offices in regards to what was going on, where they felt that they were losing their control over the work of QACs.

IV. Although "Exhaustion and Confusion" plan raised the spirits of the MB and relaunched the rallies after a period of weakness, it did not achieve any tangible political gains or change the balance of power on the ground.

V. The disagreement over the nature and timing of the by-laws amendments, as well as the disagreement over the elections to be held: their schedule, whether they are grassroots or limited to Shura councils, whether they are elections for a new HAC or a new Guidance Bureau and Supreme Guide Deputies, etc.

The crackdown, in response to the MB's escalation of violence, came to exacerbate the disagreement and confusion within the organisation. The first move of that crackdown was the arrest of Muhammad Ali Bishr in November 2014, the former member of the Guidance Bureau, and the former Minister of Local Development in the government of Hisham Kandil. He was, reportedly, responsible for negotiations with the regime.[45] When the new Interior Minister Magdi

Abd Al-Ghaffar took office in March 2015, the crackdown against the MB widened, as did the frequency of the arrests. Mohamad Taha Wahdan was arrested on May 28; Abd Al-Rahman Al-Bar and Mahmoud Ghozlan were arrested on June 2; then Abd Al-Azim Al-Sharqawi and Mohamed Saad Eliwa were arrested later in the same month. By that time, only three members of the Guidance Bureau had not been apprehended yet: Mahmoud Ezzat, Mohamed Abd Al-Rahman and Mohamed Kamal. Later on, and in an unprecedented escalation, thirteen Brotherhood leaders were eliminated on July 1, 2015, including Abd Al-Fattah Al-Sisi, the Secretary-General of the HAC. Several members of the HAC had to flee the country.[46]

In this atmosphere, the organisational dispute surfaced around late May 2015. Mahmoud Ghozlan, a member of the HAC associated with the old leaders, published an article on May 22 on the "Egypt Window", a semi-official website of the MB. The title of the article was "In the 87th Anniversary of Establishing Muslim Brotherhood; Our Call Remains and Our Revolution Continues." The article stressed on several sacrosanct principles of the MB, including that Tarbeya is the approach of the organisation towards change, and peacefulness and nonviolence is the way to achieve it. It also stressed on the importance of adherence to Shura and the rejection of tyranny, individualism, and the takfiri trend (accusing people of apostasy). The article also called for adherence to these sacrosanct principles in times of tribulation as well as in the times of prosperity. Members of the MB saw this article as an implicit refusal of the behaviour of the leadership of the HAC, sparking widespread controversies.[47]

This rift was confirmed after Mahmoud Ezzat, Deputy Supreme Guide, announced on 24 May 2015 a couple of decisions, such as the dissolution of the first HAC and the appointment Mohamed Abd Al-Rahman, the member of the Guidance Bureau, as the chairman of the new HAC, and Mohamed Kamal only as a member. Besides, he decided to launch investigations regarding the excesses of the dissolved HAC. He also announced a decision to associate the CMOA to the Al-Rabitah or London Office, under the leadership of Ibrahim Mounir, removing its association, in turn, from the HAC inside Egypt.[48]

In the same context, on May 28, Mahmoud Hussein issued a statement on his Facebook page, stating that Mahmoud Ezzat is the Acting Supreme Guide and that the Guidance Bureau is the entity that runs the MB. He signed the statement as "The Secretary-General of the MB." This triggered a response from the Spokesman of the MB, Mohamed Montaser, stating that Mahmoud Hussein is neither the Secretary-General nor representing the MB. The statement also added that MB held elections in February 2014 and elected a new Secretary-General, while entirely revamping its structures.[49]

Mohamed Kamal rejected Mahmoud Ezzat's decisions, and the representatives from five of the seven geographic sectors of the MB organisation (i.e., Greater Cairo, Alexandria, Central Delta, North Upper Egypt, and South Upper Egypt) supported him. The representatives of the remaining two sectors, Dakahlia and Sharkia, supported those decisions.[50] Besides, the CMOA refused to be associated with the London Office, insisting that it is only associated with the HAC in Egypt. All these events were a clear indication of a division within the MB.[51]

In an attempt to contain the conflict, it was decided to hold elections in the seven geographical sectors in order to elect new representatives to the new HAC. The elections took place during June and July 2015[52] and resulted in having five of the seven representatives of the sectors from the supporters of the Mohamed Kamal. He also had supporters from representatives of another three technical committees. During the second meeting of the new HAC, the control of Mohamed Kamal group over the Committee was obvious; therefore, the old leadership did not like the outcome.[53]   In a letter Muhammad Kamal later sent to the Shura Council, he said that the newly-elected HAC started its introductory meeting on August 8, 2015; however, in the following meetings throughout August, there was a deliberate failure to invite him or the representatives of some sectors that seemed to support him. Besides, according to Kamal, the points that were agreed upon were not respected either, including the full authority of the Committee to manage the organisation through a transitional period of six months, during which new by-laws would be set, and to hold new elections for the Shura Council and the Guidance Bureau.[54]

On the other hand, the old leadership had begun contacting some former MB officials, who had withdrawn themselves from the scene since the crackdown on the Raba'a sit-in and the escalation of violence. According to a young leader, those officials began to attract members of the MB, who were working neither in the revolutionary actions nor the demonstrations, in an attempt to establish a new structure parallel to the active one that already existed. This strategy was approved in a meeting of the Shura Council called by Mohamed Abd Al-Rahman in early June 2015.

Moreover, warnings were also sent to officials of the new structure not to communicate with the committees of mobilisation and revolutionary actions, instructing them to abide only by the instructions of the Acting Supreme Guide. Besides, Mohamed Abd Al-Rahman sent an internal letter accusing the administration of the former HAC of unilateral decision-making in the period after the dispersal of Raba'a sit-in, asserting absolute non-violence, and denying any existence of such a Sharia Committee that endorsed the QACs.[55] This elicited a reply from Mohamed Kamal, in his letter that we have mentioned before, where he said that Mahmoud Ghozlan was the one who adopted the Sharia Committee statement, and the members of the Guidance Bureau met with the members of that committee.[56]

In the same vein, the dispute was also acute between the leaders of the MB abroad, or between the CMOA led by Ahmed Abd Al-Rahman, and Al-Rabitah (aka the London Office) led by Ibrahim Mounir and Secretary-General Mahmoud Hussein. On 27 May 2015, Call for Egypt "Nidaa Al-Kinana" was announced by 150 Sharia scholars from different countries of the Muslim world, many of whom are members of the MB or affiliated to it. This statement clearly supported the tendency of the HAC in de-legitimising the existing regime in Egypt and called upon resisting it by all possible means. The statement even greatly expanded the concept of retribution "Al Qasas", where it considered that "rulers, judges, officers, soldiers, Muftis, media people, politicians, and all those who prove their participation, albeit by incitement, in abusing, torturing, and killing innocents unlawfully are, in Sharia, murderers and subject to the sentences of a killer. They must be punished according to Sharia provisions."[57] The importance of this

statement is that it reflected radical shifts in the thinking of the international symbols of the MB. Perhaps what the Secretary-General, Mahmoud Hussein, had done the next day, by issuing a statement confirming that the Guidance Bureau is leading the MB and that Mahmoud Ezzat is the acting leader of it, was an apparent attempt to contain the situation after this significant act.

Subsequently, a meeting of the Egyptian MB leaders abroad was held in Istanbul on August 8 & 9, 2015, in an attempt to contain the division. The meeting asserted that Mahmoud Ezzat is the Acting Supreme Guide, Ibrahim Mounir is Deputy Supreme Guide Abroad, Ahmed Abd Al-Rahman remains the head of CMOA, which will be under the supervision of Ibrahim Mounir for being a member of the Guidance Bureau. These decisions indicated a definite shift in the balance of power in favour of the former leaders. It also failed to resolve the conflict and deescalate the situation.[58]

Since the conflict was neither resolved by the election of a new HAC in Egypt in June-July 2015 nor by the August meeting abroad, some leaders of QACs decided to break away from the MB in September. According to some sources, at the beginning of the dispute, these leaders deliberately chose to refrain from involvement in this conflict, and focus only on the "Revolutionary Actions" thinking that what was going on was a "transient crisis." However, when the crisis widened and negatively affected their activity, where they even found themselves in the crossfire and targeted by the two groups, they decided to make the decision of being independent.[59] The decision resulted in serious consequences that will appear later in the next phase.

In October 2015, some sources mentioned that a new HAC was elected for six months. However, it appeared that this Committee was not entirely in control of the MB's entities, due to its lack of ability to communicate with the Acting Supreme Guide, Mahmoud Ezzat. Ezzat, on the other hand, made several decisions that were described as "unilateral," draining the Committee of much of its authority by limiting the approval of the plans of the interim committees to him only and relying on a parallel structure away from the elected HAC. Besides, Mahmoud Ezzat decided to investigate dozens of young cadres involved in Revolutionary Units accusing them of organisational irregularities.[60]

The situation abroad has not been any better. The newly-elected HAC sent a letter, on October 10, 2015, containing decisions to regulate the relationship between the Al-Rabitah and the CMOA, affirming the association of the latter to the HAC, and stating that the Al-Rabitah Office is responsible for educational, administrative and living matters, while the CMOA is responsible for managing the political, media and public aspects of the file of the Egyptian crisis. It also stated that that CMOA may only consult Al-Rabitah in its plans to coordinate with it in its activities. However, the Deputy Supreme Guide abroad Abraham Mounir, Secretary-General Mahmoud Hussein, and others from the Al-Rabitah leadership rejected these decisions and asked the Egyptian MB members abroad to cease communication with the CMOA. They even put financial restrictions over those who are still collaborating with CMOA, and accused the members of CMOA of abandoning the ideology of Al-Banna and hijacking the MB.[61]

As a result, in November 2015, the HAC and CMOA were both surprised by the convening of an MB Shura Council in Turkey, with approximately fourteen Shura Council members.

Surprisingly, some rumours mentioned that that Acting Supreme Guide Mahmoud Ezzat attended this meeting himself. Nevertheless, another twelve members of the Shura Council, who are close to the CMOA, had not been invited to this meeting. A final statement was issued by this meeting on November 18 under the title "The Position on Violence after The Coup of July 3, 2011," stressing on the adherence to "absolute peacefulness and non-violence in all its forms," and that it [i.e. MB] will accept any harm it faces as a result of abuse, arrest, killing, torture, and persecution, for the sake of its commitment to these principles." It also said that the MB is adhering to the "peaceful approach, civil struggle, political advocacy, and respecting the mechanisms of democracy and people's choices." The statement concluded by warning that "anyone affiliated with the MB shall adopt this approach; otherwise that person is not a member of this Group, and the Group will not accept him among it, no matter what he did or said, if he calls for action or plans for other than what the MB decided here."[62]

In response, the HAC issued a statement denying the issuance of such a statement by the MB. It stressed that the official decisions are issued only through the official outlets, namely the website "www.ikhwanonline.com," the official page of the Group on Facebook, and the official accounts of the spokesman of the Group on social media.[63] In fact, in early December 2015, the control over the MB was almost entirely by the hand of the old leadership. According to one of the leaders of CMOA at the time, what remained in the hand of the new leadership were only these official media outlets, due to the ability of the old leaders to attract the vast majority of intermediate leadership and their control of funding sources.[64]

Therefore, on December 14, 2015, Mahmoud Ezzat took decisions to dissolve the existing HAC, while assigning Mohamed Abd Al-Rahman to form a new one again. Simultaneously, the Al-Rabitah Office Abroad decided to suspend the official spokesman Mohamed Montaser, and appointed Talaat Fahmy as the new official spokesman while launching a new website, www.ikhwan.site to replace the official website run by the HAC www.ikhwanonline.com.[65] The move occurred in anticipation of a new wave of "revolutionary activism" on the anniversary of the revolution in January 2016; hence, some members of the revolutionary units accused the old leaders of working on destroying the movement, conspiring with the security forces, and even allowing their agents to penetrate the movement.[66]

For its part, the old leadership continued its attempt to re-control the MB's structures and institutions both domestically and abroad. Most notably, it worked to retrieve the official media outlets of the MB, using its control over funding. It struggled to control the MB's satellite channels such as "Egypt Now" and "Dawa" and managed to complete that in February 2016.[67] In addition, it sought to control the political entities that were formed to operate abroad, such as the "Egyptian Revolutionary Council," where its members, those who were associated with the CMOA, had to resign in February 2016. They said that they did so because the Council deviated from its original agreed-upon goals and principles. Some of them, however, indicated that they also felt interference from the old leadership and that the council's leaders (mostly independents) were pressured to exclude them.[68]

This escalation coincided with several attempts to mediate from internal and external parties, including the Reunion Initiative "Lam Al-Shaml" by 44 leaders and parliamentarians from MB on 24 December 2015.[69] The most important initiative was the one made by Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi and a large group of Islamic scholars in January 2016 after his meeting with representatives from both sides separately.[70] Both initiatives revolved around the same idea: returning to the grassroots to elect new leadership for the Group: a new Shura Council and a new Guidance Bureau. Some suggested that the leaders of both groups should not participate in these elections. Although the HAC welcomed Al-Qaradawi's initiative,[71] the old leadership refused to consider it an "arbitration" but rather a recommendation to be taken into account.[72] By doing that, the old leaders indicated its lack of confidence to attain any good outcome from such an election in this atmosphere.

The final noteworthy initiative to end the division came from Mohamed Kamal himself on 10 May 2016, when he submitted his resignation from the MB leadership. He called on all parties of the crisis to do the same, in order to provide an opportunity for young members to lead. The roadmap he suggested included several points, the most important of which is the holding of comprehensive elections starting from the Shura of the divisions and the Shura of the governorates, as well as all executive offices during May. He also suggested that the governorates' share in the General Shura Council should be simultaneously elected so that a new Shura Council would be in place in the first week of June.[73] As a result, a number of the Group's leaders abroad and at home issued a statement titled On Insight "Ala Bassirah", appreciating Mohamed Kamal's initiative and calling on all to accept new elections. The document included the signatures of 18 MB leaders with the endorsements of 218 intermediary leadership members. It even opened the door for the Group's members to sign it electronically at the site created for that.[74]

Being quite assured that the conflict was ended in their favour, the old leadership group rejected this initiative and even froze the memberships of the leaders who suggested it, including the leaders of the CMOA, Ahmed Abd Al-Rahman, Amr Darraj and Yahya Hamed.[75] The decision was rejected by the CMOA, who issued a statement saying that "the only entity authorized by the HAC to speak on behalf of crisis office abroad is the CMOA headed by Ahmed Abd Al-Rahman, and that the decisions of the London Office only has no impact on them.[76]

Resolving the Conflict in Favour of the Old Guard (May 2016 - present)

Since the resolutions of May 2016, it can be said that the organisational conflict was resolved in favour of the old guard, including their institutions at home represented by the Acting Supreme Guide Mahmoud Ezzat and Guidance Bureau member Mohamed Abd Al-Rahman, who also chairs the HAC, and abroad, represented by the Al-Rabitah or the London office under the direction of Deputy Supreme Guide Ibrahim Munir and the group's Secretary-General Mahmoud Hussein. This leadership has succeeded in regaining control over the Muslim Brotherhood — even though it was against the inclination of wide sections of the organisation's base—due to several factors, the most important of which are:

I. The failure of the strategy of "innovative non-violence" adopted by the first HAC—represented by a plan of "Exhaustion and Confusion"—to achieve tangible political results, despite the high costs paid by the Group.

II. The painful blows dealt by the security forces to the influential leaders and activists in the Mohammad Kamal's group, especially to the leaders of the QACs since May 2015. The most significant attack was the assassination of the Secretary-General of the first HAC Abd Al-Fattah Al-Sisi in July 2015, and then the liquidation of Mohamed Kamal himself in October 2016.[77] Since then, there has been no prominent leadership left in this current anymore. However, the security forces also targeted the leaders of the other group, most recently on 23 February 2017, with the arrest of Mohamed Abd Al-Rahman.[78]

III. The organisational experience of the senior leaders, and their success in re-recruiting broad segments of the MB members that had already withdrawn from the organisation because of security pressures or their rejections of the use of violence or the internal conflict.

IV. The old guard efficiently exploited the senior symbols who enjoyed a moral status within the organisation to re-control the MB members internally and abroad.

V. The educational methodology of the MB, which emphasised the rejection of violence and the moral character of the organisation's members, stood in the way of these radical transformations. This made the new leadership seem not in line with the Group's principles and methodology, despite the fact that these radical transformations had realistic justifications and that the Shura institutions within the organisation endorsed the new strategy.

VI. Last but not least is financial control, which was settled in favour of this current.

Within Egypt, the sources of funding were no longer sufficient to support the families of "martyrs" and detainees, and to cover the expenses of trials, lawyers, and compensations, especially after the security crackdown on the "committees for those affected" and lawyers associated with the MB.[79] Outside Egypt, the London office controls the regular members' dues, in addition to donations from other Brotherhood institutions abroad due to the trust these institutions have in the old leadership and its fear—especially in Europe and USA—that the control of the radical current could lead to the Brotherhood's involvement in more violence, which would legally complicate the status of these institutions in their own countries or lead to the labelling of the Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation. Furthermore, the supporting states such as Turkey and Qatar exerted further pressure to push the MB leaders away from this track.[80] Thus, the old leaders used this financial control to subdue the disobedient governorate offices and even hampered their efforts to obtain alternative sources of funding.[81]

As for what had come to be known as Mohamed Kamal's group, it had almost completely lost control of the MB after it had been in control of the leadership of five of the seven geographical sectors in May 2015, in addition to most of the technical committees and the CMOA. By the end of 2016, only it became controlling a number of groups in different sectors. Following the

assassination of Mohamed Kamal, this group conducted a base election among its affiliate groups and announced the completion of the election of a new Shura Council and the formation of a new Guidance Bureau called the "General Bureau" on 20 December 2016.[82]

On the backdrop of these developments, Mohamed Montaser, the Group's official spokesman, and the members of the CMOA announced their resignation.[83] The activities of both had almost halted due to financial and political pressures. Furthermore, even the attempt to start an alternative committee under the name "the Constitutive Commission for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Abroad" under the leadership of Ali Bateekh in September 2017 failed to sustain. Therefore, this group became contented with appointing a new spokesperson only.[84] Despite announcing its refusal to concede the revolutionary option, the group's activities have almost ceased due to security pressure and a severe shortage of resources available to it, human and financial.

As for the fate of the revolutionary units or the QACs, they had disbanded after the announcement by their leaders of their separation from the MB in September 2015. Some sources pointed to the fact that the majority of these units members have withdrawn or fled out of the country, and most of the groups have been broken up under the strain of the security crackdown after the liquidation and arrest of their members. In addition, some Salafi jihadi organisations became involved and subsumed some of these scattered groups after their separation from the central leadership.[85] Some researchers have indicated that there is evidence of the relationship between some groups that emerged in this period such as "Harikat Sawa'id Misr" also known as HASM, and "Liwa'a Al-Thawrah" or the Revolution Brigade, which emerged in July and August 2016 respectively, and the former members of these units.[86] Furthermore, some sources point to the fact that members of the QACs have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS)[87] or joined it in prisons.[88]

Findings: Dynamics of Radicalization and De-Radicalization

Based on what has been stated above, one can deduce some of the characteristics of the dynamics of the transformation to and from radicalism in the Muslim Brotherhood experience in the wake of the 2013 coup; most notable are two essential features. The first feature is the temporality and partiality of the radical transformations afflicting the Brotherhood in regards two aspects. The first aspect is related to conduct of violence: the disagreement within the organisation was not about "militarisation of the revolution" or about resorting to open military action against the regime,[89] but rather, it was about the conduct of violence on three levels. The first level is spontaneous defensive violence, which employs rudimentary weapons such as fireworks in order to protect protesters and fend off the security forces and thugs from attacking them. The second level is creative non-violence or violence that is aimed at exhaustion and confusion. This type of violence goes beyond the idea of defence to target facilities and infrastructure such as roads and public facilities, to generate a state of instability and to pressure the authorities. Light and primitive weapons might be utilised, albeit under the principle of "what is less than killing is non-violence."

The third level of violence is that of punitive violence, which directs retribution or liquidation in a direct and specific manner at those involved in murder or rape.

The old leadership seemed to be accepting of the first level, and perhaps the second reluctantly, under the strain of severe oppression and overwhelming anger that took over the Group. However, it did not entirely accept the third level of violence. Therefore, when the situation deteriorated and the Group lost control over the "Revolutionary units" or QACs, the old leadership backtracked from the idea of "innovative non-violence" and clearly embraced "absolute non-violence" as demonstrated by Muhammad Abd Al-Rahman's internal correspondence in July 2015 and then in the Shura Council's statement in November of the same year.

The second aspect of the temporality and partiality of the radical transformations afflicting the Group is the spontaneity of the violence committed by the Group in the first phase; this violence was mainly undertaken by sporadic members and some intermediate leaders, without the cover of the leadership. When the HAC attempted a plan to institutionalize and adopt violence strategically in August 2014, it stirred division within the Committee. In spite of the attempt to settle this division with the Shura bodies, almost half of the members of the HAC remained adamant in its view and began to announce it openly just a few months later in May 2015.

The second notable, essential feature of the transformative dynamics to and from radicalism in the MB experience is that the radical transformation process was more violent and intense among the MB base, and then began to move from the bases to the ranks of leadership thanks to the promotion of many young and new members to leadership positions, and the integration of older and younger leaders in the period after the formation of the First HAC. Nevertheless, this process of radical transformation only affected certain sectors of this leadership, before the old leaders led a wave of de-radicalisation of the Group that began in May 2015 and ended almost entirely with the decisions of May 2016.

Regarding the base, although the governorate offices and the technical committees voted by majority vote in favour of the Confusion and Exhaustion plan, 27 votes out of 33,[90] it did not reflect the general sentiment of the Muslim Brotherhood's base, taking into account that wide segments of the Brotherhood base (estimated by a young leader to be 75% of individuals)[91] decided to withdraw and freeze their membership either because of the security pressure or a dissatisfaction with the Group's new line or because of fragmentation. These segments were targeted by the Acting Supreme Guide, Mahmoud Ezzat, and were to become among the reasons for resolving the conflict in his favour. In other words, it can be said that the radical transformations were essentially concentrated in the ranks of the intermediate leaders and the Group's base that were active in circumstances of exceptional oppression in the period after the July 2013 coup. They are estimated to be about a quarter of the Group's members.

As for the armed groups, they developed in three stages: they began from organisations limited in capabilities and weapons, such as the Molotov Movement, the Execution Movement, and others. These groups were active during the period from fall 2013 to spring 2014. The second phase witnessed the development of well-armed and trained organisations such as the Popular Resistance, the Revolutionary Punishment, and the Helwan Brigades, which emerged during the

period from the fall of 2014 to spring 2015. The third phase is the period that witnessed the most sophisticated organisations in terms of structure, arms capabilities and operational skills such as Liwa'a Al-Thawra and HASM movement that emerged in mid-2016. That said, there is no evidence of an institutional relationship between these groups with the MB, although the organisational and ideological background of some of its members is linked to the Brotherhood.

This issue raises a problem which Hassan Abu Haniyeh referred to in his discussion on whether the MB serves as a "conveyor belt" of violence and extremism; a gateway to terrorist organisations, or as a "pre-emptive wall" against the involvement of youth in these organisations, and a key partner in supporting what is known as wasatiyya and moderation.[92] The anti-MB regimes tend toward the first conception and believe that the emergence of many terrorist organisations and leaders from under the cloak of the Brotherhood is the evidence that it nurtures and supports extremism and terrorism. This is part of a persistent effort to declare the Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation in many Western countries. Meanwhile, the others see the dissent of these terrorist groups and their defection from the Group as evidence of the latter's tolerance and moderation and that it can serve as a shelter to deter young Muslims from the influence of terrorist and takfiri ideas.

In examining the process of radicalisation/de-radicalisation witnessed by the Muslim Brotherhood in the post-coup period, I believe that the question that needs to be investigated is not why the organisation entered a radical transformation process after the violent political exclusion and the unprecedented repression it suffered, simply because this is an expected outcome based on the hypothesis of exclusion/radicalisation. Rather, the important question is: why has the Muslim Brotherhood not had a complete and sustained radical transformation?[93] This is the question whose answer does not require a study of the Brotherhood's ideology or the literature of some of its theorists as much as it needs to take into account the other factors previously mentioned in the theoretical framework:

I. According to rational choice theory, the calculation of the cost/benefit at the inception of the MB's radical transformation in August 2014 showed that the cost of this option was too high in return for limited political gains.

II. Also, according to the theory of political opportunity, the old leaders still held the belief that the Group has the potential to play an essential political role once the political sphere is re-opened. The Group's leadership took a decision to be inactive and not grind away resources in a futile battle awaiting to be reintegrated into the formal political system in the future.

III. Returning to the structural factors, we can see the impact of the organisational culture and socialisation, which has always emphasised the peaceful nature of the MB and renounced violence in its educational curricula over the past 40 years.[94] These factors made the radical transformation process short-lived and denied the new leaders who supported the revolutionary activism the ideological legitimacy in the eyes of most of the Brotherhood base, even if they obtained electoral legitimacy from some institutions within the Group.

IV. The factors associated with the agents are reflected in the personal nature, expertise, and memory of the conflicting leaders and the choices they made. The old leaders were successful in tightening the grip around the Group thanks to their extensive organisational expertise and the charisma of the Acting Supreme Guide, Mahmoud Ezzat, in comparison to the new leaders. Moreover, their tendencies toward non-confrontation and tactical patience stemmed from their conservative nature and from the vivid memories of the 1960s ordeal, of which Ezzat was a contemporary. Lastly, their strategic choices were based on the priority of the preservation of the organisation, as opposed to the priority of resisting the coup for the new leadership. This is why the two leaderships had a dispute, mainly because the two strategies could not be combined in the early periods. The old leaders called for an "absolute peacefulness" and abandoned the option of escalation against the regime and exerted a tremendous effort to restore the organisation and re-control the Group. Meanwhile, the new leadership focused on supporting revolutionary units and providing them with whatever is needed to succeed in their confrontation with the regime, even after they negatively affected the Group.

Moreover, given the weak control of the leadership over the Group members due to repression and targeting by the security forces, the influence of the structural factors related to the organisation and its internal culture on the conduct of the base and the intermediate leaders has become immensely weak. Therefore, these agents had a relative autonomy to make choices ranging from the decision to withdraw to engaging in violence. The psychological leaning and personal experience which these base went through became determinants of their choices. For example, the experience of imprisonment and brutal torture routinely inflicted upon detainees led to the rapid spread of ISIS ideology in Egyptian prisons, just like a "fire in a forest". According to human rights reports, ISIS detainees utilised the other detainees' suffering and anger due to maltreatment to feed their desire for revenge. Some detainees indicated that more than half of their cell members turned to ISIS ideology.[95]

Conclusion

Since the 2013 coup, the Muslim Brotherhood has been experiencing an unprecedented wave of repression and political exclusion. This wave has led to a radical transformation in the Brotherhood's strategies and political conduct. Moreover, some documents it published proposed the use of violence as a legitimate method to fight back against the current regime. However, this radical transformation could be described as incomplete and temporary. Further, it was essentially triggered by the influence of the Group base and the mid-level leadership over the senior leaders, and not a strategic decision made by this senior leadership and then advocated and promoted within the organisation.

The dynamics of radicalisation/de-radicalisation in the Muslim Brotherhood's experience after the coup d'état shows the limitation of the inclusion/moderation theory. Several structural and

actor-related factors are engaged in shaping social movements' options vis-a-vis political exclusion. This indicates the importance of including some other theories, such as the rational choice and political opportunity theories to understand and explain this conduct.

Given these factors, and while it is not possible for the Muslim Brotherhood as a whole to enter into a new cycle of radicalisation in the near future, such transformations among intermediate leaders or other segments of the organisation's base are not unlikely, provided the following two conditions. The first condition would be continued repression, exclusion, and a political impasse or a shift in the balance of power that makes the radical transformation an acceptable option with a bearable cost and comparable political gains. The second condition would be the current leadership's loss of control over the organisation, whether because of the death of some of its influential leaders or the failure of the Group to deal with its internal complexity.With new divisions, some factions may pursue a radical path, especially since the old leaders are still being blamed by the base for their failure to manage the Group during the transition as well as their failure to deal with the crisis of the coup. Not to mention, as of yet the old leadership has failed to provide a coherent vision or strategy following the resolution of organisational conflict in its favour.

One of the most important topics that will require follow up and study in the future is the impact of the Diaspora on the Muslim Brotherhood structurally and ideologically, and how this might lead to the emergence of two different currents within the organisation: the Brotherhood abroad vs. the Brotherhood at home. These studies could also examine the effect of imprisonment on the MB's members and supporters. Researchers can also raise the question: Will any political breakthrough and liberation of detainees lead to the spread of radical organisations? And will the Muslim Brotherhood be able or willing to absorb these elements or the majority of them like what happened after the end of the 1960s ordeal and the Sadat regime's policy of partial containment of the Islamic currents within the regime?

To conclude, it is an exaggeration to say that the era of political Islam has come to its end, but it is also quite clear that it is impossible for the Muslim Brotherhood to restore its former political and social influence in Egypt. The Brotherhood's ability to maintain its social base and the political role in any future political opening will depend on several factors, some of which are related to the Group itself, such as its ability to renew its leadership and deal with internal differences, along with its ability to accommodate a new generation of young people with different perspectives and non-traditional patterns of activism.

 Other factors are linked to the political and institutional contexts, the most important of which is that of a political breakthrough: will it take shape through an initiative from within the regime, or due to pressure from a popular movement, or in the context of a comprehensive national (and possibly regional) reconciliation? And what is the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in bringing about this breakthrough? Until this happens, it seems that the MB leaders prefer to maintain the strategy of dormancy and patience, and focus on restoring the organisation and sustaining it until this storm abates.

Acknowledgements

About the Author

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