

The Muslim Brotherhood

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The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is one of the largest and most established Islamist organizations. Founded by Hasan al-Banna in 1928 in the Suez Canal city of Isma'iliyya, it remains an influential politico-religious player in Egypt. Internationally, the organization plays a role through branches and sister organizations which, dependent on national contexts, act more or less independently of the Cairo base.

The MB pursues the establishment of an Islamic State. While the movement pursues this goal through the Islamization of society, it has a record of political opposition against Egyptian ruling regimes. As such, its history is marked by periods of violence and persecution, but also of accommodation and political participation. In recent decades, the MB emphasized its commitment to democracy and non-violent activism. Since the group was neither recognized as a political party nor was its legality officially confirmed, the MB played out its influence in political processes through its active engagement in institutions of civil society and social networks. In order to gain seats in parliament and regional representative councils, it circumvented party restraints through alliances with recognized political parties and by registering contenders as independent candidates. With the political changes after January 2011, the political fortunes of the MB have changed dramatically.

History of the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood (*Jama'a al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*; short: *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*) was founded in 1928 by a group surrounding the secondary schoolteacher Hasan al-Banna. Lia's and Mitchell's works on the early period of the MB draw an accurate picture of the rapid expansion of the organization during the 1930s and 1940s (Lia 1998; Mitchell 1993). Starting in Isma'iliyya, the MB found its fellowship in the lower-middle and growing working class, thus rapidly spreading its influence to major Egyptian cities. The headquarters moved to Cairo in 1932 and shortly afterwards it opened its first branches in capital cities of neighbouring countries.

From the onset, the MB defined itself as a group pursuing Islamic reform. While the group's initial goal was concerned with the reform of religious education, political turbulence during the years of Egypt's constitutional monarchy (1928–52) and the persistent influence of the previous mandate-power Britain over the country's domestic affairs set the framework of Brotherhood's

evolution into a political mass-movement (Jansen 1992; Zubaida 1993). In this context the MB stood out for its anti-British agitation and its opposition to Egypt's political parties. It presented itself as a nationalist force independent of party interests and guided purely by religious fervour. When failures of the political system became blatantly obvious during the post-war years, the MB used its popular base to mobilize extra-parliamentary protests which further contributed to destabilizing an already fragile democracy (Marsot 1977).

Similar to other Egyptian movements such as the Wafd and communists, the MB developed paramilitary units which were organized parallel to and independent of its popular outlets (Gershoni and Jankowski 1995; Mitchell 1993). The so-called *al-Nizam al-Khass* (Special Unit; the paramilitary section of the MB was also sometimes referred to as *al-Tanzim al-Sirri*, i.e. Secret Organization) operated as tightly organized military units with its head directly answerable to Hasan al-Banna. In an environment of increased political violence and anarchy, which marked the last years of Egypt's constitutional monarchy, the Special Unit was responsible for several high-profile acts of terror, amongst them the murder of Sa'adi Prime Minister Muhammad al-Nuqrashi in December 1948. Only weeks later and as an act of retaliation, Hasan al-Banna was then gunned down in January 1949 by members of Egypt's Secret Service.

Following the assassination of al-Nuqrashi, the government declared the dissolution of the MB. The official ban and the death of its charismatic *Murshid* (General Guide), Hasan al-Banna, brought the MB to the brink of collapse (Mitchell 1993). Nevertheless, the organization managed to survive the next two years through a network which connected al-Banna's associates and which included the narrowly spun contacts of the Secret Unit. Only when circumstances allowed did a circle of leaders nominate the well-renowned High Court Judge, Hasan al-Hudaybi, as al-Banna's successor in 1951. Al-Hudaybi's nomination was an expression of compromise (Zollner 2009). The leading circle avoided tackling internal frictions and put off fundamental discussions on the MB's strategic and ideological direction. Because of the Brotherhood's precarious legal position, the leading circle decided to agree on al-Hudaybi, who they hoped could be used as a pawn to repair its damaged public profile while sorting out internal discontent. Setting out under extremely difficult circumstances, al-Hudaybi was a disputed figure from the start. Although he is often portrayed as a rather weak leader, the new *Murshid* led the MB for the next two difficult decades.

July 1952 marked a major change. Egypt's constitutional monarchy was overthrown through a coup d'état instigated by a group of 'Free Officers'. While dealings between the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and the MB leadership under al-Hudaybi were initially positive, relations turned sour (Zollner 2009). The MB was debilitated by discontent within the leading ranks over self-definition, future political strategies (particularly its role in government), and the continuance of the clandestine units. Al-Hudaybi's vision of the MB as a supra-governmental network, which aims to influence politics in an implicit manner but which does not commit itself to partaking in government, was not shared by leading members who strongly supported the revolution. Internal rifts made it difficult for the MB to react to the power games of the upstart Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser. Accused of trying to assassinate 'Abd al-Nasser during celebrations of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty in Alexandria, the MB found itself accused of conspiring against the state. October 1954 thus marks the beginning of a period of persecution that lasted almost 20 years and during which thousands of MB members were thrown into prison. 'Abd al-Nasser also used the incident to purge the ranks of the RCC, ascend as President and establish his autocratic populist regime, which he led until his death in 1971.

The MB's prison years were a crucial period for their self-image and development, which is often, not quite correctly, equated to the evolution of Sayyid Qutb's revolutionary ideology. There are a number of scholars who have worked extensively on the evolution of Qutb's ideas, amongst them Kepel and, more recently, Abu Rabi'a, Sayyid Khatab (Kepel 1985; Abu Rabi'

1996; Khatab 2006a). It was during the prison years that Qutb gradually turned to radical Islamist and revolutionary views, which he expressed in some of his most important works. The fundamental question he raised was whether it is theologically legitimate to directly or indirectly support a regime that is deemed to have left the path of Islam. This issue influenced future discussions on the Brotherhood's ideological profile.

Qutb had an immediate bearing on the reorganization of the MB members outside the confines of prison. From around 1958 onwards a group took shape which was later known as 'Organization 1965' (Zollner 2007). Being the spiritual guide and leader of this group, Qutb wrote his most famous work, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones), as a manual for this clandestine cell. While the *Murshid*, al-Hudaybi, was aware of the regrouping of the MB outside prison and of Qutb's involvement, he did not initially react to the shift in ideological direction.

Only after Qutb was hanged in 1966 did the leadership of the MB under al-Hudaybi respond to a growing ideological radicalization, which used theological explanations formulated by Qutb in his most propagandistic work, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, to justify their rejection of the Egyptian state (Zollner 2007). Internal discussions on the implications of this theological stance were then prompted by the 1967 Six-Day War. The conflict with Israel posed the immediate questions of whether to defend the Egyptian state system although its leaders might be deemed illegitimate according to the view of Qutbists. In response to this challenge, the MB leadership surrounding Hasan al-Hudaybi issued the text *Du'at la Qudat* (Preachers not Judges) to counter extremist ideological trends amongst its members. These theological guidelines supplied the principles for future ideological and strategic descriptions and provided the Guidance Council (*Maktab al-Irshad*) and the *Murshid* with the opportunity to regain control of the organization.

With 'Abd al-Nasser's death in December 1971 and the nomination of Anwar al-Sadat as his successor, state policy changed dramatically (Beattie 2000). Hoping for MB support in order to push for a shift in economic and foreign policy, the new President Anwar al-Sadat declared a general amnesty. The MB publicly renounced clandestine activities and political violence, committing itself to working within the political and legal framework. With the end of persecution, the *Murshid* Hasan al-Hudaybi, and, after his death in 1973, his successor 'Umar al-Tilmisani, began to rebuild the Brotherhood's public and political power.

The MB commitment to peaceful political and social engagement is in stern contrast to the violent activities of Egyptian terrorist groups. Groups such as *al-Takfir wa al-Hijra*, *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* (GI) or *Jama'at al-Jihad* (JJ) were inspired by Qutbian ideas and therefore have their ideological roots in the radical fringes of the MB of the late 1960s. While these extremist Islamist groups carried out a number of high-profile attempts on the lives of politicians, amongst them President Anwar al-Sadat who was shot during the October War commemoration celebration in 1981, the MB spoke out emphatically against these terrorist acts.

The status quo between state and MB did not, at least initially, change when Hosni Mubarak came to power. However, the Brotherhood's aim to gain influence and legitimacy, first through informal networks, then through its successes in social movement organizations (SMO), and finally through its participation in elections, led to increasing resentment and, since the mid-1990s, to outright persecution (Al-Awadi 2004).

The MB's political triumph was not necessarily matched by internal cohesion and unity. The two successors of 'Umar al-Tilmisani, namely Muhammad Hamid Abu Nasr (1986-96) and Mustafa Mashhur (1996-2002), were rather weak and affairs were directed rather through the *Maktab al-Irshad*. The two General Guides were elected because they were the oldest representatives on the Guidance Council and not because of outstanding contributions to the cause of the MB. While the locus of power shifted to the Guidance Council, the influence of

Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, the Official Speaker of the MB and son of the second *Murshid*, became increasingly obvious within the Council. When the latter finally took charge of the MB in 2002 as its *Murshid*, his ascent to the highest position and his style of leadership evoked internal disputes about unresolved issues on democratic reform, political involvement and the translation of MB aims into public policy. While al-Hudaybi's leadership brought these issues to the fore, his sudden death in 2004 did not resolve internal conflicts.

During the leadership of his successor, Mahdi 'Akif, internal conflicts became even more prevalent. While the *Murshid* was by no means as strong a leader as al-Hudaybi and in fact only a compromise candidate of the Guidance Council. Calls for ideological reform, a new strategic direction and more democratic inner-organizational participation did not quieten down. The landslide success of the MB in the 2005 parliamentary elections brought these issues to the fore. The concerns brought forward by a 'reformist' faction usually associated with the younger generation of Brothers and with political pragmatists who see the MB as a political organization rather than a religious movement still remain unresolved. When 'Akif resigned in December 2009, the election of the new *Murshid*, Muhammad Badi'a, has to be seen in these terms. The selection of a *Murshid* who, like all his predecessors since Hasan al-Hudaybi, represents the 'old guard', prompted the outrage of political pragmatists. In the elections of the Guidance Council in January 2010, the majority of seats were allocated to Badi'a's supporters, thus alienating reformists within the organization (Awad 2010).

Ideology

There is an ongoing dispute about the MB's ideological framework and, more particularly, whether the organization commits itself to democratic ideals or whether it endorses political violence and extremism. Disputes within the scholarly community about the 'true' intentions of the MB are intrinsically linked to uncertainties about the Brotherhood's theological basis and ideological interpretation.

There is no doubt that Hasan al-Banna personifies the organization's ideological core and identity. Despite many contradictions and disputes over ideology and strategy, members see themselves unified by al-Banna's ideals which are characterized by active political engagement to bring about national confidence, social justice and economic progress through an emphasis on religion. Because al-Banna emphasized activism over intellectual erudition, there are relatively few sources, mostly speeches and public addresses, a few statements and pamphlets and, finally, his autobiography. These sources portray Islam as a universal system that penetrates all aspects of life. Comparable to other mass organizations of the early twentieth century, al-Banna projected the MB as a movement that fuses the personal, social, political and religious. While Diyab points out the totalizing aspect of al-Banna's world view, numerous scholars such as Abed Kotob, and more recently Stacher, Zollner and Wickham, have noted that al-Banna left only a set of crudely defined aspirations, which seek the Islamization of politics, economics, law, culture, public and private life.

These general political goals also find expression in an elusive strategic framework. While today's Brotherhood without doubt rejoices in unity to its foundational leader, al-Banna has thus been used by diverse factions as a reference point to justify opposing viewpoints (Wickham 2009). His candidacy in the 1944 parliamentary elections has, for example, been called upon by the pro-democratic reformist faction, while certain critical remarks on party politics have been used to demonstrate reservations against a democratic system. Similarly, al-Banna's guidance could be differently interpreted as to his position on political violence, gender equality and the relationship to other religious communities and denominations.

Any analysis of MB ideology needs to engage with a set of ideas which developed in the course of the Brotherhood's most challenging time, the years of persecution between 1954 and 1971. The ideological legacy of this period was not expressed through clear strategic guidelines, but debates on the Brotherhood's calling raged on a more fundamental, theological level. The person most associated with the ideological development of these years is Sayyid Qutb, who was hanged in August 1966 after being charged for conspiring against the state. Qutb's theological explanations are to a large extent associated with radical Islamist positions, which, inspired by his most propagandistic work, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, built the ideological base for extremist groups (Kepel 1985). However, two issues need to be recognized: first, Qutb's legacy as a whole must not be reduced to his impetus on extremist Islamist theology; and second, the MB leadership tried to counterbalance a radicalization in their midst by the end of the 1960s (Zollner 2007).

It is undeniable that Qutb's views in *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* have been used as ideological guidelines by militant Islamists. These split from the MB around 1967 and subsequently formed terrorist groups in the course of the 1970s. As has variously been pointed out, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* uses the concepts of *hukm Allah*, *jahiliyya* and *jihad* to present a simple dichotomy (Khatib 2006b). Arguing that the world can be categorized into 'true Islam' and its enemies, Qutb's work set the tone for extremist political action and terror in the name of Islam. If Qutb is only measured by his *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, then he can indeed be seen as the father of radical Islamist ideology; yet Qutb's overall legacy as a modernist writer – his effect on theological interpretation through his popular Qur'anic commentary and his impact on Islamist ideology including his lasting impact on the Muslim Brotherhood through his political writing – is multi-faceted. Qutb can therefore not be simply reduced to the equation that he represents Islamist militancy (Zollner 2007).

Moreover, the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood under Hasan al-Hudaybi developed a theological counter-narrative in the second half of the 1960s. An internal document was issued under the title *Du'at la Qudat*. It had the purpose of setting principled theological premises which draw on Islamic law as a mode of discussion (Zollner 2009). The book therefore established a theological base which was neither provided by al-Banna nor further elucidated by Qutb. In fact, this unique theological and juridical approach became the common basic framework of the Brotherhood and constitutes an indirect refutation of a simple theological dichotomy adopted by Qutbists. Nevertheless, because of the *Du'at la Qudat* theological approach, but also because of the historical controversies underlying the authorship of the text, the book remained largely a teaching text for members interested in religious interpretation. Still, concepts explained in *Du'at la Qudat* certainly appear in subsequent policy and strategic publications, although the text itself is not much quoted.

While al-Banna provided the Brotherhood with its identity, Qutb and al-Hudaybi were important contributors who elaborated further the Brotherhood's ideological, theological and juridical foundations. Based on these principal authors, the MB gradually developed its strategic stances in the course of the last decades (Abed-Kotob 1995). At the centre of internal discussions since the early 1970s are issues such as its position with regard to democracy and the Egyptian nation-state; related to these are also questions regarding the Brotherhood's participation in elections and its view on economic liberalization and privatization. On these issues, the Muslim Brotherhood adopted a largely accommodationist attitude, which aims for democratic participation rather than revolutionary objectives.

Nevertheless, the degree of adjustment with the political system in Egypt and, related to it, the question of internal reform is one of much debate amongst members. Internal debates about the Brotherhood's ideological and strategic future weigh heavy on the organization's current

situation. Driven by the Brotherhood's success in the 2005 elections and its success in parliament, a faction within the MB calls for more openness, transparency and liberalization, while aiming to push for party recognition even if this means the renegotiation of long-held positions (Stacher 2008; Leiken and Brooke 2007). This grouping within the MB could be best described as the politically pragmatic wing and its members are often referred to as the 'new generation'. This vision conflicts at points with the old-style leadership, which was previously represented by the late Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, but also by his successors, Mahdi 'Akif and Muhammad Badi'a. As indicated above, the attitudes of the 'old guard' are moulded by the experience of persecution. The memories of the near-destruction of the organization feed caution and suspicion about the political system. Rejecting the notion that politics ideates religious interpretation, the 'old guard' is considerably more conservative in its outlook. It resents the idea that beliefs can be submerged in order to pursue political interests. There is therefore a tendency to define itself as a social movement that works above and in constant opposition to the political system, rather than merely as a political party that adjusts its policies to the will of its membership.

Social movements and social engagement

Defining the MB's profile at the fifth General Assembly in 1939, al-Banna declared that one of the main areas was that of a social movement (Mitchell 1993). As indicated above, the MB struggled throughout its history to find a clear answer to the question of whether it should define itself as a social movement with an element of political opposition or as a political opposition with a social agenda. Nevertheless, the political restrictions of the recent decades led the MB to emphasize its social engagement as an outlet of political commitment.

Returning to the political scene in the early 1970s, the Brotherhood used informal networks and personal affiliations to gradually build up its sway within institutions of civil society. Wickham's study illustrates how the MB used its engagement in institutions of civil society to channel its influence in politics since direct participation was restricted (Wickham 2004). Not being able to find recognition as a political party, the MB began to dominate non-governmental organizations (NGOs), student organizations, professional organizations and syndicates in the course of the 1980s. It was through these formal social movement channels that the MB managed to circumvent restrictions, thus gaining enormous influence as a political opposition.

Responding to the fact that the MB built up its influence as an SMO, the government attempted to curb the Brotherhood's steadily growing power through additional legal constraints. However, these legal measures had only limited success. Furthermore, they were and still are highly criticized by observers and activists, secular as well as religious, as evidence that the government lacks commitment to democratic development.

Using this tight organizational structure, the MB thus managed to grow a network of welfare services. As Clarke and Wickham show, the MB's social provisions include social clubs and a wide range of welfare institutions such as kindergartens, schools, libraries and even hospitals (Wickham 2004; Clarke 2004). These areas of social engagement make the Muslim Brotherhood a provider of alternative social services, which, in many cases, are reported to be better managed than those of the state. Critics, however, remark that the Brotherhood uses its social profile as a means to spread its world view, to gain public approval and sympathies, to recruit new members and to extend its structure and influence. Less unfavourable voices such as those of Ismail emphasize that the MB actually provides alternative resources where the state cannot answer demand (Ismail 2006). This then would indicate that the MB does not necessarily use its welfare services for recruitment purposes. This argument recognizes that the

Brotherhood's engagement in welfare is part of its mission and self-definition as a social movement, which is led by ideals such as social justice and care for those in need.

Analogous to formal channels of civil society, the MB also steadily extended its power as an SMO through informal networks. At the heart of these informal networks are close personal relations which are built into the administrative structure of the MB (Mitchell 1993). So-called 'families' organize the membership base and connect it through a tight system to the leadership council. This grid enables the Brotherhood to coordinate its activities efficiently. Informal social networks also connect the Muslim Brotherhood to SMOs with axiomatically different political ideologies, as Abdelrahman shows (Abdelrahman 2009). Their common political opposition to the existing state system and its reluctance to fully introduce democratic participation connects the Brotherhood with movements of the secular left. As such, the shared opposition against the authoritarianism of Husni Mubarak's regime, but also against recent amendments of the constitution and the continuous state of emergency, binds these informal networks of SMOs together. While these SMOs might not agree in all details, they are not, as Abdelrahman observes, necessarily unstable, as least not as long as their common interest holds them together. Looking at the parliamentary election of 2005 or analysing current preparations for the 2010 and 2011 elections, one can see that these informal networks of SMOs have an immense bearing on the political scene (Hamzawy 2010).

Political power

From the beginning of the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Banna was inspired by the idea of Islamic reform. Following the footsteps of Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida, Hasan al-Banna saw the solution for the perceived decline of the Muslim world in the revival of Islam as a social and political force. Following the end of the Caliphate in 1924, al-Banna aimed to change Egyptian society by working towards the re-establishment of an Islamic State as Egypt's political framework.

As we have seen above, the Brotherhood is built on a universalist ideology which argues that 'Islam' encompasses the individual and the social, and synthesizes the religious with the political. This ideological basis and the influence of modernism led al-Banna to adapt a strategy not dissimilar to other mass movements. As such it addressed the wider public directly and aimed for the mobilization of large segments of society in order to engage in political protest and to encourage popular expression of political opposition. At the same time, al-Banna tried to influence political processes through informal networks and personal relationships, which connected him to leaders of the *Wafd*, to Shuyukh al-Azhar and to upcoming officers of the military.

Al-Banna's strategy to use the power of the Muslim Brotherhood to organize itself as a political protest movement rather than as a political party was particularly successful in the context of Egypt's struggle to define itself as a state independent of British influence and as a nation-state adopting a modern parliamentary system. Al-Banna argued that political parties of Egypt's constitutional monarchy merely followed their own short-sighted interests. Speaking of *hizbiyya* (party-ism), he regarded these as dishonest, corrupt and incompatible with Islamic principles.

While al-Banna rejected the concept of parties as the representatives of public will, he supported the concept of a parliament as a forum for the participation of the nation-state. Evidence for this is that the Muslim Brotherhood actively rallied against the suspension of parliament during and after the war period. Furthermore, al-Banna put his name forward as an independent candidate for parliamentary elections in 1944. Nevertheless, political activities during these

years are overshadowed by al-Banna's decision to establish a military wing which eventually engaged in political violence.

It was not al-Banna but his successor, Hasan al-Hudaybi, who had a taste of political power. Al-Hudaybi's early years coincided with the July 1952 coup d'état during which a group of officers took control. The Muslim Brotherhood, which already had friendly relations with leaders of the RCC, such as the first president of the new republic, Muhammad Naguib, but also with the upstart, Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, and the still young Anwar al-Sadat, was invited to participate in reshaping the government. However, internal conflicts on the movement's future direction and al-Hudaybi's lack of commanding full support made the Brotherhood vulnerable and gradually dampened relations with the RCC. They finally broke completely in October 1954 when the Muslim Brotherhood was accused of instigating an assassination attempt on 'Abd al-Nasser in Alexandria. The event, which marked the beginning of the time of persecution, was the end of any hopes of political participation and initiated 'Abd al-Nasser's populist autocracy.

After 'Abd al-Nasser's death, relations with the regime relaxed. The new president, Anwar al-Sadat, allowed the MB greater freedom to express its ideas in public and engage in civil society. Nevertheless, al-Sadat did not lift the 1954 ban, leaving the organization with an ambiguous legal status which continues to hamper the MB even today. The decision to aim for direct political participation through parliamentary activities soon triggered hostile responses from a regime which did not intend to give up its authoritarian rule. Because the MB was not recognized as a political party, it circumvented electoral restrictions by setting up coalitions and, since the change of the electoral law in 1990, by running its candidates on the list of independents. This tactic proved to be successful, as the 2007 electoral victory evidences.

In 1980 it entered into a temporary symbiosis with the liberal Wafd Party (winning six of 360 seats in the *Majlis al-Sha'b*, or lower house) and in 1987 the MB extended its strategy to initiate a tripartite coalition between MB, liberal Wafd and socialist Labour (winning 36 seats). These remarkable results in elections directly challenged the dominance of the ruling party, the NDP. In response, the government changed the electoral law from a party-based system to one based on individual candidacy for seats in constituencies. The changes resulted in an election boycott by all opposition parties. The following election campaign to the election of the *Majlis al-Sha'b* in 1995 was overshadowed by heavy-handed government harassment and the arrest of a number of MB members. Nevertheless, the MB returned to the ballots but only managed to win a single seat. The elections of 2000 were fought under similar pressures, but the MB increased its influence in parliament, gaining 17 seats. Five years later, in 2005, the MB had a landslide victory, winning 88 seats or 20 per cent of the total, making it the largest opposition bloc in the history of the Egyptian Republic (Shehata and Stacher 2006; Stacher 2008). These two elections, a Carnegie Report found, displayed a strategic dilemma for the MB (Ottaway and Hamzawy 2008). While the MB bloc, like all parties involved in the political process, would, of course, like to extend its seats in parliament, it could not afford to display too much success as this could have evoked drastic responses against them. Hence, the Brotherhood only competed with 19 candidates in the 88-seat *Majlis al-Shura* (upper house of the parliament) and, in a last-minute decision, withdrew from the 2008 municipal elections after the government refused to register the majority of suggested candidates. The November 2010 elections to the *Majlis al-Sha'b* need to be seen in conjunction with the regime's aim to prepare conditions for a handover from President Hosni Mubarak to a successor of his choice, with his son Gamal Mubarak as the favourite option (Al-Anani 2010; Hamzawy 2010). The poll, which was criticized for systematic electoral infringements, vote rigging and violence, ended with heavy losses for the MB, which secured only a single seat.

The protests of January and February 2011, which resulted in the departure of President Hosni Mubarak and which initiated a process of transforming the Egyptian state system, also had decisive effects on the MB's political presence. Shaking off a 56-year official ban, the organization was catapulted into the public arena. Its political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), is seen as a major political force within an evolving multi-party system. The sudden change in the MB's fortunes brought about questions on the organization's political agenda and its maturity as a political actor. The parliamentary elections and presidential elections, which at the time of writing were scheduled for autumn 2011, will show what role the MB will play in shaping the democratic future of post-revolutionary Egypt and how it fits into its evolving political landscape.

International aspects and diaspora

The Muslim Brotherhood's influence reaches beyond Egypt. In fact, from the movement's very beginning it saw its calling beyond national interests. As such, branches in neighbouring countries were already established in the 1930s.

In the course of the Brotherhood's development and due to the fact that the leadership of the organization was more or less debilitated after Hasan al-Banna's death, the dissolution order of 1949, and even more so by the harsh persecutory measures under 'Abd al-Nasser between 1954 and 1971, MB branches outside Egypt developed into movements that acted more or less independently from the mother organization in Egypt. As the national Muslim Brotherhood movements in countries of the Near and Middle East responded to the context of their own national conflicts and debates, it is wrong to talk about 'branches' in states such as Syria, Jordan, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, etc. Evidence for this is the fact that national Brotherhood movements outside Egypt established their own recruitment and membership structures as well as independent systems of organizational participation and networks. As such, members of national Brotherhoods outside Egypt have no voting power on either the Guidance Council or the position of the *Murshid* in Egypt and, furthermore, cannot bring forward any candidates.

Nevertheless, consultations and cooperation between Brotherhood movements and the 'mother organization' in Egypt exist. What unites national MB organizations is a common heritage of al-Banna's ideological base and, connected to this aspect, the idea of a universal Muslim bond of brotherhood. Amongst others, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is affiliated with ideologically moderate movements such as the Tunisian *al-Nahda* (Renaissance) or the accommodationist Jordanian Brotherhood with its parliamentary wing, *Jabhat al-'Amal al-Islami* (the Islamic Action Front). Yet it is also linked on a certain level to organizations that are seen to be associated with terrorism, such as the Palestinian Hamas. Depending on the issue and political circumstances, but also on the relative closeness of leading cadres and informal networks, this sense of brotherly identity is either emphasized or downplayed.

The presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East needs to be, at least to some degree, distinguished from that in Western countries. While organizational structures, agendas and, to a certain extent, membership can be identified for the various national movements in the Middle East, no such organizational unity exists for members and supporters affiliated to the MB in Europe and the US.

It is therefore more accurate to speak of loose personal networks rather than a formal MB presence. Still, one can identify clusters where members take active part and sometimes even dominate Muslim social movements in Europe and the US. Vidino and various contributors in Mejer's edition trace some MB activities in organizations aiming to represent the Muslim

community such as the European Institute for Fatwa and Research, the Muslim Association, the Muslim Council of Britain, the Muslim American Society, etc. (Meijer 2011; Vidino 2010).

The obvious fact that Muslims constitute a minority in Europe and the US has, of course, an impact on the aims of Muslim Brotherhood activists and supporters. Moreover, most MB supporters in Europe and the US live in exile or, more recently, are a second generation that follows the footsteps of the first generation of activists. This context guides the *raison d'être* of their engagement to a major extent, which lies in Muslim community affairs on the one hand and, more importantly, a continuous interest in political developments in the Middle East.

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