

## **The Survivability of Social Movements Under State Repression: The Case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt**

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### **Bio:**

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She is one of the co-founders of an international research cohort (COIRIS), the Cohort for the Study of Islam and International Relations, in 2013, Rapallo, Italy. She is Co-Editor in Chief of a book series with Palgrave Publishing: “Islam and Global Studies.” Abdelkader has published *Islamic Activists: The Anti-Enlightenment Democrats* (2011), *Modernity and the Principle of Public Welfare* (2003), and *Social Justice in Islam* (2000). Her latest book is *The Forgotten Khayr el-Din al-Tunsi’s Islamic Social Contract* (2026).

### **Abstract:**

This paper presents a comparative research analysis of the political status of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt from 1954 until 2018. The focus of this research is on the state’s repression and the Muslim Brotherhood’s mechanisms in re-engaging in public life, especially post 2013. The paper will provide a comparative study of the interaction between the group and the state from its dissolution in 1954-1960 and 2013-2018. This comparison will

shed light on the possibilities that lie ahead for the survival of the group after the mass imprisonment of its member and the Rab'aa massacre perpetrated by the Egyptian state.

*Keywords: Islam and politics, Islamic movements, social movements, repression and dissent, reactionary political movements, muslim brotherhood.*

### **A. Introduction:**

This paper argues that: 1) the narrow vision of Islamic activism in an essentialist “terrorism” context is counterproductive to U.S. interests and fails to reflect the truth on the ground in Muslim majority countries of populist religious political opposition movements. 2) that the Muslim Brotherhood (the case study analyzed in this paper represents a social movement that connotes an actor with agency that is reactive but also independent in the decision making process. 3) Assuming agency the paper attempts to comparatively analyze aspects such as the degrees and mechanisms of state repression during different time periods in the Muslim Brotherhood’s history, and the group’s internal cohesion under extreme duress from the state. The information analyzed will indicate the “survivability” of the Muslim Brotherhood and the repercussions of that on the regional and international levels of policy making. The Muslim Brotherhood is one of the strongest opposition social movements in the Middle East and thus its future is central to regional and international foreign policy analysis. According to the free elections in 2012, the majority of the Egyptian population voted in support of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, thus indicating its support of this political organization, making them an essential part of the political scene that is unavoidable partner in seeking any degree of democratization in Egypt. Hence, the Muslim Brotherhood

survival and engagement in the political platform is very threatening to age old authoritarian regimes in the region like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This paper will also address the hyper focus on the state as the sole actor given its power and its willingness to repress, however what is constantly unattended to in most of the literature is that even under severe repressive conditions that individuals in the movement and the social movement as a whole have alternative methods of survival.

Islamic activism and politically involved Islamic transnational movements have garnered academic attention post the Iranian revolution of 1979. The support of the revolution from a wider base than anticipated in Iran (a base that included intellectuals, liberals, and leftists) undermined the confidence that ideological splits in Muslim societies will always act as a guardian against social change. Academic research continued to analyze Islamic politically active groups in the 1990s as a result of the rise of al-Qaeda and the United States interests in Afghanistan's oil, set to the backdrop of an indirect confrontation with Russia. Since 2001 with the 9/11 attack, the research agenda of the literature on Islamic activism has been limited to its focus on terrorism. The sole focus on terrorism had many effects on calculating the costs and benefits of the United States' strategic interests in the Muslim world, though it had many other repercussions that will be addressed in this paper.

#### Research Question:

Both direct state repression and internal cohesion under repression affect the probability of the social movement's survival. Maintaining an organizational skeleton and regrouping members (whether in prisons or in fleeing abroad from state repression) are directly correlated to the social movement's survivability: whether the survival tactics are on the group or individual level. State repression therefore is not the only factor affecting a social movement's survivability.

## **B. Theoretical and Historical Context:**

Recent studies of political Islam<sup>1</sup> have neglected two aspects of these movements which necessitates analyzing the Muslim Brotherhood's survival from another angle, namely: its' with stance of state violence.

1. The Islamic activist's ideology, a bias that Roxanne Euben's "Enemy in the Mirror" addresses adequately by highlighting the fact that the very popular ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood Sayid Qutb has never been discussed in Western political thought.<sup>2</sup> This severe bias in the literature is caused by what Philpott terms as the "Westphalian synthesis", i.e., the non-inclusion of religion in publications in the international relations field. (Philpott, 2002) Thus, the effect of the Enlightenment era and the separation of Church and State, also affected the academic study of religion and International Relations. By this measure I further argue that even on the domestic level engaging in research that addresses those socio-political movements remains very narrow.
2. The fact that very few studies address those religious movements as social movements that have 'agency' alludes to an essentialist discourse rooted in the realist/terrorism perspective.

<sup>1</sup> Political Islam here means Islamically informed political parties/societies. The recent usage of the term limits it to violent groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda, however there is a much wider base with politically viable groups like the Muslim Brotherhood examined in this paper that are not mentioned. Islamic movements like the Muslim Brotherhood and the Renaissance party in Tunisia connote socio-political movements that are informed by Islam; however, they do not support theocratic rule.

<sup>2</sup> Euben writes:

"The subtext of this reading (i.e., the Western reading of Islamic fundamentalism) is that the growing appeal of fundamentalism owes little to its own inherent power as a moral ideal. As Foucault has pointed out, to be irrelevant is to be shut out of the realm of what is normal and acceptable; it is to be silenced as if mad". (Euben, 1999, p. 24)

Tepe and Demirkaya also emphasize how “The burgeoning accounts of Islamic groups and movements seems to be generating an approach that de-territorializes Islam, relying increasingly on large-n studies. Missing in these works are thorough analyses of domestic actors and institutions in a range of countries where Islam plays a critical role, as well as detailed studies of some countries (e.g., Yemen, Iran, or Saudi Arabia). Perhaps more striking is the trend that places Islam within an increasingly pervasive “securitization paradigm” (Tepe & Demirkaya, p. 204)

The trend of homogenizing the study of Islam and politics has become increasingly polarized with the rise of attacks by groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS. Thus, the study of Islamic groups has been reduced to a fast paced reaction to policy related questions that are heavily dictated by U.S. national security interests, without understanding the differences in ideology or historical actions that each movement has taken.

Whether one addresses individuals like Sayid Qutb<sup>3</sup>, or the Muslim Brotherhood movement on the group level, one finds that most studies are descriptive and narrowly focused on the specificity of the individuals or the movement under study. As accurately described by Euben, Sayid Qutb, for example, is expounded in the literature as an extremist and terrorist, and if his writings attract followers then they too are extremists and irrational. Therefore, Islamic movements are easily essentialized and pigeon-holed as irrational movements that: “are downplayed as contingent upon the unique ideological orientation of Islam, thus implicitly essentializing Islamic activism as unintelligible in comparative

<sup>3</sup> Sayid Qutb is widely read in Muslim countries, he was and continues to be a Muslim ideologue. His writing was solely focused on his academic training in the beginning: literary appreciation of the Qur’an, then when he joined the Muslim Brotherhood his writing shifted towards issues that pertain to social justice in Muslim societies, last but not least during his imprisonment in Abdel Nasser’s time his writing turned more towards extremism. (Euben, 1999)

terms and perpetuating beliefs in Islamic exceptionalism”.  
(Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 3)

Thus, studies have concentrated on the cultural uniqueness of Islamic movements with an underlying focus and emphasis on differentiation, exemplified by Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” argument, highlights this trend. Islamic activism is usually addressed as a structural-psychological mechanism by which members of those movements adjust to “poverty” or the advent of “modernization”. (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 9)

Wiktorowicz highlights that: “Participants are not ‘dysfunctional’ individuals seeking psychological comfort, but instead frequently represent educated and well-adjusted members of society”.

(Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 9) The study engages in “framing” social movement theory, which is defined as the social, cultural and moral grounds that a social movement uses to maintain and mobilize its followers. Framing is important in Muslim majority countries because of the historical legacy of colonization. Religio-nationalists in Muslim countries, especially the MENA region relied on: “issues of identity, culture, and post-materialism (as opposed to class, economic, or narrow political interests) Islamic movements are embroiled in struggles over meaning and values”. (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 16)

On a brief but necessary note, the time chosen to compare the state’s actions against the Brotherhood are important in that 1954 marks when Abdel Nasser the president of Egypt, post the 1952 military coup, clamped down on the movement. Although the 1952 coup succeeded partially because of the cooperation of the Brotherhood, Nasser knew the potential threat of the Brotherhood’s popularity amongst the Egyptian population. (Mitchell, 1969) Internal divisions within the movement also catapulted the society in losing the chain of command between its leadership under Hudaybi versus the leadership of the secret apparatus which conspired to assassinate Abdel Nasser during a public speech in 1954. (Mitchell, 1969) Therefore, Abdel Nasser’s

move to consolidate power was justified by the assassination attempt and the arrest, military trials, and the denial of the members' basic legal and human rights were all compromised. The society as will be discussed later in this paper at this crucial moment of repression unified and survived because of a number of factors: 1) fleeing and seeking refuge in many countries, thereby regrouping and continuing their mission (which was also their strategy in prison), 2) their ideological principle of Persecution *Mihna* that they utilized to unify the movement in face of state repression (Al-Anani, 2016) 3) Their ability to rebuild the society's assets to continue offering their free educational, medical and other services to the society.

After Nasser died, Sadat, released the surviving Muslim Brotherhood members and their activity continued although subdued. However, as a result of their experience and other factors affecting the Egyptian political and economic scene, other more violent movements sprouted in the 1970s and Sadat was assassinated by one of those groups in October of 1981. Mubarak replaced Sadat and he was cautious in dealing with the Muslim Brotherhood, there were laws that banned the movement from participating in public policy and elections however the movement got around that by running as independent candidates and were thus again participating in elections but in a very constricted manner. It is only in the 2011 uprisings that the movement started participating fully in support of the revolutionaries in terms of providing protection and organization in Tahrir square and they succeeded in rallying voters in the presidential elections of 2012, the first democratic election in Egyptian history with a result of 52% versus the opposing ancien regime candidate who won 48%. The Muslim Brotherhood suffered on many counts after Morsi became president: the differences between the liberal versus conservative leadership, the generational gap between the leadership and the youth who were on the frontlines of the revolution, the simple provincial cult of personality leadership, without any strategic political alliances and lack of control over the

military and the police, were all factors that uprooted any effort by the society to maintain its gains and the revolutionary gains after 2011 uprisings.

In July 2013, the military imprisoned Morsi and in August of 2013 the military ransacked supporters of the movement in a public square, killing 1000-2000 men, women and children, and wounded twice as many people, including the medical staff that attempted to save lives during the massacre. The leadership was rounded up and imprisoned and this is the second phase under analysis in this paper from 2013-2018.

### **C. The Muslim Brotherhood: State Repression and Violence:**

State repression as a policy could be “preemptive” or “reactive” (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 69) It can also be a mix of both as will be illustrated later in previously collected data about regime repression of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.<sup>4</sup> Egypt’s relative lack of political channels and institutions together with high degrees of repression lead to variance in reaction whether by participating in the “broken” state institutions or adopting violence as a tactic against repression.<sup>5</sup> (Hafiz & Wiktorowicz, 2004; Abdelkader, 2000)

As an example of “preemptive repression” Hafiz and Wiktorowicz write about the regime’s enactment of a new law #206: which gerrymandered districts to support the National Democratic Party to win the elections. A second example of “preemptive repression”: “Days before the elections, the state sentenced 54 members to prison terms ranging from three to five years. As a result, only 1 of 150 MB candidates made it to the People’s Assembly, and he was removed in 1996 for

<sup>4</sup> The data collected was from 1988-1993. (Abdelkader, 2000)

<sup>5</sup> Relative lack of political channels and institutions are highlighted and fully discussed as semi-authoritarian regimes attempt to impress the notion that they are democratic in nature, even though they protect the status quo. Semi-Authoritarianism is fully captured in Ottaway’s (2003) article.

membership in an illegal organization”. (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 73)

Violence as a result of state repression is also illustrated in “Social Justice in Islam” (2000). Upon measuring the government performance and repressive policies in Egypt, the conclusion was that:

“Violent Islamic activism, measured by the number of attempted attacks on public officials, tourists, and secularists, shows a steady increase over the five years. That is, the violent element of Islamic activism has a tendency to grow over time in response to violations of the four independent variables of the goals of Islamic law (sharia) (al-maqasid).<sup>6</sup>

However, there is a difference between the violent and the nonviolent patterns of Islamic activism, reflected in the number of demonstrators, kinds of demonstrations, and electoral activities, tend to vary more closely with the government’s responses to the four independent variables”. (Abdelkader, 2000, pp. 97–98)

Islamic Activism in Egypt thus serves as a primary example: “The independent variables of the preservation of religion, the mind, and the preservation of posterity are the strongest explanatory variables in Egypt. Their explanatory weight is relatively higher than the preservation of self and the preservation of property. In the years that the government cracked down on Islamic activists by violating habeas corpus, killing or torturing prisoners, and wounding or killing Islamic activist demonstrators, the nonviolent aspects of Islamic activism decreased, whereas the violent aspects continued to increase”. (Abdelkader, 2000, pp. 97–98)

<sup>6</sup> The goals of Islamic law (Al-Maqasid) is a legal principle that depends on the spirit of the law and not its literal interpretation, it is a legal concept that was initially addressed in early Islamic legal thought and later developed in thirteenth century Islamic Andalus. The concept was also broadly addressed as a social science tool to measure the degree of social justice from an indigenous perspective. (Abdelkader, 2000)

Table 1  
Summary of Data on Islamic Activism in Egypt\*

| Year  | Nov         | Oct | Nov         | Oct | Nov         | Oct | Nov         | Oct | Nov         | Oct |   |    |   |   |   |    |   |    |   |    |
|---|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|---|----|---|---|---|----|---|----|---|----|
|   | 1988 - 1989 |     | 1989 - 1990 |     | 1990 - 1991 |     | 1991 - 1992 |     | 1992 - 1993 |     |   |    |   |   |   |    |   |    |   |    |
| Approximate number of Islamic activists arrested              | 2,340       |     | 3,660       |     | 3,710       |     | 2,800       |     | 10,450      |     |   |    |   |   |   |    |   |    |   |    |
| Approximate number of attempted attacks                       | 35          |     | 44          |     | 47          |     | 124         |     | 668         |     |   |    |   |   |   |    |   |    |   |    |
| Approximate number of Islamic activists who rally/demonstrate | 1,255       |     | 2,220       |     | 3,890       |     | 190         |     | 7,110       |     |   |    |   |   |   |    |   |    |   |    |
| Categories of kinds of demonstration                          | 1           | 2   | 3           | 4   | 1           | 2   | 3           | 4   | 1           | 2   | 3 | 4  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4  |   |    |   |    |
| Frequency of kinds of demonstrations                          | 7           | -   | 4           | 1   | 6           | 6   | 3           | 4   | 10          | -   | 4 | 2  | 1 | 5 | 2 | 7  | 9 | 11 | 1 | 7  |
| Categories of election patterns                               | 1           | 2   | 3           | 00  | 1           | 2   | 3           | 00  | 1           | 2   | 3 | 00 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 00 | 1 | 2  | 3 | 00 |
| Frequency reflecting election patterns                        | 1           | -   | -           | -   | 2           | 2   | -           | -   | 1           | -   | - | 1  | - | - | - | 3  | 2 | 2  | - | -  |

\* See Appendix 1 for information on the categories and scales used to code the data.

By this measure, as Hafiz and Wictorowicz (2004) and Abdelkader (2000) note that historically speaking there is a connection between state repression and violent dissent in Islamically oriented parties. Although those studies are indicative of Islamic movements’ reactions to state repression, however, they do not particularly measure Islamic movements’ attempts at survival through repressive state policies, even within the particular case study of the Muslim Brotherhood.

## **D. Muslim Brotherhood Survival Tactics Post the Abdel-Nasser Era and Since Their Annihilation in 2013: A Comparison:**

### **I. Literature on Muslim Brotherhood Survival Tactics:**

The literature that speaks to social movement survival under repression is particularly narrow when engaging with the Muslim Brotherhood survival tactics after waves of state repression.

Munson<sup>7</sup> writes:

“The case of the Muslim Brotherhood also suggests that our understanding of the relationship between mobilization and repression must expand its focus to include the processes within organizations that enable them to withstand repressive efforts of the state”. (Munson, 2001, p. 488)

Munson utilizes the Political Opportunity Structure (POS) theory as a tool to understand Muslim Brotherhood survival and mobilization. The connection however between the POS assumptions and the factors listed by Munson in support of his mobilization assumptions are contradictory.<sup>8</sup>

Munson argues that the Muslim Brotherhood structure built on “diversity of social beliefs and commitment” led to the group’s success in surviving repression. (Munson, 2001, p. 499)(Munson: 499) A second factor in the Muslim Brotherhood’s survival was

<sup>7</sup> Munson takes up the Muslim Brotherhood’s survival, however there are a number of assertions in the publication that are erroneous, for example, he writes that the Muslim Brotherhood’s worldview is “rooted in the Hanbali school of Islamic thought” (Munson, 2001, p. 489). Al-Banna the founder of the movement belonged to a Sufi sect before he created the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, then the sequence of leaders did not display/believe in Hanbali thought, there is as expected with human agency, variations historically in their religious leanings. For example, we cannot assert that al-Hudaybi (the second leader of the Muslim Brotherhood after al-Banna’s assassination) was a Hanbali?

<sup>8</sup> Munson writes that “declining state repression, increasing political access, divisions among the elite, and influential allies.” (Munson, 2001, p. 494) Those factors are not related to Munson’s later assertions that: “There are three important themes in Egyptian political history during the time period under question: 1) the role of the British in Egyptian political life, 2) the delegitimizing of the once-popular Wafd party, and 3) the ideological conflict over the creation of Israel”. (Munson, 2001, pp. 494–495)

the movement's involvement in social services, to the extent that the government was forced to continue services even after the imprisonment and demonization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Nasser's time in 1954.<sup>9</sup>

Munson summarizes the reasons for the Muslim Brotherhood survival of regime repression: "1) its internal structure was adapted specifically for avoiding repressive efforts of the state and making it practically and ideologically easy for individuals to join; 2) its activities were intertwined with beliefs in such a way that each was strengthened and made more resilient to state repression and more attractive to potential supporters; and 3) the structure of the group's message, rooted in rich Islamic ideas and symbols, was tied to everyday Egyptian life and thus accessible to potential recruits". (Munson, 2001, p. 507) He highlights that POS and political Islam literature do not give priority to the organizational and tactical qualities of the Muslim Brotherhood. Munson's significant contribution is his stress on ideology and its connection to social movements' survivability, for indeed, "ideology must be considered more systematically. Its effects and relationship to social movements are more pervasive than current models allow". (Munson, 2001, p. 507)

### **E. Factual Information Collected:**

#### **I. Direct State Repression Information:**

- a) Number of Muslim Brotherhood arrested members in Abdel Nasser's era (1954-1960)
  - b) Number of Brotherhood members sentenced to death in Nasser's era.
  - c) Number of MB members who fled the country under Nasser
  - d) Property confiscation under Nasser
- Versus

<sup>9</sup> "State department records indicate, in fact, that the system was so large that the government was forced to fund and continue staffing the Society's extensive network of services after the organization was dissolved by Nasser in 1954 for fear that their collapse would lead to widespread unrest (USDS 1954, #1129)". (Munson, 2001, p. 501)

- a) Number of Muslim Brotherhood members arrested from 2013-2018
- b) Number of Brotherhood members sentenced to death 2013-2018
- c) Number of MB members who fled the country since 2013
- d) Property confiscation since 2013

## **II. Internal Cohesion Under State/Regime Repression:**

- a) Ideological cohesion (Doves/Reformers vs. Hawks/Conservatives) in Nasser's era
- b) Generational cohesion (young versus old) in Nasser's era.

Versus

- a) Ideological cohesion from 2013-2018
- b) Generational cohesion from 2013-2018

## **F. Factual Information on the Muslim Brotherhood's reaction to state repression:**

After the assassination attempt on Nasser on October 26, 1954, internal conflicts between the leadership of the “secret apparatus” and Muslim Brotherhood leader Hudaybi were at their height. There was no communication between Hudaybi and the secret apparatus that committed this act of violence. (Mitchell, 1969) The chain of command in the society was totally broken. (Mitchell, 1969) The media started its character assassination of the Muslim Brotherhood as an organization.<sup>10</sup> The media outputs at the time would begin shaming the society, as Mitchell captured it, by portraying them as “merchants of religion”.<sup>11</sup> The smear campaign stopped at nothing.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> “For the next two months the pages of the daily and weekly press and magazines contained virtually nothing else”. (Mitchell, 1969, p. 152)

<sup>11</sup> The same words are still used in the aftermath of 2013.

<sup>12</sup> “The old allegations of immorality against the secretary-general, ‘Abidin, were aired, and new, colourful ones ranging from homosexuality to adultery were added to his account and to that of Sa’d Ramadan, both of whom were still in Syria; other

## **Factual Information:**

### **I. Nasser's Era: 1954-1960**

#### **a) Number of Arrests:**

In November of 1954 the government announced that they have arrested 1,000 of the Brotherhood's members. (Mitchell, 1969, p. 153)

#### **b) Number of Death Sentences:**

Mitchell also notes: "In all, fifteen were sentenced to death, but all except the first six sentences were commuted. Over half of those tried were acquitted or received suspended sentences. For months, unnumbered Brothers, not brought before the courts or already tried and acquitted, remained in prisons". (Mitchell, 1969, p. 161)

#### **c) Number of Muslim Brothers who Fled:**

There is no exact figure of the number of emigres to other countries, however Richard Mitchell notes: "The government consistently denied persistent rumors that Syria would grant, or had granted, them political asylum, but the news was correctly reported by Radio Israel on 13 October and confirmed within a day in a not widely circulated Egyptian Radio newsletter. After this experience the government tightened up passport control for all suspected Brothers, a move which coincided with **a minor exodus to Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.**"<sup>13</sup> (Mitchell, 1969, p. 142)

members were alleged to have kept mistresses, molested women in the street, and absconded charge that the leaders of the Society were 'merchant of religion' either using their trusting followers for their own personal advantage or guiding them towards a primitive, barbaric 'religious state'". (Mitchell: 153)

<sup>13</sup> At the pre-military coup moment and after the Muslim Brothers were released from prison after their first dissolution in 1949, Mitchell notes the Muslim Brothers' tactics of survival: "The organization while it remained technically illegal, began regrouping under the leadership of the former deputy, Salih 'Ashmawi. Its rapid recovery was largely due to its having continued to operate as an organization in the prisons; grouped together in mass concentrations, it was a simple matter to re-establish the former patterns and relationships. Those who escaped abroad

**d) Amount of Assets Confiscated:**

In terms of investments and companies that belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood, the following is reported:

\*Company for Islamic Transactions, approximately 30,000 Egyptian Pounds in 1946. Combined later in 1947 with the Company for Mines and Quarries for a total of 60,000 Egyptian Pounds (Mitchell, 1969, p. 275)

\*Printing Press and Journalism: 1947 approximately 100,000 Egyptian Pounds

\* Company for Spinning and Weaving approximately 5,000 Egyptian Pounds

\* Company for Commercial and Engineering Works approximately 14,000 Egyptian Pounds.

\*Commercial Company approximately 20,000 Egyptian Pounds. (Mitchell, 1969, pp. 275–277)

All of the businesses/enterprises that the Muslim Brotherhood were engaged in were confiscated in the first dissolution of the society (1948), that never was given time to recover till the 1954 dissolution which put an end to all those businesses and all this capital and resources were confiscated by the state. (Mitchell, 1969, p. 277)

**G. Factual Information: Post-Arab Spring and State Crackdown 2013-2018:**

**a) Number of arrests:**

According to the government's figures: 22,000 were detained from July 2012 to July 2013 before the major 2013 crackdown. (Human Rights Watch, 2014)

continued to spread the message, especially in **Syria, Jordan, and Pakistan.**" (Mitchell, 1969, p. 80)

It is estimated that 1,000-2,000 protestors died in Rab'aa Square and al-Nahda on August 14, 2013 and 4,000 were injured (Human Rights Watch, 2014)

**b) Number of Death Sentences:**

Mohamed Badie (Muslim Brotherhood Supreme leader) and 46 others are sentenced to life in prison. 374 were given 15 years in detention, 75 prominent members were sentenced to death in a mass trial of 739 people. (The Guardian, 2018)

**c) Number of Muslim Brothers who Fled:**

The Council on Foreign Relations notes: “Thousands of the group’s leaders and members have been imprisoned and others went into exile....Qatar and Turkey have cultivated ties with the Brotherhood and its offshoots, and many exiled members of the Egyptian group have settled in those countries. In contrast Saudi Arabia and the UAE have worked to suppress Brotherhood-affiliated movements, seeing their populist appeal as an ideological rival to their absolute monarchies” (Laub, 2019)

An article in the Middle East Journal confirms in passing reference to the number of Muslim Brothers fleeing: “many of the Brotherhood members have fled the country and are now taking refuge in various countries such as Qatar, Turkey and the United Kingdom.” (Al-Anani, 2015, p. 542) <sup>14</sup>

The Century Foundation reports: “According to senior Turkish officials who were quoted in the media in 2019-2020, there are some 15,000-30,000 Egyptians living in Turkey. An opposition leader in Istanbul told the author that Muslim Brotherhood members, along with their families, number around twenty thousand. In other words, it is possible that most Egyptians now

<sup>14</sup> In a footnote of this quote, the author clarifies: “Many of the Muslim Brotherhood’s senior officials and members fled to Qatar after the coup. However, some of these figures had to leave Doha after intensive pressure from other Gulf countries, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Ian Black, “Qatar-Gulf Deal Forces Expulsion of Muslim Brotherhood Leaders,” *The Guardian*, September 16, 2014. (Al-Anani, 2015, fn. 58)

living in Turkey have some type of connection to the Muslim Brotherhood” (Ayyash, 2020)<sup>15 16</sup>

**d) Amount of Assets Confiscated:**

According to Brooking’s Steven Brooke’s paper (2015):

“The Ministry of Social Solidarity can dissolve an association, and that association can only appeal the dissolution order back to the Ministry. In effect, this means that third parties (such as the Egypt’s court system) have no jurisdiction over dissolution cases unless the Ministry of Social Solidarity allows it. This is why the regime’s campaign against the Brotherhood’s community associations has proceeded so quickly: in late February the Ministry dissolved 169 institutions from the list, and on March 1<sup>st</sup> they dissolved 112 more. A further 99 were dissolved in mid-March”. (Brooke, 2015, p. 10)

Also, the Islamic Medical Association that operated 22 hospitals, 7 specialized medical centers and mobile medical caravans, were seized by the government in early 2015 (Brooke, 2015, pp. 4–5) :

“These included properties worth approximately 300 million Egyptian pounds (approximately 39 million dollars)” (Brooke, 2015, p. 5)

**H. Internal Cohesion Under Repression: Ideological and Generational Fragmentation:**

<sup>15</sup> The patterns of leadership in exile still reflect a “cult of personality” imprint so that Mohamed Soudan is in a leadership position in London, and that Medhat al-Haddad is also the financial leader in Turkey (Ayyash, 2020) The patterns of leadership still continue to be reserved for the older generation in their 60s and 70s and one of the leaders Mahmoud Hussein allegedly spent the organization’s money to purchase land and a car for his son, while members of the Brotherhood are expected to survive on the equivalent of \$30 a month form the organization. (Ayyash, 2020)

<sup>16</sup> This number might be inflated because the source is in opposition to Erdogan’s government and therefore critical of Erdogan’s public support of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt.

In hindsight Anani analyzes the ability of the Muslim Brotherhood to survive Abdel Nasser's repression in the 1950s and 1960s: The Brotherhood members including their leadership utilize the regime's repression and extreme brutality as a psychological memory and solidarity symbol that unifies its members going forward. (Al-Anani, 2016, pp. 141–142)

“In fact, it turned repression into a source of solidarity rather than anguish. This occurred because of what can be called the “adversity narrative” or *mihna*, the sense of victimization that prevails among the Brotherhood's members because of regime repression” (Al-Anani, 2016, pp. 141–142)

This can be exemplified by Ezzat (a Muslim Brotherhood member) statement in that he explains how: “Regime repression is the glue that binds us together and reflects that we are on the right path” (Al-Anani, 2016, pp. 141–142)

Historically the Brotherhood under Nasser and before its dissolution in 1954 suffered internal discord between Hudaybi (the new Supreme Guide after al-Banna's assassination in 1948) and the Secret Apparatus leadership. (Mitchell, 1969) When Sadat released Muslim Brotherhood members in the 1970s, they still built on that cohesion and survived the repression and continued to grow as a social movement till 2013.

Likewise, Anani notes that a watershed moment for the movement in terms of internal schisms under Mubarak's repression was the founding of Al-Wasat party.<sup>17</sup> Al-Wasat party was created by mid-ranking members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the mid-1990s, in objection to the conservative leadership of the Muslim

<sup>17</sup> Al-Wasat, literally translate into the Middle/Center Party, Carnegie defines its political interests:

"(It) seeks to interpret Islamic sharia principles in a manner consistent with the values of a liberal democratic system. Although al-Wasat advocates a political system that is firmly anchored in Islamic law, it also views sharia principles as flexible and wholly compatible with the principles of pluralism and equal citizenship rights". (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010)

Brotherhood that did not want to form a political party.<sup>18</sup> (Al-Anani, 2016, p. 145)

During Sadat's time when the regime was less repressive, the balance between conservatives and reformists tipped on the reformist side. This would stand in contrast to the advent of Mubarak whereby the scales favored the conservatives again due to state repression.

#### Brotherhood Cohesion After 2013:

The Brotherhood after the coup suffered internal divisions mainly because of generational differences: The youth blame the older members including the movement's leaders for the negative public image of the Brotherhood as well as, their inability to unify the movement internally. (Al-Anani, 2016, p. 158) The younger generation's sacrifices, therefore, have affected their views and future goals: the youth are more revolutionary, and they do not believe that participating through the limited political channels available will further their goals and ambitions.

“ In order to turn the tide, this group advocates for weekly protests and agitating the al-Sisi regime in any way possible. Driven by frustration and despair, the Brotherhood's youth have lost faith in formal politics and view it as a waste of time. After almost three years since the removal of Morsi, the Brotherhood

<sup>18</sup> By conservative and reformist Anani clarifies: “By conservatives, I am referring to leaders who adopt strict ideological and religious beliefs and are preoccupied mainly with the organization's existence and survival. They focus on D'awa, tarbiya, and social services, more than politics. They also prefer to operate under the umbrella of the Brotherhood as a religious movement, not a political party. This group is usually dubbed al-tayar al-tanzimi (the organizational current) because they focus on organizational unity as the Brotherhood's chief priority. In contrast reformists adopt a progressive religious and ideological position and seek to integrate the Brotherhood in the political process. They focus on political activity, building cross-ideological alliances with liberal and secular forces, and contesting elections They also call for internal changes and reform of the Brotherhood's structure to be more democratic and transparent. They are usually called al-tayar al-'Aml al-'Aam (the Public activity current)”. (Al-Anani, 2016, p. 146)

maintains its weekly protests and organizational meetings (USRA, Shu’ba, etc.) and mobilizes its supporters” (Al-Anani, 2016, pp. 158–160)

The ideological division between conservatives and reformists has thus been downplayed as opposed to the generational divide. The generational divide did not play as important a role in historical times of crises for the Muslim Brotherhood movement, though now it seems to occupy center stage.

### Conclusion:

#### Factual Summary:

|                 | 1954-1960           | 2013-2018               |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Arrests:        | 1,000 <sup>19</sup> | 28,000 <sup>20 21</sup> |
| Death Sentences | 9                   | 75 <sup>22</sup>        |

<sup>19</sup> The Egyptian population was approximately 22 to 26 million in that era.

<sup>20</sup> “There are no generally agreed-upon figures for the number of political prisoners in Egypt since the July coup, but different sources place the numbers and supporters between 16,000 and 41,000; most of these are Morsi supporters. For instance, unnamed government officials told AP reporters in March 2014 that security forces detained at least 16,000 people, including approximately 3,000 top or mid-level members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamza Hindawi, “Egypt Crackdown Brings Most Arrests in Decades” The Associated Press, March 16, 2014,

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/egypt-crackdown-brings-most-arrests-decades>.

However, according to WikiThawra, an initiative run by the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, this number is closer to 41,000 people. “Hasr al-Maqbud ‘alayhum wa-l-Mulahiqin Qada’iyyan khilal ‘Ahd al Sisi/ ‘Adly Mansour” (“The Detainment of Those Arrested and Prosecuted during the Sisi/Adly Mansour Era is renewed May 15, 2014) WikiThawra, January 9, 2014,

<http://wikithawra.word-press.com/2014/01/09/sisi-mansour-detainees/>. (Al-Anani, 2015, fn. 54)

<sup>21</sup> The Egyptian population was approximately 88-102 million in that era.

<sup>22</sup> It is worth mentioning that the regime and law enforcement are intentionally denying the Muslim Brothers in prison any medical care. Therefore, many imprisoned Muslim Brothers passed away due to pre-existing medical conditions that were not receiving any care (e.g., heart disease, diabetes...etc.) All prisoners including the Muslim Brothers were also affected this past year (2020-2021) by

Frozen Assets total 200,000 L.E.<sup>23</sup>

300 million L.E.<sup>24</sup>

The preliminary facts collected indicate: 1) a much fiercer attempt by the current regime to eradicate the organization. 2. The en masse trials and death sentences enacted by the state also indicate a more aggressive and unsurpassed stance in state repression with no legal observation or guidance. As indicated previously incarceration in and of itself could result in death without going through the legal system because of the lack of rudimentary medical care in prison facilities. 3. The third factor utilized in this paper: freezing all business operations and the Brotherhood's assets again are much more profound in the ongoing 2013 clamp down. As opposed to approximately the confiscation of the equivalent of \$ 9 million from 1954 to 1960, the post 2013 crackdown resulted in confiscating 30 million dollars. At face value, the numbers indicate the state's attempt to wipe out all the Muslim Brotherhood's businesses, especially those addressing social services, which is the primary tenant of the organization since its founding. Social services provided the Brotherhood, whether in education or health, a litmus test for their legitimacy as an organization capable of political and socially-just leadership. Most importantly, I assert that the split between reformists and conservatives prior to state repression is irrelevant because under state repression historically the Mihna narrative unified the group. The generational split is more significant since the Arab Spring was mainly mobilized by the youth and demographically it is projected that the Egyptian population growth will be youth heavy.

COVID-19 and the prisons' lack of space and unavailability of any healthcare services.

<sup>23</sup> The Egyptian pound in that era was equivalent to \$3-\$4, which given inflation would amount to \$9 million dollars today.

<sup>24</sup> The Egyptian pound was equivalent to .14 cents in 2013, and in 2020 was equivalent to six cents. So, on average the amount is equivalent to \$30 million today.

Whether the *mihna* narrative is currently being used to bind the members together and whether it will be as successful in the movement's survival remains to be seen. The psychological impact of detention, torture and death are also factors that will influence the "survivability" of the Muslim Brotherhood as a social movement.

In conclusion I would like to highlight that the Muslim Brotherhood other Islamically-oriented movements are rarely analyzed through social movement theory lens because of the inherent biases in the depiction and analyses of such movements. The literature's emphasis orients itself towards the phenomena instead of true analysis that tackles the reasons behind its creation and *raison d'être*. Therefore, this omission in social movement theory expounds an image of irrationality and the lack of agency in politically-oriented groups in the Muslim world.

Secondly, as a preliminary study that utilized social movement theory, another layer of complexity was not addressed, namely: the Muslim Brotherhood's actions and reactions. Most mobilization and social movement studies are focused on the state and its degrees of repression on a macro-level of analysis. Dissent by the social movement therefore lacks the representation of valuable individual reactions to state repression. (Honari, 2018) If one analyzes the Muslim Brotherhood's reaction to repression by focusing solely on their participation or lack thereof, we would be missing out on many individual responses and tactics in reaction to repression. Thus, agency is denied on multiple levels for Islamic political activism: first, on the group level and second, on the individual level. The latter is important in social movement theory because it dissects and provides variance in the groups' tactics in their attempts to react at the individual and group levels. (Honari, 2018)

One tactic that the Muslim Brotherhood is utilizing at the individual and group levels is survivability: "In response to repression, some movements may reduce their activities or refrain

from any activities or go underground to survive” (Honari, 2018, p. 960)

An approach that is needed in repression literature is one that recognizes “states and dissidents equally as strategic actors” (Honari, 2018, p. 966)

In the mood of macro-level analysis, the focus on micro-level decision making and action affects the literature’s capacity to reflect, explain, and capture the reactionary moment in those social movements. As Ayyash notes: “To some extent, the apparatus has been able to recover very quickly since the Egyptian crackdown and the dispersal of sit-ins on August 14, 2013. In many places around Egypt, weekly meetings (known as ‘usra) never stopped, except for a few weeks after the sit-in dispersals. And the organization returned to functioning in survival mode, as it has been doing marvelously for decades” (Ayyash, 2020) Analysis that lacks attention to individual and group agency and their details is detrimental to macro-level analyses of repression generally. More specifically, in the Muslim Brotherhood’s case as illustrated and argued: it is missing the group’s “survivability” tactics and the new forms, identities, and internal debates that continue to shape the groups’ individual and collective positionality in an increasingly repressive state.

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