

**A Commitment to Politics:  
The Trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood  
During Egypt's 2011–2013 Political Opening**

**by**

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Major Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

in the

School for International Studies  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

**Summer 2014**

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## **Abstract**

Prior to the 2011 Arab uprisings, Islamist parties in most Arab states had been systematically prevented from exercising any meaningful authority in government. Following President Mubarak's ouster from power in 2011, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) established a political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), and formally entered mainstream politics, providing a rare opportunity to examine the role of an Islamist party in the context of democratic transition. Contrary to concerns that the MB might use Egypt's political opening to install an undemocratic regime, the movement instead committed itself to electoral politics and consistently adhered to the framework for political transition. An analysis of the MB's political trajectory during the 2011–2013 timeframe reveals that the movement endeavoured to protect Egypt's democratic transition against the encroachment of the military and the judiciary. Despite the FJP's efforts, sustained interference by non-elected institutions brought Egypt's democratic experiment to a premature end. This course of events confirms that an Islamist movement is capable of fully committing to politics, but also indicates that political commitment alone is insufficient to ensure a successful transition to democratic governance.

**Keywords:** Muslim Brotherhood; Islamist movement; Freedom and Justice Party; Egypt; political opening; political commitment

*For Chris,  
Who inspired my interest in the Middle East  
And encouraged me to pursue my dreams.*

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the School for International Studies for granting me this opportunity. I am especially grateful to my primary supervisor, Dr. Tamir Moustafa, for his support, insightfulness, and constructive feedback.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Senate Graduate Awards Adjudication Committee for awarding me a Graduate Fellowship.

I would also like to recognize my co-op employers, especially Shirley Sutherland and Dr. Sharon Fortney at North Vancouver Museum and Archives, for the valuable work experience they offered me.

I would like to acknowledge the friends I met on other continents – Iman Zaineab, Alena Bartoli, Paula Al Amudi, and Chris McIntosh, among others – who have continued to inspire me along this journey.

I am grateful to my cohort for their support. Special mention goes to Mayada Saikali, for sharing my interest in the Middle East, and to Nikki Bakes, for ensuring we always had a social event on the horizon.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents and my siblings, especially my sister Andrea Wilmot, whose confidence in me has been unwavering. Your encouragement means the world to me.

# Table of Contents

Approval.....	ii
Partial Copyright Licence .....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements .....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Acronyms.....	viii
Introductory Image .....	ix
<b>Introduction The Organizational Impact of Political Commitment.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Literature Review Inclusion, Moderation and Politicization.....</b>	<b>5</b>
The Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis .....	5
Inclusion.....	7
Moderation .....	9
Politicization .....	12
<b>Section One The Muslim Brotherhood in Semi-Authoritarian Egypt.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Section Two The Muslim Brotherhood During the 2011 Uprisings.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Section Three Political Commitment: The Freedom and Justice Party .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Section Four Ambition: The FJP and the Quest for Electoral Victory .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Section Five Assertiveness: Morsi and the Task of Governance .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Conclusion When Political Commitment is not Enough .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>43</b>

## List of Acronyms

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi; Justice and Development Party (Turkey)
CA	Constituent Assembly
FIS	Front Islamique du Salut; Islamic Salvation Front (Algeria)
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party (Egypt)
HAC	Higher Administrative Court
IAF	Islamic Action Front (Jordan)
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MP	Member of Parliament
NSF	National Salvation Front (Egypt)
PEC	Presidential Election Commission
PJD	Parti de la Justice et du Développement; Justice and Development Party (Morocco)
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera; Prosperous Justice Party (Indonesia)
SAC	Supreme Administrative Court
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SCC	Supreme Constitutional Court
SJC	Supreme Judicial Council



Street art in Alexandria, Egypt, commemorating the January 25, 2011 popular uprisings.

Photo credit: Jennifer Mary Leigh Wilmot, April 2011.

## **Introduction**

### **The Organizational Impact of Political Commitment**

Prior to the 2011 Arab uprisings, Islamist movements in most Arab states had been systematically prevented from exercising any meaningful authority in government. Two instances in the last quarter-century that might have brought an Islamist opposition party into power in the Arab world were deliberately obstructed. In Algeria during the early 1990s, the military acted to prevent an electoral victory by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), resulting in civil war. More recently, when the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian elections, the international community intervened to undermine its capacity to govern (Brown, 2013, p.57-58). Until recently, there was considerable speculation regarding how politically empowered Islamists in the Arab world might conduct themselves, but there were few concrete examples on which to draw. In the absence of empirical evidence, scholars nonetheless debated the extent to which an Islamist movement such as the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) might adhere to democratic conventions in practice. Stacher (2010) is critical of scholars who attempted to ascertain the Egyptian MB's democratic credentials without acknowledging the highly repressive and undemocratic political context in which this movement was operating (Stacher, 2010, p.345). With regard to ideology, Stacher (2010) similarly objects to the tendency of scholars to highlight some of the conservative positions taken by the movement, without considering the broader social context. Many of the positions espoused by the MB are consistent with mainstream norms and ideals in Egypt, and as such these positions do not represent an inherently narrow Islamist perspective (Ibid, p.353). Ultimately, prior to the 2011 uprisings, the repression of Islamist movements across the Arab world precluded any practical assessment of their objectives. Hamzawy and Brown (2008) suggest that Islamists themselves may not have known how they would react if they achieved political power (Hamzawy and Brown, 2008, p.49). An

analysis of the MB's trajectory during Egypt's 2011–2013 political opening provides important insight.

The January 25, 2011 Egyptian uprisings created an unprecedented opportunity for the political inclusion of Islamists in Egypt. As a movement with a broad agenda for social reform, the MB had historically viewed political participation as only one of many potential modes of activism and influence. While members affiliated with the MB began competing in elections in 1984, their participation in politics rested on the understanding that the movement could not win an election against the ruling party. Acutely aware of these limitations, the MB fielded candidates for only a minority of seats so as not to appear threatening to the incumbent regime. The ideological impact of this restrained mode of participation ensured that the MB never fully committed to a political process that blocked its full inclusion (Brown, 2012a, p.162-163). As a result of its experience with unfair elections, the MB exhibited a discursive shift wherein it de-emphasized calls for the implementation of Islamic law in lieu of demands for democratic reform (Wickham, 2013, p.151). With the onset of the Arab Spring and President Mubarak's removal from power, the former barriers to full political participation were lifted. Within the new political opening, amid widespread calls from the Egyptian public for freedom and democracy, the MB understood that victory at the polls had become a viable possibility. I argue that this realization – that for the first time in the movement's history success was within reach – produced profound changes in the movement's structure and orientation. Released from the constraints of semi-authoritarianism, the MB fully committed to and invested in the political process.

The impact of a commitment to politics on a movement as broad and diverse as the MB cannot be understated. Certainly, the movement did not cease its non-political forms of social outreach and mobilization when it committed to politics. However, while it had previously insisted that no mode of activism should take precedence over another, during the 2011 to 2013 period there was a clear shift toward the prioritization of political endeavours, often at the implicit expense of other activities. This arrangement inevitably provoked divisive elements within the movement, both from members who resisted the newfound centrality of politics to the movement, as well from members who supported the emphasis on politics in principle but preferred a different political strategy in practice

(Wickham, 2013, p.175). From an organizational standpoint, the most outwardly visible effect of the MB's entrance into mainstream politics was the creation of a political party. In practice, the manner in which the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) was structured in relation to the MB served to reinforce the pre-existing hierarchy within the social movement. Senior members retained their positions of authority within the movement and the newly established party, while younger and reformist elements either defected or pledged loyalty to a movement within which they felt they had little voice. Nevertheless, the hegemony of the old guard ensured the unity and cohesiveness of the moment and its newly created political party (Ibid, p.183). As the FJP entered the political landscape as a legal political representation of the MB for the first time in the movement's history, it demonstrated its commitment to the political process through the adoption of new guiding principles.

I argue that the post-Mubarak political opportunity structures enticed the Egyptian MB to commit itself to the political process and devote significant resources to this endeavour. During the first eighteen months following the uprisings, the FJP's activities displayed the growing salience of two features: an unprecedented level of political ambition, and a concern for the public image of the MB and its party. In other words, the movement wanted the FJP to succeed, but it also wanted to prove to both Egyptians and international observers that it was a moderate and responsible political actor (Hamid, 2014, p.145). In practice, these two new politically-oriented attributes interacted with enduring organizational characteristics rooted in the MB's experience with political repression. Traits such as caution and self-restraint had enabled the movement to survive – even thrive – under semi-authoritarianism, but were less conducive to conditions of greater political openness (Brown, 2012a, p.205-208). Nevertheless, the FJP persevered in its political pursuits, and after Mohammed Morsi was elected president in June 2012, the party's ambition amplified into increased assertiveness. Electoral victory enhanced the MB's sense of entitlement to preside over the political sphere (Wickham, 2013, p.269). For anyone who questioned the limits of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, or envisioned that the 'paradox of democracy' could empower elected Islamists to impose an undemocratic regime, this was the moment of truth (Schwedler, 2013, p.4-5). I contend that the MB's commitment to a democratic transition based on majoritarian principles was both genuine and steadfast. Until the day Morsi

was forcibly removed from power, the FJP worked within the existing system and remained consistently committed to the political process.

This paper is organized as follows. It begins with a review of the scholarly literature on the inclusion, moderation and politicization of Islamist social movements, placing particular emphasis on the relationship between the openness of the political system and the extent to which a movement invests in political activity. Section one provides a historical and organizational overview of the Egyptian MB, highlighting how the movement's ideological and organizational principles evolved through interactions with the repressive state. The movement's operational characteristics under semi-authoritarianism contrast significantly with its trajectory during Egypt's political opening. Section two charts the MB's response to the 2011 popular uprisings. The movement's gradual reorientation to support the revolutionaries is juxtaposed against the highly uncertain political conditions that prevailed in Egypt at the time. Section three focuses on the MB's decision to commit to and prioritize politics, and assesses the organizational impact of creating a political party. Section four analyzes the movement's growing political ambition as the FJP contested the parliamentary and presidential elections. The FJP pursued its political objectives from within the parameters of the transitional system because it believed success was possible in Egypt's more open political climate. Section five traces the movement's increased political assertiveness during Morsi's presidency. Morsi's political strategies must be understood in the context of significant structural continuities with the former regime that undermined his authority. Although some of his decisions were controversial, I present evidence that the objective was never to subvert the emergent democratic system. The conclusion of the paper considers why the MB's brief period of governance ended in failure despite the movement's sincere commitment to the political process. It closes by contrasting the experience of the Egyptian MB since July 2013 with the trajectory of Turkey's Islamists after the 1997 soft coup.

## **Literature Review**

### **Inclusion, Moderation and Politicization**

#### **The Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis**

The question of how and under which conditions an anti-system party will become incorporated into the mainstream politics of a state has generated considerable scholarly debate. The inclusion-moderation hypothesis posits that if an anti-system social movement is permitted to participate in the political process, it will temper its radical positions and ambitions over time. According to this model, the opportunities and benefits afforded by political inclusion incentivize marginal groups to work within the institutional parameters of the existing system. Political inclusion may provide such groups with legal status, an increased capacity to organize, and additional means through which to publicly disseminate their vision of reform. Through inclusion, the anti-system group confronts institutional constraints and becomes exposed to an ideologically diverse range of politicians and activists (Tomsa, 2012, p.487). By engaging in cross-partisan dialogue and complying with institutional regulations, the movement gradually sheds its extremist views and moves toward the centre of the political spectrum. Adopting a more centrist position also increases the possibility of attracting a wider constituency, enhancing the likelihood of success at the polls. Examples of movements that have historically followed this pattern include Christian Democrats and Social Democrats in 20th century Europe, both formerly radical social movements that incrementally shifted from the edge of the political spectrum toward the centre-right and centre-left respectively (Brown, 2012a, p.38-42). Attributing the moderation of these movements to political inclusion alone overlooks the specific social, political and temporal context in which these movements evolved. Nonetheless, the inclusion-moderation hypothesis provides a useful starting point from which to

understand the evolution of social movements, including Islamist movements, in response to changing political conditions.

The case of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey is an oft-cited example of successful Islamist party inclusion and subsequent moderation in a Muslim majority Middle Eastern context. The success of the AKP must be understood in the political context of assertive secularism dating from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's rule in the 1920s; this level of secularism remains unrivaled in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the rise of the AKP demonstrates that, given a context of relatively consolidated democracy and strong institutional constraints, an Islamist party can reconfigure itself and moderate its platform in order to appeal to a broad electorate and adhere to a state's requirements for secularism. Mecham (2004) contends that the AKP adopted a moderate platform as a result of two factors. First, repeated interactions with structural constraints (the courts and military) dictated the range of available actions and ultimately had a moderating effect on the movement. Second, working within the context of democracy allowed successive Islamist parties to experiment with different political tactics, while believing that their efforts could lead to genuine political success (Mecham, 2004, p.354-355). The AKP emerged triumphant in the 2002 elections after pursuing a secular agenda premised on economic and educational reforms, anti-corruption initiatives and support for Turkey's bid to join the European Union (Ibid, p.354). The party's multiple re-elections since it came to power in 2002 further confirm that an Islamist political party can govern effectively over time within a secular democratic framework. Despite recent criticism of its heavy-handed tactics, the party continues to enjoy widespread support. In Turkey's first direct presidential elections held in 2014, the AKP candidate Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (formerly Turkey's prime minister) was elected by a majority of votes (Ozhan, 2014).

By contrast, the experience of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia reveals a less promising political outcome of Islamist moderation. Since democracy was restored in the Muslim majority archipelago in 1998, Islamist parties have never enjoyed majoritarian support, usually winning a combined total of votes not exceeding one-third. The PKS is unique among Islamist movements in Indonesia. It was modelled after the organizational structure of the Egyptian MB and traditionally upheld a reputation for

transparency and accountability (Tomsa, 2012, p.489). The PKS was never officially excluded from Indonesian politics, but it performed so poorly in the 1999 elections that it was disqualified from running in 2004. In order to overcome this restriction, the party refashioned itself under a new name, moderated its political platform, and captured more than 7% of the vote in 2004. Inspired by its success, the PKS subsequently reframed itself as a 'religious-nationalist' (rather than Islamist) party and opened its membership and candidacy lists to non-Muslims (Ibid, p.490). Although the decision to moderate its platform initially appeared to benefit the party, internal divisions soon appeared between those of a more pragmatic stance and those who were unwilling to sacrifice ideology for political gain. The party also came under criticism as its elected representatives became integrated into the country's corrupt political system. Consequently, the PKS only marginally increased its standing during the 2009 election. By moving toward the centre, it had risked alienating its traditional Islamist base, yet it had failed to secure the support of more centrist voters (Ibid, p.493).

## **Inclusion**

Given the centrality of political inclusion to the inclusion-moderation framework, it is important to consider how this term is operationalized and how much inclusion is deemed necessary to incentivize moderation. If political inclusiveness varies along a spectrum, one would expect to find a threshold after which the level of inclusion extended to an Islamist movement becomes meaningful. For Brocker and Kunkler (2013), inclusion implies the legal and political recognition of [religious] groups, such that they can form parties and compete in elections to the same extent as other political groups (Brocker and Kunkler, 2013, p.176). For Tomsa (2012), political inclusion denotes not only the right to participate electorally, but also the licence to participate in government and to engage in public debates (Tomsa, 2012, p.487). Prior to the 2011 uprisings, the political conditions in most Arab states fell short of meeting either definition of political inclusion. Nevertheless, evidence from semi-authoritarian political contexts suggests that the moderating impact of political participation persists even where democratic institutions are weak, unreliable and easily manipulated by ruling elites. Across the Arab Middle East, Islamist movements such as the MB often seize

opportunities to participate even marginally in mainstream politics. Despite ongoing repressive constraints and inherently uneven opportunities structures, opposition movements tend to revise their approach in favour of working within the existing system. Even when it knows it cannot win at the ballot box, an Islamist movement becomes politicized through its participation in elections and engagement with the political system (Brown, 2012a, p.4-5).

Empirically, Schwedler (2006) has shown that in non-democratic contexts, small but significant political openings can have a moderating impact on the behaviour and ideology of an Islamist movement. Acknowledging the importance of contextual factors, she has refined the original inclusion-moderation model to indicate that a limited regime-led political opening has the effect of restructuring the public political space, which in turn initiates bi-directional interactions between political opportunity structures, the group's internal structure, and the boundaries of acceptable behaviour (Schwedler, 2006, p.22). She compares the trajectories of the Jordanian Islamic Action Front (IAF) and the Yemeni Islah party to illustrate how interactions among these three factors can lead a particular Islamist movement toward or away from a position of moderation. In this model, it is not the possibility of success through participation that leads Islamists to moderate, but by-products of new opportunity structures, such as engagement in internal debate. Similarly, in Morocco, the Justice and Development Party (PJD) has been incorporated into the political system, but in practice the party's political representation entails very limited power (Zeghal, 2008, p.35). Despite the absence of incentives and opportunities that characterize a truly inclusive system, the very act of participating in elections and accepting to work within the parameters of the system has influenced the party's trajectory. The PJD has come under pressure to clarify its platform, and must confront difficult decisions regarding cooperation with the ruling party or the formation of coalitions (Ibid, p.35-36). Ultimately, while it is clear that political participation can have a moderating effect, to describe the integration of Islamist groups into semi-authoritarian regimes as 'inclusion' is misleading, given that the conditions governing their participation are more repressive than they are inclusive.

The applicability of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis remains limited because it cannot account for instances in which Islamists have moderated prior to political

inclusion, or under conditions of outright repression. Schwedler (2006) acknowledges that the inclusion-moderation framework is often used to account for moderates becoming more moderate, rather than radicals becoming moderate (Schwedler, 2006, p.15). Indeed, contrary to the premise that inclusion produces moderation, the Egyptian MB moderated its behaviour under highly exclusionary political conditions. The movement officially foreswore violence in 1969, having endured more than a decade of severe repression under President Nasser. The MB did not enter electoral politics until 1984, and even then the political climate remained repressive. Hamid (2014) contends that the MB had repression forced upon it, such that the outward appearance of moderation represented much less of a reorientation of core values and ambitions than a fact of life under authoritarian and semi-authoritarian rule. According to this view, actions denoting moderation merely amount to posturing and doing whatever is necessary for self-preservation under restrictive circumstances (Hamid, 2014, p.167). An extension of this view would suggest that since the Egyptian MB did not undergo genuine moderation, one would expect this movement to proceed with its illiberal political agenda intact upon being released from repressive conditions. This paper will go on to argue against this position, but in the present context this supposition raises important issues about how to determine whether moderation has truly occurred, or indeed, what 'moderation' entails, and whether it is a useful concept for analyzing the evolution of Islamist movements in response to changing political conditions.

## **Moderation**

Within the discourse on Islamist social movements, the terms 'moderate' and 'moderation' are conceptually problematic for many reasons. While moderation has been defined in many ways by different scholars, it generally denotes the renunciation of violence alongside the adoption of liberal democratic values. Often in the literature, a moderate individual or group is dichotomously distinguished from its radical counterpart, as though the two were entirely discrete entities with no potential for overlap (Schwedler, 2011, p.350-351). This practice of mutual exclusion overlooks the fact that the process of moderation may occur unevenly across issue areas. For example, a group might exhibit moderation insofar as it accepts the participation of women in the public sphere,

but it may concurrently seek to censor certain types of artful expression in society. Particularly in the case of religious groups for whom (the interpretation of) religious texts is an important source of authority, positions on some matters may prove far more malleable than others (Ibid, p.358-359). Additionally, imposing a firm distinction between moderates and radicals ignores the fact that moderation tends to occur as a graded process along a continuum, rather than in absolute terms. Over time, groups may exhibit considerable ideological or behavioural moderation toward the centre of the political spectrum, while still falling short of meeting the full criteria for moderation (Ibid, p.363). Classifying moderation and moderates in discrete binary terms cannot account for these manifestations.

The concept of moderation is often divided into behavioural and ideological variants (Tezcur, 2010, p.10-11). Behavioural moderation implies a commitment to non-violence and a willingness to work within existing power structures, while ideological moderation denotes the acceptance of “liberal notions of individual rights and democratic notions of tolerance, pluralism, and cooperation” (Schwedler, 2011, p.352). Measuring behavioural or ideological moderation is difficult, as the former may be construed as a tactical move, and the latter is difficult to discern empirically. A group’s internal documents generally provide a more reliable indication of its ideological stance than do the group’s public statements. The utility of this distinction becomes less clear in instances where a group exhibits characteristics that could be classified as moderate on one dimension but radical on the other. To illustrate, an Islamist movement that seeks to recast the existing social order in accordance with Islamic principles would be considered ideologically radical, but the same group would be deemed behaviourally moderate provided it operates in accordance with legal parameters (Ibid, p.350). Indeed, within the realm of behavioural moderation, the emphasis placed on abiding by the rules can lead to some unlikely conceptions of moderation and radicalism. For example, a group that accepts the terms of an inherently undemocratic system could be viewed as moderate, while one that seeks to replace an authoritarian system with a democratic one might be construed as radical. Similarly, Islamists who choose to boycott elections rather than work within an established unfair system could be considered radical (Hamid, 2014, p.46).

The mechanisms through which political inclusion leads outlier groups to moderate are equally challenging to ascertain empirically. Scholars differ on the extent to which they attribute moderation to the structural factors of a given system, or to processes of within-group and inter-group dialogue. In the context of Turkey, Mecham (2004) emphasizes the role of strong institutional parameters in guiding the AKP toward moderation. Brown (2012a) similarly views the political context as central to reshaping Islamist movements. Alternatively, scholars such as Schwedler (2006) and Wickham (2004) stress the importance of dialogue and debate in producing moderation. Schwedler proposes that the formation of coalitions with ideologically diverse opposition groups is in itself indicative of ideological moderation, while Wickham maintains that such engagement with disparate groups is the precondition that facilitates subsequent ideological moderation. Furthermore, while some scholars suggest that Islamist social movements progress from behavioural to ideological moderation, others contest this mode of sequencing in lieu of concurrent dialectical processes (Schwedler, 2011, p.364). Finally, it can be difficult to distinguish between the moderation of individuals and that of an entire organization. In some instances, the appearance of widespread moderation may be a case not of an entire movement shifting toward the centre, but of moderate figures becoming more visible within the movement, while radical elements are sidelined or expelled (Ibid, p.364).

Given the internal contradictions and weak analytical leverage associated with the term moderation, some scholars have looked for alternative terminology that better reflects their understanding of the concept. Ashour (2007) reserves the term *moderation* to refer to ideological realignment toward democratic principles, and employs *deradicalization* to denote a rejection of violent methodologies (Ashour, 2007, p.599-600). Schwedler (2011) advocates adopting distinctive terms for specific issue areas. For example, one could distinguish between *legalists* and *contextualists* on religious interpretation, or between *accommodationists* and *nonaccommodationists* toward political participation (Schwedler, 2011, p.351-352). While conceptually interesting, these sub-classifications do not depart significantly from the overall inclusion-moderation framework wherein some amount of political inclusion is assumed to influence a range of ideological and behavioural markers. In the context of this paper I am concerned in particular with the conditions under which an Islamist movement participates in – and

commits to – the political process. Therefore, the salient questions are not whether a group is included and whether it moderates as a result, but rather how and under what conditions an Islamist movement is permitted to participate politically, and how this experience of regimented participation influences the extent to which the movement invests in or commits to the political process as a whole.

## **Politicization**

Brown (2012a) uses the term *politicization* to indicate the extent to which movements seek to participate in the existing political system and abide by its established rules and boundaries (Brown, 2012a, p.5). Drawing on Capoccia (2002), Brown employs the descriptor *ideologically anti-system* to denote groups whose orientation opposes the political system itself, and *relationally anti-system* to indicate groups whose orientation does not inherently oppose the system but whose views diverge significantly from the mainstream (Ibid, p.44). Within this paradigm, politicization and an ideologically anti-system orientation are, if not mutually exclusive, then certainly inversely proportional to one another. A relationally anti-system perspective is compatible with either stance toward the existing system, but in practice Brown observes that a decrease in an Islamist movement's ideologically anti-system sentiment tends to correlate with an increase in its relationally anti-system tendencies (Ibid, p.232). By avoiding the terms moderate and radical, and by assessing the extent of a group's relational anti-system orientation by reference to prevailing positions and opinions in a given social and political context, Brown (2012a) avoids many of the normative implications that are inherent in the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. Indeed, an important critique of the entire inclusion-moderation framework, in particular when it is applied to non-Western settings, is its highly normative underpinning, according to which Western understandings of liberal values become the standard for measuring the acceptability of a group's tactics and objectives. While I do not believe in absolute cultural relativism, I accept that political centrism varies from context to context and thus moderation (as an endpoint) cannot be defined in absolute terms from a Western liberal perspective.

Consistent with Brown's (2012a) analysis, I accept the premise that when an Islamist movement is allowed to participate politically, it typically seizes the opportunity and confines itself to working within the parameters of the system. I adopt the term *politicization* for its greater specificity, analytical leverage and amenity to empirical observation. However, extending my analysis into the 2011–2013 timeframe requires that this theory be further qualified. When applied to Islamists, the inclusion-moderation hypothesis typically refers to instances where political openings are regime-led, albeit often in response to demands from opposition movements (Schwedler, 2006, p.25). Likewise, Brown's (2012a) analysis of the politicization of Islamist movements derives from semi-authoritarian political contexts where political openings (and closings) are determined by the ruling elite. Under such conditions, an Islamist movement will invest in politics to an extent, but it will not fully commit to a political process from which it is inherently barred from winning. The MB in semi-authoritarian Egypt thus retained its involvement in a variety of social, charitable, educational and religious projects, at the same time as it devoted a certain amount of energy and resources to political pursuits (Brown, 2012a, p.69-70). While limited inclusion under Sadat and Mubarak produced limited politicization, Egypt's 2011–2013 political opening was not initiated by the regime. This fact is not so much important in itself, but for the political opportunities it produced. While institutional remnants of the former order endured in very significant ways, these structural elements were not initially viewed as barriers to success in the new political order. When the political context changed, so too did the Islamist movement.

For scholars such as Hamid (2014) who contend that any behavioural or ideological concessions made by an Islamist movement are superficial rather than credible, the political opening in Egypt provides an excellent test case. Whereas scholars who doubt the capacity for Islamists to moderate would expect the MB to shed all illusions of temperance upon being released from political repression, I argue precisely the opposite. Specifically, when the MB encountered a situation wherein it envisioned success to be possible from within the system, it fully engaged with the political process. This unprecedented level of political commitment was the decisive factor that set in motion the MB's organizational and ideological restructuring. While the movement did not abandon its charitable and educational activities, it prioritized political opportunities during the 2011 to 2013 time period. This sudden reorientation around the

political sphere had considerable ramifications for the internal structure of the MB, which necessarily influenced its decision-making and overall trajectory. The most significant development was the creation of a political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), but other observable shifts equally reflected the newfound centrality of political engagement to the movement. Before analyzing the impact of political commitment on the MB in detail, I review the movement's process of partial politicization in semi-authoritarian Egypt. The characteristics that the Islamist movement exhibited under semi-authoritarian rule contrast significantly with the traits it subsequently adopted during Egypt's political opening, when electoral success became a possibility worth pursuing.

## **Section One**

### **The Muslim Brotherhood in Semi-Authoritarian Egypt**

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) was founded in Ismailia, Egypt in 1928 by Hassan Al-Banna, a charismatic schoolteacher. The social movement expressed broad ambitions with the ultimate goal of restoring Islam to its rightful position of centrality in the social order. In 1932, Al-Banna moved the MB's headquarters to Cairo, where the organization's membership quickly swelled and it became increasingly involved in political affairs (Soage, 2008, p.22). The MB operated from the premise that foreign influences had usurped the desired primacy of Islam in organizing and maintaining the social order (Mitchell, 1969, p.217-218). However, despite its criticisms of Egyptian society, the movement as conceived by Al-Banna was reformist rather than reactionary in nature. Although its ultimate goal was to implement a social order based on Islamic law, the organization sought to bring about reform first at the level of the individual and then at the level of society. Change should occur incrementally from below rather than as a sudden revolutionary event (Ibid, p.234-235). From a political standpoint, Al-Banna was highly suspicious of partyism and partisanship, but the MB nonetheless fielded candidates in the 1941 and 1945 elections; in the former case they were pressured to withdraw and in the latter case all MB candidates were defeated. Meanwhile, reformist ideals notwithstanding, the MB perpetrated acts of violence during the 1940s. While its targets were primarily British forces occupying Egypt, the movement also occasionally targeted the Egyptian state. In December 1948, a member of the MB killed Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud An-Nuqrashi Pasha, and Al-Banna was killed in reprisal a few weeks later (Wickham, 2013, p.26).

Clearly then, the MB during its formative years exhibited a tension between generating reform from below, and achieving its objectives through force. This tension came to the forefront during the MB's experience of severe repression by the Nasser

regime. Following the Free Officers' coup of 1952, the MB, now under the leadership of Hassan Al-Hudaybi, was initially spared disbandment by President Gamal Abdel Nasser's populist regime. However, after an attempt on Nasser's life was attributed to the MB, the organization experienced the highest level of repression since its inception. Its leaders were arrested and held in prison camps (Kepel, 1985, p.26-28). Among the incarcerated was Sayyid Qutb, a prominent member whose prison manifesto *Signposts* allowed for the interpretation that it was acceptable to use force against the oppressive state in order to achieve the implementation of an Islamic order. Even after his execution in 1967, Qutb's writing continued to exert significant influence within Islamist circles, including among members of the MB. Although Qutb's ideology resonated with some members, his proposed methods were wholly incompatible with the nonviolent gradualism favoured by the reformists within the movement. In 1969, Supreme Guide Al-Hudaybi wrote *Preachers, Not Judges* as a rebuttal to Qutb's confrontational position (Wickham, 2013, p.29). The MB became divided between reformists and militant Islamists, resulting in a rare schism between the two factions (Kepel, 1985, p.61-66). The radical Islamists seceded from the movement, while the reformists continued to pursue their objectives in a nonviolent manner under the banner of the MB.

Thus the MB's ambiguities toward violence were formally resolved by the late 1960s, albeit under conditions of intense political repression rather than inclusion. Moving forward, the movement's gradualist approach to achieving its objectives became further consolidated under the leadership of Supreme Guide Umar Al-Tilismani (Wickham, 2013, p.30). In the 1970s, the MB was granted a greater degree of freedom to organize and mobilize within society. Incoming President Anwar Sadat liberalized the economy and viewed the Islamists as strategic countermeasure to the rise of leftist movements in Egypt (Awad, 2013, p.276). While the MB reconfigured itself above ground, consistent with the movement's broad multifaceted structure, it pursued political participation as only one of its many objectives. Moreover, even after the political space partially opened in Egypt, much of the MB's political mobilization occurred in the periphery rather than the political centre of Egyptian society (Wickham, 2002, p.94). The organization was still technically illegal, and in the interests of self-preservation, the MB preferred to pursue its activities outside the immediate purview of the state. The MB proved highly adaptive to operating in semi-authoritarian political conditions. Reflecting

the centrality of Islam to its mandate, it cultivated networks in the parallel Islamic sector by connecting with individuals through the provision of social welfare and in the form of Islamic consciousness-raising. Additionally, during this period many Islamists, some of whom later joined the MB, became active in the university student unions and went on to dominate the professional syndicates during the 1980s (Ibid, p.94).

Under Sadat, the MB learned to tailor its activities in response to the opportunities and constraints provided by the regime, but it mainly confined its activism to the periphery of society. Following Sadat's assassination, President Hosni Mubarak came to power in 1981, and in 1984 the MB began to participate in the political process more directly (Wickham, 2013, p.46-47). The decision to compete in state elections was controversial within the movement itself; the MB's founder Al-Banna had condemned partisan politics, and yet he had participated in elections during the 1940s. Elections in semi-authoritarian regimes are freer but still unfair, as the opposition may be permitted to run, but it is never allowed to win. Under such preordained conditions, the MB adhered to the procedural tenets of electoralism, but it would not fully invest in the political process (Brown, 2012a, p.162-163). When it was permitted to do so, the MB fielded a small number of candidates in elections, either as independents or by forming temporary alliances with other political groups, because the movement itself had no legal status (El-Ghobashy, 2005, p.378). The movement was generally careful to contest few enough seats that it would not challenge the dominance of the incumbent regime, as it had no interest in provoking a direct confrontation. Members of the MB benefitted from their engagement with the political process as they acquired new skills, and increased their visibility in the public sphere. More significantly, the movement exhibited a discursive shift as it came to prioritize democratic reform as a necessary precondition to implementing its Islamic agenda (Wickham, 2013, p.151). While the MB had long since disavowed violence, it was now undergoing a process of political learning that accompanies political participation.

In sum, under the semi-authoritarian regimes of Sadat and Mubarak, the movement emphasized the importance of self-preservation and adhered to a long time horizon. It learned to employ self-restraint in order to avoid antagonizing the regime, and pursued a range of social, educational and religious activities in addition to its

Islamist political agenda (Brown, 2012a, p.73-76). As a general trend, the official discourse of the movement's leaders became more supportive of democratic reforms, in part reflecting a process of ideological change that results from engagement with the political system, and also because they realized the movement would directly benefit from the expansion of political freedoms. Internally, the MB's organizational structure exhibits a great deal of formality, and its entrenched hierarchical structure tends to emphasize loyalty and discipline at the expense of equal representation within the movement (Ibid, p.67). In particular, youth members and reformists have struggled to make their voices heard by the movement's conservative old guard. However, the movement's top-down structure has also ensured cohesion and unity among its ranks, contributing to its superior organizational capacity (Wickham, 2013, p.93-95). Social engagement is central to the movement's ethos and may take the form of activism, advocacy, teaching and preaching. Under semi-authoritarianism, political participation was just one of the MB's many possible projects, and when state repression precluded such pursuits, the movement redirected its energy toward charitable, educational or socio-economic projects. The MB's cautious approach and adaptive capacity to seize opportunities where they existed enabled it to thrive under semi-authoritarian conditions (Brown, 2012a, p.69-70).

Throughout the latter decades of Mubarak's rule, the MB was subjected to successive iterations of state repression. During the 1990s the regime retaliated in response to the MB's domination of the professional associations. Similarly, after the MB overreached during the 2005 elections and won 20% of the seats in parliament, the movement was again subjected state retribution (Brownlee, 2010, p.482). Despite its demonstrated willingness to confine its political activities within the parameters set by the state, the MB repeatedly came under attack. Moreover, regardless of how aggressively the regime singled out and suppressed the movement, the MB did not resort to violence. In contrast to radical groups such as the Jama'a Islamiyya, which perpetrated acts of violence against the Egyptian state throughout the 1990s, the MB remained stoically disciplined (Ibid, p.479-480). When it was excluded from the political sphere, the MB simply redirected its resources and activism elsewhere. Indeed, it was not because the MB was presumed to be a radical anti-system movement that it was judged so threatening to the Mubarak regime. Quite conversely, it was because the MB

had consistently presented itself as moderate and supportive of the democratic process – even under political conditions that were far from democratic – that it was deemed such a threat to the prevailing order (Wickham, 2002, p.214). In practice, however, the MB's learned inhibition rendered it extremely reluctant to engage in activities that directly challenged the regime. According to the 'paradox of moderation', the temperance of an anti-system movement decreases the likelihood that it will contribute to processes of democratization (Tezcur, 2010, p.20). The traits that had enabled the MB to survive under semi-authoritarianism prevented it from effectively resisting political repression. This accounts significantly for the movement's lukewarm support for the revolutionary cause during Egypt's 2011 uprisings.

## **Section Two**

### **The Muslim Brotherhood During the 2011 Uprisings**

The January 25, 2011 uprisings in Egypt erupted just two weeks after the Jasmine Revolution had successfully overthrown the Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The MB was not among the instigators of the Egyptian protests, many of whom were youth, leftists and liberals. By nature, the MB is not a revolutionary movement and it preferred a gradualist approach to social and political change. Perhaps more significantly, the MB had been conditioned by years of semi-authoritarian rule, such that it was too restrained to risk challenging the regime directly. Indeed, the MB's typical caution and uncertainty were evident as the protests unfolded and the movement vacillated between supporting the revolutionaries and negotiating with the regime. Tellingly, in the wake of the Tunisian Revolution, rather than calling for similar demonstrations in Egypt, the MB's leadership sent a letter to the Egyptian regime, detailing a series of demands for political reform (Pargeter, 2013, p.213). Days later, when mass protests erupted in Cairo's Tahrir Square and throughout Egypt, the MB withheld its support and refrained from participating. Evincing its classic self-control and pragmatism, the movement kept its distance not least because it recognized that if the demonstrations failed, its members would become the targets of swift and forceful backlash from the disgruntled regime (Ibid, p.214). Early on, some youth members petitioned the Supreme Leaders for permission to join the protests; their request was eventually approved, provided that the youth participated as individuals without the formal backing of the movement (Wickham, 2013, p.160). For the MB, an official endorsement of the revolutionaries was simply too risky.

However, as the popular uprisings progressed, the MB understood that it could not afford to be left out of such a significant event in Egypt's history. On January 28, the MB belatedly entered Tahrir Square and joined the demonstrations. From the outset,

the MB's leadership was careful to emphasize that the movement was moving with the protests, and not leading or controlling them. The MB was keenly aware that if the impending revolution appeared to be driven by religious concerns, it could be discredited by both the regime and the international community (Hamid, 2014, p.140). As such, supporters of the uprisings emphasized their common Egyptian identity, advocated freedom and new opportunities for all Egyptians, and avoided making explicitly religious references. Rather than positioning itself at the forefront of the protests, the MB applied its strong organizational skills throughout Tahrir Square. Members distributed food and water to protestors, provided medical and security services, and connected the first microphones in Tahrir Square, thereby giving the revolutionaries a voice (Wickham, 2013, 166-167). While offering support to the cause, the ever-cautious MB downplayed its own involvement in the uprisings and sought to reassure fellow protestors that it had no intention of co-opting the demonstrations for its own purposes. The movement further underscored its commitment to a united front by officially backing Mohammed ElBaradei, a secularist leader who emerged as the spokesperson for the protestors' demands (Pargeter, 2013, p.214). Its common refrain of 'participation, not domination' proved as applicable to the revolutionary scene as it had to semi-authoritarianism.

As the protests continued unabated, Mubarak undertook various measures in an attempt to appease the demonstrators and restore public order. On January 28, he implemented a curfew in Cairo, Alexandria and Suez and deployed troops into the streets. Adopting a more conciliatory approach, he then dismissed his cabinet and appointed his first vice president, political ally Omar Suleiman. In a final attempt to dissuade the protestors, on February 1 Mubarak asserted that he would not seek another term and vowed to implement constitutional reforms (Moustafa, 2011, p.186). For its part, even after the MB had established a presence on the ground in Tahrir Square, and even as it expressed support for the demands of the revolutionaries, it appeared to be either indecisive or internally divided. Early in February, the MB began calling for Mubarak to relinquish power, and on February 4 it issued a statement refusing to engage in dialogue with the regime. However, by February 5 the MB had repositioned itself and agreed to meet with newly appointed Vice President Suleiman (Pargeter, 2013, p.218). Just as the MB's behaviour had been conditioned by the regime under standard semi-authoritarian conditions, so the movement continued to respond to actions taken by

the regime during the course of the protests. Although a few other opposition groups attended the meeting on February 6, most boycotted it to indicate that the time for dialogue had passed. By contrast, given the as-yet uncertain outcome of the uprisings, the MB was unwilling to exclude itself from the negotiations. The ever pragmatic and opportunistic movement felt that if an arrangement with the regime was to be brokered, it wanted to be involved in the process (Ibid, p.219).

The MB's double-play caused uproar among the protestors of Tahrir Square, who accused it of betraying the revolution by having one foot in the square and one with the regime (Pargeter, 2013, p.219). Equally unimpressed were the youth members within the movement itself. Fearful of losing its support base at this crucial time, the MB sought to justify its actions by issuing statements claiming that it had taken part in the meeting in order to relay the people's demands to the regime, and to assess the regime's willingness to meet these demands. In the coming days, the ambivalent MB continued to oscillate between the regime and the revolutionaries. By February 8, it had reverted back to overtly denouncing the regime and calling for its removal, and yet on February 10 it announced that it would partake in another round of talks with the administration (Ibid, p.220). Meanwhile, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) convened a meeting and issued a statement supporting the people's demands. Having lost the backing of the armed forces, Mubarak addressed the public one last time and promised additional reforms (Wickham, 2013, p.165). However, the protests persisted and by nightfall on February 11 Mubarak had tendered his resignation. In a move that would have considerable bearing on Egypt's political trajectory in the months and years following Mubarak's removal, the SCAF appointed itself to oversee the transitional period. It suspended the constitution, dissolved the upper and lower houses of parliament, and amended the electoral laws to permit the establishment of new political parties (Tavana, 2011, p.558).

Clearly then, the MB was neither a forerunner nor even an unequivocal supporter of the January 25 Egyptian uprisings. It initially remained detached from the protests, and although it eventually joined the demonstrations in Tahrir Square, the movement continued to prioritize its own self-preservation throughout the eighteen days of civil unrest. When Mubarak stepped down, the MB celebrated the success of the uprisings,

but it continued to affirm that it did not seek to dominate the political sphere during the post-Mubarak era. Now operating well outside of its comfort zone, the MB had to decide how best to proceed in a new political context characterized by great promise, prospects and possibilities – as well as an unprecedented level of uncertainty. In much the same way that it had previously courted the regime in times of convenience, MB initially viewed cooperation with the SCAF as the most promising road forward. Following the SCAF's revision of the electoral laws, the MB announced its intention to form its own political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), and to contest a portion of the seats in parliament (Farag, 2012, p.223). For the MB, the time had come to commit itself to electoral politics. Although political domination never became the MB's objective, during the weeks and months following the popular protests, the movement's political ambitions showed signs of expansion.

## **Section Three**

### **Political Commitment: The Freedom and Justice Party**

The first and most significant outward indication of the MB's newfound commitment to politics was the formation of a political party, and the internal restructuring that accompanied this endeavour. Under semi-authoritarian rule, the MB's pursuit of a broad range of activities – both political and non-political in nature – occurred partly out of necessity, as the movement adapted and responded to the successive iterations of relative accommodation and subsequent clampdowns that characterized the Sadat and Mubarak regimes (Brown, 2012a, p.69-70). However, in addition to being prudent and resourceful in the face of political constraints, this commitment to a diversity of pursuits reflected a longstanding and deliberate decision by the MB not to favour political endeavours at the expense of other forms of social engagement. In particular, the notion of partyism had been treated with suspicion by the movement's founder Al-Banna, who viewed partisanship as a great source of potential divisions (Wickham, 2013, p.22). Political ambivalence notwithstanding, several offshoots of the MB in neighbouring Arab states had already formed a political party when permitted. For its part, during the Mubarak era, the Egyptian MB had occasionally contemplated the possibility of submitting a formal request to form a party, but it never followed through in practice. The MB no doubt anticipated that its request would be denied, and in any case it preferred to conduct its activities with minimal oversight by the state (Al-Awadi, 2013, p.549). Given its historical aversion to partyism, the MB's decision to establish its own political party and to formally enter the sphere of partisan politics following the 2011 uprisings presents an interesting case for analysis.

Within two weeks of Mubarak's departure, the MB had announced its intention to form a political party. With the electoral laws amended, the MB was able to fulfil the

requirements for establishing a party, and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) was granted legal status on June 6, 2011 (Wickham, 2013, p.174-175). As Hamid (2014) observes, the formation of a political party has consequences. In principle, it implies a distinction between two separate entities: an Islamist social movement concerned with its own survival, and a partisan grouping fuelled by political imperatives (Hamid, 2014, p.83). Whereas the MB as a religious social movement enforced strict protocols regarding graded membership procedures, the FJP as a 'civil party with an Islamic reference' was open to anyone who supported its agenda. In practice, roughly 80% of the party's nearly 9,000 founding members were affiliated with the MB, effectively blurring the boundaries between the two bodies (Wickham, 2013, p.174). Overall, the extent to which the FJP operated independently from its founding movement appeared to be limited. Initially, Supreme Guide Mohammed Badie bypassed consultation and directly appointed experienced Member of Parliament (MP) Mohammed Sa'ad Al-Katani to oversee the creation of the party. Specific leadership positions within the FJP were then allocated by the MB's Shura Council, rather than determined through internal party elections. Although members such as Mohammed Morsi and Al-Katani, appointed party president and secretary-general respectively, resigned from the Guidance Bureau before taking their new positions within the party, strong linkages between the movement and its party remained (Ibid, p.174). For example, after President Morsi was elected, he deferred to the movement's Shura Council on important policy matters including the reinstatement of the legislative assembly (Shehata, 2012).

While the MB retained a significant degree of influence over the ostensibly autonomous FJP, the founding of a political party also had a considerable impact on the structural cohesion of the social movement. Not all within the MB supported the elevation of politics within the movement, and those who objected did so on different grounds. Some members, such as the reformist Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, protested the creation of the party in principle, arguing that the MB should confine its social activism to the sphere of civil society. (Interestingly, Aboul Fotouh was later expelled from the MB for his decision to contest the presidency.) Other reformists objected to the manner in which the party was situated in relation to the movement and questioned the extent to which the FJP would be truly independent of the MB (Wickham, 2013, p.175). While it would be simplistic to conflate the political party with the social movement, there

was a considerable degree of overlap between the two entities. The fact that a large majority of the FJP's membership was derived directly from the movement underscored the degree of continuity. Moreover, the ruling that members of the movement were forbidden from joining other political parties reinforced the perception that the FJP was merely a political reflection of the MB. The MB wrote the FJP's platform and ratified its bylaws, and the FJP made decisions in consultation with the MB, thereby undermining its claim to autonomy (Pargeter, 2013, p.227). Perhaps most significantly from the standpoint of the MB, the existence of the FJP ensured that a significant portion of the movement's resources and agenda were devoted to the political domain, straining the movement's internal cohesion in the process.

As Brown (2012a) has observed, Islamist movements modelled on the MB rarely fission, but when they do it tends to be over issues of politics and organization, rather than due to ideological differences (Brown, 2012a, p.127). Indeed, this was not the first time that politically motivated tensions had surfaced within the Islamist movement. In 1996, a reformist splinter group led by Aboul Ela Madi had seceded from the MB in order to form the centrist Wasat Party. Insofar as the structure and internal workings of the MB are concerned, a major outcome of this schism was the dilution of the reformist trend among the MB's remaining membership. During the first decade of the 2000s, the reformist trend within the MB remained weak and the old guard retained the balance of power. Internal elections held between 2008 and 2010 were hindered by the repressive political climate, and ultimately reaffirmed the supremacy of the old guard (Wickham, 2013, p.127). Under repressive regimes, organizational tendencies that emphasized discipline and obedience could be more easily justified, and the MB's diverse membership had typically united in collective opposition to the ruling political order (Al-Awadi, 2013, p.543). Following the 2011 uprisings, the external political situation improved, but internally the MB's conservative and hierarchical qualities endured. Realizing that their voices were no more likely to be heard now, many more reformists defected from the MB to create their own political parties, including the Egyptian Current Party (Farag, 2012, p.219-220). Once again, the reformist trend within the MB declined and senior leaders retained their positions of authority within the movement and the party. The organizational impact of the MB's entrance into mainstream politics was underway.

Additional organizational implications resulted from the MB's decision to commit to and prioritize political participation during Egypt's political opening. Since its inception, the Islamist movement had operated and flourished as a force of resistance against the prevailing order. Though it renounced violence at an early stage, it retained its relational anti-system orientation and positioned itself in opposition to (though not in direct confrontation with) the successive Egyptian regimes. Even as it participated in semi-authoritarian elections, the MB strongly resented the systemic biases that precluded its success (Brown, 2012a, p.23). As a direct result of the repressive political context in which it evolved, a great deal of the MB's popular support, and indeed its *raison d'être* was rooted in contesting the status quo. In contrast, the MB's commitment to mainstream politics after Mubarak's ouster necessarily re-oriented its stance toward the political sphere. Where the movement had formerly been a pillar of resistance against the previous political order, the newly legalized FJP now sought an influential role within the emerging political system (Farag, 2012, p.219). Also reflecting its newfound legality in a freer political climate, the movement came under pressure to replace its longstanding culture of secrecy with a level of organizational transparency that was conducive to a more open political environment (Al-Awadi, 2013, p.548). From within as from without, committing to politics and forming a political party reshaped the MB's internal structure. Meanwhile, as it advanced onto the new political scene, the FJP displayed an unprecedented level of political ambition.

## **Section Four**

### **Ambition: The FJP and the Quest for Electoral Victory**

After the 2011 uprisings ousted former Egyptian President Mubarak from power, the MB committed to politics because it believed that success would be possible in the emerging political system. However, to state that the MB worked within the bounds of the system is somewhat ambiguous, given that the system itself was undergoing a transition, and the balance of power between the military, judiciary and future elected officials was in flux. The SCAF had tasked itself with overseeing the transition process and was due to transfer power to a civilian government within six months, a commitment that ultimately remained unfulfilled. Initially, the MB signalled its political engagement by cooperating with the SCAF, not least because it understood that any successful transition would require the support of the military (Wickham, 2013, p.170). Although this tenuous alliance deteriorated in the months that followed, as the SCAF increasingly embodied an extension of the former regime, the MB continued to adhere to the timeline and provisions of the transitional period. When the SCAF or judiciary issued rulings that compromised the MB's interests, the movement nonetheless complied and continued to operate within the legal structure. During times of political confrontation and controversy the MB emphasized the need to consolidate Egypt's democratic transition through institutional means (Hamid, 2014, p.148-149). Importantly, the movement upheld this position in practice. For example, when the parliament was prevented from forming a government and was later dissolved on constitutional grounds, the MB accepted these rulings. It shifted its sights to the presidency and continued to pursue political influence from within the system (Pargeter, 2013, p.232).

The MB had two goals when it entered mainstream Egyptian politics. First, it wanted to secure a legitimate position of influence for the FJP within the new political

order. Though certainly ambitious, this objective should not be misconstrued as an attempt to dominate the political scene. Quite conversely, the MB reassured Egyptians that it would not seek a majority in parliament and it would not field a presidential candidate (Pargeter, 2013, p.221). For the time being, the MB claimed it was content to hold back and allow other sectors of society time to organize, before competing with them on more egalitarian terms (Hamid, 2014, p.142). In part, this approach can be understood as a function of lingering self-restraint carried over from the era of semi-authoritarian repression. The post-Mubarak political climate remained highly uncertain and the MB no doubt feared the repercussions of over-investing. However, the decision to proceed, albeit with caution, also reflected the MB's second objective upon committing to politics. Having endured decades of demonization by successive Egyptian regimes, the MB wanted to prove to Egyptians and international stakeholders once and for all that it was a moderate and responsible political entity. In an early gesture of good faith, the MB substantiated its commitment to inclusiveness by forming a cross-partisan electoral coalition with a diverse array of political groups, including the liberal Wafd and leftist Karama (Wickham, 2013, p.249). Although many parties subsequently defected from this Democratic Alliance for fear of being overshadowed by Islamists, it nonetheless reflects the MB's attempts at cross-ideological cooperation and consensus-building. As the MB continued its political pursuits, it retained its traditional pragmatism and discipline, but its habitual self-restraint incrementally gave way to growing political ambition.

In March 2011, the MB seized an important opportunity extended by the SCAF for one of its members, legal expert Sobhi Saleh, to participate in the committee that would generate recommendations for amending the constitution (Pargeter, 2013, p.222). The committee's recommendations would guide the course of Egypt's transition, and the MB's inclusion in this project enabled it to influence two important issues. First, the movement could influence the timing of the constitutional rewriting in relation to the elections. Despite more benevolent earlier assertions, the MB supported the position that elections should be held first and the constitution amended later, as the movement would be in a stronger position initially than if other political groups were given time to organize. Secondly, the movement could influence the manner in which the new constitution was drafted. The MB sought strong governmental oversight, according to

which the parliament would elect a 100 person committee that was responsible for drafting the new constitution (Ibid, p.223). Having secured these two elements in the recommendations, the MB campaigned hard to have the principles approved by the public referendum. Members framed a 'yes' vote as a vote for Islam, eliciting criticism that it was exploiting religion for its own purposes. In fact this was the MB's first outright display of partisanship. As a political entity with an Islamic frame of reference, the FJP was motivated to advance its partisan interests. When the referendum passed with an impressive 77% in favour, divisions between Islamists and secularists came to the fore (Ibid, p.224). This was the first major indication of the extent to which Egyptian society had fragmented since the strong display of unity in Tahrir Square. Leftists and liberals distrusted Islamists, and although they had high hopes for a democratic transition, their confidence in the system was limited.

As the parliamentary campaign got underway, the FJP again adjusted its political vision. It initially stated that the FJP would not contest more than one-third of the seats. Interestingly, this was the threshold that the MB had adhered to during semi-authoritarian elections, as a stronger showing would have granted the movement an element of authority in the form of veto power over the government's constitutional amendments (Brown, 2012b, p.5). Extending its reach, but still not seeking a majority, the MB increased the number of seats it would contest to 50%. Meanwhile, one of the demands of leftist and liberal groups was to reform the electoral laws so that candidates were elected according to a party-list system, rather than as individuals. This would require parties to clarify their platforms, and was intended to reduce both vote-buying and personalism. The MB was poised to perform well in any elections and so in a show of good faith toward the other sectors of society, it endorsed the new electoral law (Wickham, 2013, p.173-174). However, the adoption of an electoral system in which two-thirds of the seats would be elected through a party-list caused the MB to rethink its strategy, and it decided to contest a majority of seats after all. The FJP justified this turn of events by arguing that in the context of the new electoral system, many of its candidates were positioned near the bottom of party-lists and were unlikely to receive many votes. Accordingly, despite bold outward appearances, the Democratic Alliance, which had by now lost many of its prominent cross-partisan members, was not likely to

secure more than 40% of the seats in parliament (Ibid, p.250). As it turned out, the MB's estimate was remarkably accurate.

Although the FJP sought an increasingly prominent role for itself in Egypt's new government, its dedication to the democratic transition remained steadfast. For its part, the SCAF began to display self-interested motives as it interfered more heavily in the transition process. In October 2011, the SCAF-appointed interim government introduced a series of supra-constitutional principles. Informally dubbed the Al-Selmi document, in reference to Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Ali Al-Selmi, this document was designed to protect liberal rights against infringement by Islamists (Moustafa, 2012, p.4). It also served military interests by ensuring the armed forces' continued role in the coming political order (Hamid, 2014, p.147). Viewing the declaration as an affront to their political aspirations, the MB and other Islamist groups took to the streets in protest. The situation escalated when the Salafis remained in Tahrir Square, chanting religious slogans and provoking the already fractious secular-Islamist divide in Egyptian society. At this point, in a clear testament of its commitment to the political process, the MB emphasized the need to consolidate Egypt's democracy through parliamentary, rather than revolutionary means (Ibid, p.148-149). To some extent, the MB's calls to take the transition off the streets and into the institutions reflected its traditional non-revolutionary ethos. However, the MB was more concerned that civil unrest would delay the electoral process and prolong military rule. In practice, the administration repealed the new principles and voting went ahead as scheduled. Despite the foregoing civil unrest and threats of boycott by some liberal parties, Egypt's parliamentary elections proceeded in a peaceful and organized manner. The FJP's Democratic Alliance won more than one-third of the total votes, earning it 43% of the seats. The Salafis' Islamic Alliance won an impressive 25% of the seats, giving Islamists a strong majority in parliament and unsettling the defeated liberals and leftists (Wickham, 2013, p.251-252).

Having secured a clear parliamentary victory in Egypt's first free and fair elections, the FJP was eager to begin exercising its popular mandate. However, despite having achieved power through legitimate means, the Islamist-dominated parliament soon confronted a series of barriers from the secular opposition, the judiciary and the military. The FJP and Salafi Nour Party collaborated in appointing the 100 members of

the Constituent Assembly (CA) that would draft the new constitution. Along with fifty members chosen from within the parliament, the CA's composition included external legal experts and civil society representatives (Wickham, 2013, p.253). Secularists complained that fully two-thirds of the CA were Islamists, and that minority groups such as women and Copts were underrepresented. For its part, the FJP defended the Islamist majority in the CA by the fact that it numerically reflected the Islamist representation in the current parliament. While this stance was arguably uncharitable toward other sectors of society, it was consistent with the principles of majoritarian democratic representation. A quarter of the CA members chose to boycott the first meeting, while a group of activist legal experts filed a complaint with the Higher Administrative Court (HAC; Ibid, p.253-254). The CA was ultimately disbanded on the basis that some parliamentarians had self-selected for participation in the committee (Awad, 2013, p.286). Meanwhile, the elected parliament found its authority increasingly undermined by the SCAF, which denied the FJP the right to form a new government, arguing that this responsibility was reserved for the president. In keeping with its commitment to the political process, the MB chose the only recourse that would enable it to effectively govern within the existing system: it reneged on its earlier promise and entered the presidential race (Pargeter, 2013, p.232).

That the MB had never intended to field a presidential candidate is evidenced by the deep divisions that this turn of events provoked within the movement. Only upon finding itself unable to govern did the FJP set its sights on the position of executive authority. Initially the party searched for an external candidate to endorse. Having exhausted those options, the MB referred the question of contesting the presidency to the Shura Council, the movement's consultative decision-making body, where it was approved by a narrow margin of 56 to 52 (Wickham, 2013, p.254). The FJP's deference to the Shura Council underscores the continuities between the party and the movement. Hamid (2014) argues that the MB's stakes in the presidential elections were twofold. The obvious motive was the need to secure the party's capacity to govern and keep the increasingly intrusive SCAF in check. Secondly, the movement was concerned with maintaining its own internal cohesion. Aboul Fotouh, a reformist and former member of the MB, was running for president and the movement's leaders feared a rift in the MB if he emerged triumphant. This prospect was particularly threatening because it would

disprove the supposition that Islamist success could only be achieved from within the MB's institutional framework (Hamid, 2014, p.153). Evidently, the organizational ramifications of not running for president were deemed more ominous than those caused by the very decision to run. In addition to Aboul Fotouh, Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, a former member turned Salafi, emerged as another presidential contender. The MB questioned the merits of remaining on the sidelines if a potentially more conservative Islamist might come to power instead. Weighing all of these considerations, it decided to enlist a candidate (Ibid, p.153-154).

The FJP's candidate of choice was Khayrat Al-Shater, an influential businessman and prominent figure within the movement's financial networks. Since 2011, Al-Shater had become a leader in the MB's Renaissance Project, an Islamically-sanctioned program of political, economic and social reform (Wickham, 2013, p.254-255). As the presidential campaign progressed, the FJP faced two significant setbacks. First, a ruling issued by the Presidential Election Commission (PEC) disqualified Al-Shater based on criminal charges he had incurred during the Mubarak era. (The Salafi candidate Abu Ismail was also disqualified.) While the eligibility of Ahmed Shafiq, a loyalist to the former regime, was also disputed, his standing in the campaign was ultimately restored. Although the MB clearly resented these decisions, it remained committed to the electoral process and registered its second choice candidate, Mohammed Morsi. While Morsi possessed extensive parliamentary experience, he lacked Al-Shater's charisma. Nevertheless, owing to the MB's strong organizational backing, Morsi advanced to the second runoff against Shafiq (Al-Awadi, 2013, p.545). Two days before the polls were scheduled to open, the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) invalidated one-third of the lower parliamentary seats reserved for independent candidates, charging that FJP members had contested them as well. The SCAF then dissolved the entire lower parliament and assumed legislative authority (Wickham, 2013, p.261). The runoff thus took place in the absence of an elected legislative parliament, a constitution, or checks on the PEC's authority. Rather than defect from the electoral process, the MB vigilantly observed every presidential polling station and independently tabulated the votes. On June 24, 2012, having secured 51.7% of the vote, Mohammed Morsi was declared Egypt's first democratically elected president (Ibid, p.264).

## **Section Five**

### **Assertiveness: Morsi and the Task of Governance**

Although Morsi had won the presidential race, albeit by a narrow margin, in practice his capacity to govern was constrained by a series of crippling military decrees and judicial rulings. Consequently, the MB's increased political assertiveness during Egypt's post-election period must be understood in the context of intrusive institutional continuities with the former regime that sought to undermine its governmental authority. The SCAF was unwilling to relinquish its privileged position in society, and the balance of power between the elected and non-elected institutions had assumed a zero-sum dynamic (Tabaar, 2013, p.733). Whereas under semi-authoritarianism, the MB had responded to repression by conceding, the now fully politicized movement countered these constraints with determination. Morsi assumed his role as president on June 30, 2012, having begrudgingly taken his oath before the SCC, in the absence of the recently dissolved legislative parliament (Wickham, 2013, p.266). Having been stripped of lower parliamentary representation, the FJP invoked Morsi's executive powers as the only remaining means to assert its right to govern. During the ensuing months, Morsi issued several bold presidential decrees that were intended to promote stability and prevent the non-elected institutions from overreaching. Although the president's actions were controversial, the objective was never to undermine the democratic transition (Fadel, 2014, p.14). Once the MB had committed to politics, it remained firmly politicized. The movement was determined to exercise its position of political influence to the extent possible by working within the parameters of the transitional system.

On July 8, after a single week in power, President Morsi reinstated the dissolved legislative parliament. The judicial establishment sharply criticized this move and issued a written statement ordering the immediate cancellation of Morsi's decree. During a brief parliamentary session held on July 10, which many secularists boycotted, Speaker of the

House Al-Katani declared that the status of the parliament would be reviewed for appeal by the Court of Cassation (Wickham, 2013, p.266-267). While the MB's legal experts did not contest the SCC's ruling in principle, they questioned the manner in which it had been implemented. They reasoned that since only one-third of the parliamentary seats had been nullified, the dissolution of the entire legislative parliament was unwarranted. As such, the MB's objective was never to overturn the judiciary's decision, but rather to re-evaluate the SCAF's application of this legal ruling. Meanwhile, in the absence of an overarching constitution, influential figures within the state establishment effectively elevated the SCC to a position of supra-constitutional authority (Ibid, p.267). The SCC's increasingly authoritarian tendencies during Egypt's political opening marked a notable departure from its relatively independent and progressive stance during the foregoing Mubarak era (Moustafa, 2007). In the context of the present political crisis, the SCC invoked its binding authority and demanded the dissolution of the parliament for the second time. President Morsi acquiesced in deference to the SCC and the prevailing rule of law, and Al-Katani promised that there would be no more unauthorized parliamentary meetings (Wickham, 2013, p.267). However, a crucial point overlooked by critics who frame Morsi's July 8 ruling as an act of insubordination to the legal establishment is the fact that its stipulations clearly uphold the core tenets of the SCC's ruling. Rather than seeking to permanently reinstate the former legislative parliament, Morsi called for new parliamentary elections to be held within sixty days of approving the constitution (Ibid, p.267).

One month after his confrontation with the SCC, in the context of an attack on border control officers near Rafah, Morsi moved against the armed forces. The Rafah security incident provoked a heated disagreement between the president and the military leadership, with the latter calling for a state of emergency to be implemented in the Sinai Peninsula, a measure Morsi deemed excessive. Amid rising tensions between the two sectors, Morsi seized the occasion to undercut the military and consolidate his presidential authority (Ozhan, 2013, p.16). On August 12, he audaciously announced the retirement of numerous senior military figures, including the Minister of Defense Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, the Chief of Staff Sami Anan, and the leaders of the Army, Navy and Air Force, all of whom were replaced by younger officers. Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi replaced Tantawi as the Minister of Defense. Morsi also reclaimed the executive powers

that the SCAF had appropriated for itself upon dissolving the elected parliament in June (Frisch, 2013, p.195). Although his efforts ultimately proved insufficient against the resilient SCAF, Morsi's attempt at subordinating the military to civilian rule was supported by many revolutionaries. In addition to Islamist proponents, many youth elements, leftists and liberals responded favourably, although the latter expressed concerns over the incremental 'Brotherization' of the state (Awad, 2013, p.282). Conversely, oppositionists decried Morsi's actions as means to secure dictatorial powers. Wickham (2013) argues that both of these interpretations overlook an important factor, which is that the displacement of the former military leadership appeared to have been negotiated with – and endorsed by – a subset of influential figures within the military itself, namely those who opposed Tantawi's confrontational stance against the president (Wickham, 2013, p.267). Accordingly, Morsi's reshuffling of military personnel represented less of a unilateral imposition of presidential will and more of a coordinated leadership reassignment.

On November 22, Morsi made his boldest move since taking office. He issued a presidential decree exempting both his decisions and the drafting of the constitution from judicial oversight (Brown, 2013, p.49). Critics charged that the president's assumption of absolute authority subverted the separation of powers and severely undermined the democratic process (Ozhan, 2013, p.17). However, Fadel (2014) argues that Morsi "acted in accordance with his responsibilities as the only democratically accountable official in the country" (Fadel, 2014, p.14). During the preceding weeks, the second appointed Constituent Assembly (CA) tasked with drafting the new constitution had reached an impasse, with secularists and Islamists bitterly divided over the appropriate role of religion in society. In the context of escalating opposition, Morsi had legitimate reasons to fear that the SCC would dissolve the CA a second time, effectively reversing much of the transitional process. The president therefore acted pre-emptively to ensure the timely completion of the constitution (Brown, 2013, p.49). Far from steering the country toward an authoritarian outcome, Morsi acted in the interests of enshrining a more inclusive and pluralistic political system. Fadel (2014) argues that despite the enduring controversy over the matter of religion, the new Egyptian constitution had a meaningful effect. It expanded political rights, decreased the power of the president, and increased the relative strength of the prime minister and the parliament, thereby

supporting a more open political configuration (Fadel, 2014, p.14). Moreover, Morsi's controversial decree was invoked as a temporary measure to preserve the CA, and as such it was never intended to be sustained. Once the president had approved the draft constitution, the decree was duly reversed on December 8 (Ozhan, 2013, p.19-20). A public referendum over the constitution took place during the third week of December, and despite a low voter turnout, the new constitution was approved and implemented (Brown, 2013, p.49).

Morsi had reaffirmed his commitment to the political process by using his November 22 presidential decree for the sole purpose of finalizing the stalled constitution, and by promptly lifting the restrictions on the judicial establishment once the CA had fulfilled its duty. With the constitution endorsed by a majority of voters, elections for the new legislative parliament were slated to be held in the spring of 2013. At this point, the newly re-empowered judiciary forcefully reasserted itself against Morsi's presidential authority (Azzam, 2013, p.160). During the foregoing political crisis, the upper parliament – which was granted temporary legislative powers pending new lower parliamentary elections – had been debating a new law that would have forced a quarter of Egypt's judges into retirement. The judiciary responded by threatening strikes and escalation in their standoff with the upper parliament. Seeking conciliation, Morsi met with senior officials of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) and promised not to pass any legislation that did not receive judicial approval (Al-Amin, 2013, p.30-31). Although the judicial crisis was contained, the newly ratified constitution nonetheless weakened the judicial establishment by reducing the number of SCC justices and by placing greater restrictions on the SCC's capacity to intervene in electoral proceedings (Lang, 2013, p.361). The new constitution further delimited the judiciary's sphere of influence by allocating the power to define individual rights to the political institutions, rather than to the SCC (Fadel, 2014, p.14). The judiciary clearly resented having its status and authority circumscribed, and its persistence as an authoritarian enclave produced a sharp narrowing of Egypt's political opening. The Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) overturned Morsi's July 8 decree that had called for legislative parliamentary elections to be held within sixty days of approving the new constitution (Azzam, 2013, p.160-161). As a result, the president continued to govern without a lower parliament, in a political environment increasingly dominated by non-elected institutions.

It was in this context that Egypt's already tenuous security situation deteriorated further. In February, riots erupted in Port Said after state security failed to contain football hooliganism, resulting in nearly eighty deaths. The rioting resumed when the courts convicted twenty-one participants of murder, but only charged two police officers with negligence. Minister of Defense Al-Sisi cautioned that ongoing public disorder could destabilize the state, a warning that some interpreted to mean that the military was planning a coup against the Islamist government (Azzam, 2013, p.162). Additionally, the polarization of Egyptian society between Islamists and secularists intensified during the ensuing months, and oppositionists established cross-partisan groups including the National Salvation Front (NSF), a political alliance, and Tamarod ('Rebellion'), a grassroots movement (Housden, 2013, p.72). On June 30, the one year anniversary of Morsi's presidential inauguration, millions of protestors rallied in the streets, demanding his departure from office. The following day, Al-Sisi issued an ultimatum: Morsi had 48 hours to restore public order in Egypt, or the military would intervene. The protests continued, and on July 3 the military followed through on its provision (Tabaar, 2013, p.727-728). Oppositionists succeeded in their efforts to overthrow the president largely because their objectives coincided with elite interests among the military establishment (Housden, 2013, p.76). The SCAF was concerned with preserving its status against the implementation of civilian rule. In a twist of irony, Minister of Defense Al-Sisi, the man Morsi had handpicked to replace his military adversary Tantawi, became the man who toppled Morsi and eventually took his place as Egypt's president.

## **Conclusion**

### **When Political Commitment is not Enough**

Two key points emerge from the MB's short-lived experience of governance in post-Mubarak Egypt. The first, as I have argued in the preceding sections, is that the movement wholeheartedly committed to politics and devoted significant resources to this endeavour during Egypt's political opening. Despite all of the difficulties it encountered during the 2011 to 2013 period, and even as structural continuities endured and the political space began to close again, the MB never once reneged on its commitment to working within the system. The second observation, which the June 30, 2013 protests and ensuing military coup rendered all too clear, is that political engagement, while necessary, is not sufficient to ensure success. This is particularly evident in unstable, unconsolidated democratic transitions, where many political parties are inexperienced and the rules of political participation are not well established (Schwedler, 2013, p.14-15). During Egypt's political opening, these rules were vulnerable to manipulation by institutions such as the SCAF that sought to undermine a successful transition to civilian rule. Indeed, both the military and the judiciary demonstrated a capacity to intervene in Egypt's transition in ways that significantly obstructed the democratic process (Ozhan, 2013, p.15). As such, an assessment of the extent to which MB's political strategies served to protect or weaken Egypt's transition to democracy must necessarily take into consideration the broader political context in which the movement was operating. My analysis reveals that the FJP remained committed to the political process, but it was unable to overcome the institutional barriers that worked to prevent the establishment of a democratic system of governance in Egypt.

As an Islamist party governing for the first time during a highly uncertain period of political transition, FJP faced several compelling challenges. One significant challenge was to pursue the party's partisan agenda without marginalizing the other sectors of

Egyptian society (Wickham, 2013, p.268). The FJP was elected on an Islamist platform, and accordingly, from a strictly majoritarian standpoint it had the mandate to advance its political program. However, given Morsi's narrow presidential victory, it was clear that he was presiding over a deeply divided nation. Efforts to effectively rebuild an inclusive Egyptian society would require cooperation and concessions across all sectors of society (Fadel, 2014, p.15). Schwedler (2013) suggests that an Islamist movement may respond differently to an unstable transitional context than to a controlled regime-led political opening, as the former is susceptible to shifts in the balance of power, both between competing sectors of the state establishment as well as across the spectrum of political actors. Political instability can disincentivize the formation of cross-ideological alliances (Schwedler, 2013, p.15). At times, the approach taken by the FJP perpetuated distrust among the non-Islamist sectors of society, undermining their confidence in the legitimacy and representativeness of the democratic process and leading oppositionists to voice their discontent in the streets rather than through institutional means. Nevertheless, the MB cannot be held singularly responsible for the deterioration of relations between the Islamist government and the predominantly secular opposition. In particular, beginning with the initial appointment of a committee tasked with devising recommendations for amending the constitution, actions taken by the military often served to entrench and exacerbate the Islamist-secular divide in Egyptian society (Faris, 2013, p.100).

A second challenge facing Morsi and the FJP concerned the execution of more mundane governmental tasks, such as developing the economy and providing security in the emerging political system. Upon taking office, Morsi launched a 100 Day Plan intended to produce improvements in the areas of bread, fuel, traffic congestion, waste collection and security. Though ambitious, this program lacked the longer time horizon needed to generate sustained and meaningful progress (Wickham, 2013, p.272). From an economic standpoint, Al-Awadi (2013) argues that Morsi's inheritance of a struggling economy does not absolve him of responsibility for its further deterioration under his rule (Al-Awadi, 2013, p.545-546). The issue of state security is more complex, since critics of Morsi's failure to reform the security sector clearly underestimated the military's immunity to Morsi's efforts (Fadel, 2014, p.15). As such, a third noteworthy challenge facing Morsi and the FJP was to defend against the encroachment of institutional

remnants of the former regime that sought to forestall a successful transition (Wickham, 2013, p.268). With limited room to manoeuvre, and unwilling to stray outside the bounds of the system, Morsi worked to overcome the restrictions imposed by the non-elected institutions. While his August 2012 attempt to subordinate the military was generally well-received by the Egyptian public, his move against the judiciary in November 2012 elicited considerable dissent. In practice, his efforts on both fronts failed to permanently sideline the structural continuities. Meanwhile, oppositionists had become increasingly dissatisfied with Morsi's exercise of authority and on June 30, 2013, they once more expressed their dissatisfaction in the streets (Housden, 2013, p.72-73). Egyptians had had high expectations for their first democratically elected president, and disappointed citizens resented that in their eyes Morsi had failed to deliver.

Thus, despite a sustained commitment to the political process, the MB's experience of governance ended in failure. Since July 2013, the movement has been subjected to the highest level of state repression since the 1960s. In the immediate aftermath of Al-Sisi's coup, the military appointed former SCC chief jurist Adly Mansour to the position of interim president. The military's handpicked government also included economist Hazem El-Bablawi, who served as the prime minister, and the secularist ElBaradei, who briefly served as vice president until he resigned a month later. Acting President Mansour issued a constitutional declaration that guaranteed the military's autonomy and exempted its decisions from civilian oversight (Faris, 2013, p.102). Meanwhile, dozens of senior figures in the MB had charges filed against them. On July 8 and again on July 28, peaceful protests organized by supporters of the MB were countered with heavy-handed repression by the armed forces. In one particularly brutal incident, on August 14, the military unleashed violence against pro-Morsi demonstrators at Al-Nahda and Rabaa Al-Adawiya Squares in Cairo, resulting in at least 635 deaths (Williams, 2013). ElBaradei resigned from his post as interim vice president, citing an escalation in state violence that precluded the possibility of reconciliation between the divided sectors of Egyptian society (Al-Akhbar English, 14 August 2013). As the military continued its forceful crackdown largely with impunity, proponents and members of the MB were also subjected to litigation. In June 2014, the courts upheld death sentences for more than 180 affiliates of the Islamist movement, including deposed President Morsi and Supreme Guide Badie (Middle East Monitor, 21 June 2014).

One significant difference between the experience of the Egyptian MB and the trajectory of the AKP's predecessor parties in Turkey concerns how the state responded to the Islamist movement once it had been removed from power. The Islamist Welfare Party won 22% of the vote in Turkey's 1995 elections; six months later the party formed a coalition government and Necmettin Erbakan became Turkey's first openly Islamist prime minister (Bonner, 2009, p.142). The following year, Erbakan was forced to resign because the military viewed his religious policies as a threat to the secular nature of the state. Although democracy was quickly restored after the 1997 soft coup, measures were taken to limit the role of Islamists in society. The Welfare Party was disbanded, six former members were banned from political participation, and following the public reading of an Islamic poem, then-Istanbul Mayor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and three other Welfare activists were briefly incarcerated (Ibid, p.142). However, Islamists in Turkey did not experience the harsh backlash that the Egyptian MB has endured since July 2013. Quite conversely, many members of the former Welfare Party were able to reorganize, and the reformist trend among them went on to form the AKP that later dominated Turkey's 2002 elections. Thus, Islamists in Turkey had multiple opportunities to learn and develop new political strategies based on their experiences in government (Mecham, 2004, p.354-355). Historically, the MB has proven highly skilled at adapting in response to political constraints. The Turkish case suggests that the greatest barrier to the MB's political learning curve is not the presence of a powerful and privileged military in principle, but the specific recourse of harsh repression that has denied the MB future opportunities to participate in political life.

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