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The Evolution of a Social Movement: The Muslim Brotherhood's Path Between Political Ambition and the Rejection of Armed Struggle[†]

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Abstract: This article examines the evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, tracing its transformation from a social movement into a political party. This study investigates the conditions and dynamics that compelled the organization to engage in the political sphere and its efforts to distance itself from armed strategies. It explores the factors that have driven these changes and offers insights into potential future trajectories, especially in the context of the challenges faced by the Brotherhood following the military coup on 3 July 2013. Employing theoretical frameworks from studies on the transformation processes of similar movements and utilizing a process tracing methodology and in-depth interviews, the article seeks to understand how both historical and contemporary contexts have shaped the Brotherhood's evolution and strategies. The findings suggest that, much like during previous periods of repression, the Brotherhood is likely to endure the current crisis and sustain its organizational presence. However, in doing so, it is expected to temporarily withdraw from political engagement. The article posits that, after completing this period of exile and resuming its activities in Egypt, the Brotherhood will likely continue as a social movement, stepping away from political involvement for a significant period.

Keywords: Muslim Brotherhood; social movement; Islamist movement; Freedom and Justice Party; Egypt



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1. Introduction

With nearly a century of history, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) stands as a pioneering force among Sunni Islamist movements (Wickham 2013, p. 21), navigating numerous challenges throughout its existence. However, the aftermath of the 3 July 2013 coup d'état marks perhaps the most formidable period in its history. Unlike the era of Gamal Abdunasser, in the post-Arab spring period, which Willi (2021) described as the “fourth ordeal”, the MB struggles to maintain its organizational cohesion. Historically, the movement has distanced itself from violence as a guiding principle, despite its early unofficial military structure called the Special Unit, which, de facto, emerged due to leadership disputes and structural constraints. Over time, the MB managed to shed this military dimension, presenting itself as a peaceful entity, even under extreme conditions, despite the presence of more radical voices within its leadership.

The 2013 coup reignited the debate over the MB's alleged “military wing”, leading to accusations against a faction led by Mohamed Kamal (Al-Jazeera 2016). While this faction represents a marginal line within the organization, its emergence underscored the MB's internal tensions regarding military organization. More significantly, the question of the MB's political roadmap post-coup sparked visible debates among its senior leadership, resulting in a bifurcated leadership structure—one centred in London under Ibrahim Munir and the other in Istanbul under Mahmoud Hussein. The election of Salah Abdulhaq as the new leader following Munir's death has not resolved this duality (Omar 2023).

Key factors driving the current crisis include organizational rigidity, a lack of transparency, strategic deficiencies, and the alienation of the younger generation (Al-Anani 2021). These issues raise critical questions about the MB's internal dynamics and its historical patterns of adaptation. This article aims to analyse the MB's evolution from a social movement to a political entity, focusing on its efforts to distance itself from armed struggle within a historical context. The study aimed to provide a detailed examination of how organizational and structural conditions have influenced the movement's trajectory, contributing to the academic literature on Islamist movements and social movements.

The extensive literature on the MB encompasses detailed studies on its historical development, as well as thematic analyses of its social and political activities (Al-Anani 2016; Dingel 2017; Helbawy 2010; Lia 2000; Mitchell 1993; Munson 2001; Vannetzel 2021; Wickham 2013; Bozkurt and Rakipoğlu 2023). While research on the MB's alleged relationship with violence is limited, numerous studies have explored its interactions with political order (Abdul Reda 2014; Al-Anani 2015; Al-Arian 2014; Al-Awadi 2009; Pargeter 2021; Tonsy 2022). Since the 2013 coup, scholarship has increasingly focused on the movement's internal divisions and the broader implications of its organizational crisis (Al-Anani 2019, 2021). These studies, supported by primary sources and interviews, provided valuable data for this article.

This study employed the process tracing method and in-depth interviews to analyse the historical trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood. As a qualitative research approach, process tracing is well-suited for examining causality and temporality within a single case or a small number of cases, providing a robust framework for understanding the movement's transformation (Söyler 2021, p. 68; George and Bennett 2005). Four interviews were conducted with key figures who held prominent leadership roles during the Morsi era, selected for their direct involvement in shaping the Brotherhood's political strategies. Although the number of interviews is limited, they offer valuable insights into the internal decision-making processes. These insights are integrated into the analysis and supplemented by secondary literature to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Brotherhood's evolution.

2. The Dynamics of Social Movements' Transition into Political Parties and Armed Struggles

The transformation of social movements into political parties, often referred to as "partyization", is a well-documented phenomenon. Traditional scholarship has long maintained a clear distinction between social movements and political parties, primarily based on the differing nature of their activities—informal versus formal (McAdam et al. 2008). However, recent academic discourse challenges this binary view, emphasizing the increasingly blurred boundaries between these two forms of political engagement. Scholars such as Jack A. Goldstone (2003) have highlighted how social movements and political parties are often interconnected, particularly in established democracies where these boundaries are less distinct.

Herbert Kitschelt's (2006) concept of "movement parties" exemplifies this hybridization, illustrating how social movements can evolve into political entities that straddle the line between grassroots activism and formal political participation. Kitschelt's typology, which draws from both social movement theory and political science, has been expanded by scholars such as Della Porta et al. (2017). Although much of the literature has focused on the European experience, it is evident that movements across various ideologies—whether Islamist, nationalist, or leftist—can undergo institutionalization, transforming into "movement parties". For instance, Jenny B. White (2002) examined the interdependent relationship between social movements and political parties through the lens of Turkey's Welfare Party and its roots in Islamist mobilization.

Kitschelt (2006) outlined several key factors that can drive social movements to undergo partyization. Firstly, conflict with established parties may arise when social movements adopt comprehensive ideologies aimed at societal reorganization, prompting them

to enter the electoral arena. Secondly, movements may be driven by perceived electoral support, though this perception can be misleading, as traditional parties often possess more accurate voter data. Thirdly, the likelihood of a movement's partyization is influenced by the political environment; movements are more likely to engage in formal politics when electoral laws and barriers to political entry are low. Lastly, established parties' neglect of social movements, focusing instead on their core electorate, may lead these movements to form their own political parties. Kitschelt posited that social movement parties are most likely to emerge under three conditions: the presence of collective interests shared by a significant portion of the population, the reluctance of established parties to address these interests, and low to moderate thresholds for political representation.

Barbara H. E. Zollner (2021), however, critiqued the conventional frameworks used to analyse partyization in democratizing countries. She argued that both the "party systems" approach and the "linear development" model, which assume an inevitable transformation of movements into parties, are insufficient. Zollner challenged the notion that an increase in political parties and competition necessarily leads to democratization. Instead, she emphasized the importance of party institutionalization.

Zollner criticized senior scholars for assuming that the transformation from movement to party is a natural and inevitable process. She challenged the progressive assumptions underlying these theories, arguing that they overlook cases where movements, even in open political systems, choose to remain outside formal political spheres, as seen in Egypt, Tunisia, and other democratizing countries. She contended that partyization is not a deterministic process but rather is contingent on a movement's perceived capacity to influence political outcomes (political influence). Moreover, she disputed Goldstone's assertion of the fluidity between social movements and political parties, arguing that clear boundaries are essential between social movements and political parties for successful democratic state-building. Without these distinctions, the institutionalization of new parties may fail, challenging the viability of the "movement party" model.

On the other hand, the academic literature on why and when social movements resort to violence spans both social movement studies and terrorism studies, often addressing the source of violence from different perspectives. Traditional studies have typically focused on the macro (structural/systemic), meso (organizational), and micro (individual) levels, each offering distinct explanations for environmental factors, the characteristics of armed groups, and individual motivations for violence. However, these approaches have been criticized for their inability to provide a comprehensive explanation of political violence and the transformation of social movements into armed entities (Zollner 2021, pp. 380–82).

In recent years, both social movement and terrorism studies have shifted towards more "relational" and "comprehensive" approaches to understanding why movements turn to armed struggle. Della Porta (2006) proposed a model that integrates systemic, organizational, and individual dimensions to better comprehend the environmental conditions, group dynamics, and individual motivations that contribute to the radicalization process. Her research on political violence in Italy and Germany demonstrated that different levels of analysis dominate various aspects of radicalization.

Jennifer M. Hazen (2009), in her study of social movements transforming into armed groups in Nigeria, identified several factors that contribute to radicalization, including the government's refusal to address popular demands, harsh responses to protests, ideological shifts that legitimize violence, existential threats to the movement, competition among social movement organizations for limited resources, and perceptions that other organizations are too weak to effect change. She advocated for applying the "protest cycle model" to understand the transformation of movements into armed entities. She argued that factors such as political opportunities, framing, resource mobilization, and group competition should be analysed holistically and dynamically.

Hazen's analysis of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) confirmed that different factors dominated at various stages of the movement's development. The political structure, patrons, and ideology were critical in the NDPVF's emergence, while intra-

movement rivalry and ideology were decisive in the choice of violence. The movement's sustained armed struggle was facilitated by the absence of political leadership in the Niger Delta and the reluctance of the Nigerian army to fully engage the NDPVF. She also highlighted the role of charismatic leaders in driving and sustaining movements in armed struggle (Hazen 2009, pp. 283–85, 296).

Peter Waldmann (2005) further identified key factors that drive radicalization. These include external attacks by the state or other collective actors, the absence of a protective state or institution, the presence of logistics and territory that provide safe havens for the movement, and the creation of a shared identity, memory, and destiny among the movement's members to foster solidarity.

Moreover, Eitan Y. Alimi (2011), in his comparative study of the Weathermen, Tanzim, and al-Qaeda, advocated for a relational approach, identifying key factors in radicalization: intra-movement power struggles, unfavourable opportunity/threat ratios, and an escalation of action–reaction between the movement's actors and state forces. Alimi described the radicalization process as a multifaceted journey, where relational mechanisms influence the process differently, depending on the historical context. He also noted that political polarization and the revocation of a movement's legitimacy can further facilitate radicalization. In summary, the literature suggests that social movements resort to armed struggle due to a complex interplay of environmental conditions, organizational dynamics, and individual motivations. These factors interact at different levels and times, making the process of radicalization unique to each movement's context (Alimi 2011, p. 96).

3. A Short History of the Muslim Brotherhood: Structural and Organizational Conditions and Radical Transformations

Founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna and his associates, the MB began as a social movement rooted in the Ismailiyya region of Egypt. During its initial phase, the MB functioned primarily as a charitable organization with strong Sufi influences, rather than as a movement with an explicit political reform agenda. The organization's early activities were centred on education, aiming to raise a new generation that understood religious principles (Lia 2000, p. 63). During this period, the MB's distinctiveness from other religious groups in Egypt was not yet apparent (Yetim et al. 2020, p. 30).

3.1. Expansion of the Muslim Brotherhood

The year 1932 marked a pivotal moment in the history of the MB, as al-Banna's relocation to Cairo signalled a significant transformation. With its headquarters now in Cairo, the MB evolved from a local religious and social movement into a broader Islamic movement with pronounced social, political, and economic dimensions (Mercan 2019, pp. 68–69). The movement began addressing various political issues, particularly foreign policy matters such as support for the Palestinian cause, and domestic concerns related to Islamic governance. This shift initiated a process of expansion, during which the MB diversified its activities and saw its number of branches increase from four in 1929 to over two thousand by 1949, with a membership base growing to around 500,000 (Mitchell 1993, p. 328). In Cairo, al-Banna focused on engaging university students and strengthening ties with educational unions, which significantly contributed to the rapid increase in membership and the movement's steps towards institutionalization (Helbawy 2010, pp. 65–66).

The early general assemblies of the MB played a crucial role in tracing the movement's transformations. The first plenary session in 1933 was particularly decisive, leading to the drafting of the official statute, the establishment of women's branches, the formulation of an anti-missionary stance, and the setting of an ideological framework that culminated in the first letters to the existing political authority (Mercan 2019, pp. 70–71). Although some scholars, such as Carrie Wickham (2013), have argued that the MB initially held an "anti-systemic" position, excluding the existing political order, al-Banna's soft and complimentary language in his letters to statesmen suggests that the movement did not

wholly oppose the state (Erkilet 2000, p. 239). The fact that the anti-imperialist and politically charged discourses expressed in internal meetings during the early 1930s did not feature prominently in the MB's publications indicates that the movement maintained a cautious approach, engaging with local politics without directly challenging the regime (Lia 2000, pp. 114–15). In essence, the MB adopted a reformist stance during this period, offering critiques to the rulers without aspiring to political power.

By the second half of the 1930s, the MB's political position became more pronounced. The movement's support for the 1936 general strike in Palestine not only attracted local attention but also garnered the interest of regional actors (Munson 2001, p. 488). The third and fifth general assemblies in March 1935 and January 1939, respectively, were instrumental in shaping the movement's organizational structure. The third congress formalized the hierarchical structure, membership criteria, and responsibilities and laid the groundwork for the movement's military dimension with the decision to establish scouting units. By the fifth congress, the MB had largely completed its internal structuring and entered the "execution" phase, wherein it sought to influence Egyptian politics and broader Islamic governance (Mitchell 1993, pp. 14–15). This congress brought to the fore issues such as spreading the cause within society, establishing an Islamic government, and working for the benefit of both Egyptian domestic politics and the Islamic ummah (Helbawy 2010, p. 67).

The year 1936 marked the beginning of a new era for the MB, influenced by the widespread struggle in Palestine and the accession of King Farouk to the Egyptian throne. The MB's open support for the Palestinian struggle manifested through public protests and scouting activities, and the movement's embrace of the Palestinian cause as a domestic issue increased its popularity among the Egyptian public. During this period, close relations were established between Hassan al-Banna and Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, further solidifying the MB's commitment to the Palestinian cause. Additionally, the MB's connection with the Egyptian palace was strengthened by Ali Maher Pasha, an advisor to King Farouk, who sought to form an alliance with the MB to counterbalance the opposition Wafd party. In turn, the MB leveraged this relationship to continue its activities with minimal interference. Ahmad al-Sukkari, a prominent figure within the MB since its inception, played a key role in maintaining the liaison between the movement and the palace (Mercan 2019, pp. 74–79).

However, the MB's close ties with the palace eventually led to internal dissent. A faction within the movement, characterized by its revolutionary rhetoric, criticized the MB's passive stance on the Palestinian issue and advocated for an active armed struggle. This group also opposed al-Banna's political manoeuvring, arguing for a more concrete and vocal anti-imperialist struggle in Egypt. When their demands were not met, they broke away from the MB to form the "Society of the Youth of Prophet Muhammad", leading to the largest schism in the movement's history (Mercan 2019, pp. 79–80). In response to internal pressures, al-Banna reluctantly approved the formation of the MB's armed wing, the "Special Unit" (An-Nizām al-Has), also known as the "Secret Organization" (Al-Jihaz al-Sirrī) outside the movement (Lia 2000, p. 224). This unit, primarily composed of scouts and battalion members, was officially established in 1940 following consultations among a five-member team called by al-Banna (Abdulhalim 2019, p. 72). The unit also operated as an intelligence network and, while it remained largely inactive during the war years, it occasionally carried out attacks within Egypt, particularly against British targets. Although al-Banna appeared to accept the establishment of this military wing due to structural and organizational conditions, he sought to limit its activities as much as possible. Nevertheless, the growing demands of the radical wing within the MB led to the strengthening of the military unit, resulting in significant sanctions and pressures against the movement in the latter half of the 1940s.

As the MB moved into the "execution" phase, its identity as a political movement became increasingly prominent, alongside its armed struggle dimension (Ganim 2012, p. 327). The political positions articulated at the fifth congress became more concrete

during the sixth congress in January 1941. At this congress, the MB advocated for the nationalization of the Suez Canal and issued openly anti-British resolutions (Lia 2000, p. 226), while maintaining a moderate and conciliatory tone in statements regarding King Farouk (Mercan 2019, pp. 79–80). The congress also marked a significant decision for the MB to take an active role in institutional politics, declaring its intention to participate in elections. Initially, the MB had distanced itself from parliamentary politics, but by the early 1940s, it sought to expand its activities beyond social movements, viewing the existing political corruption in Egypt as a barrier to representing a significant portion of the population. While a minority within the MB viewed electoral participation as a compromise of its core principles, the majority supported the decision, and it was generally welcomed by the Egyptian public, who were disillusioned with the existing order. However, the British, alarmed by al-Banna's candidacy in the 1942 elections, threatened the MB through Mustafa Nahhas Pasha, the prime minister of the Wafd government, warning that the movement would be banned and its leaders exiled if they persisted. Consequently, al-Banna and his colleagues, after consulting with the Shura Council, withdrew their candidacies, in exchange for Nahhas Pasha's assurance that the MB would continue to operate freely. The MB again fielded candidates in the 1945 elections, facing no direct British threat this time, but failed to achieve success due to widespread electoral rigging (Helbawy 2010, p. 68). As a result, the MB's full entry into the political arena was delayed until the 1970s (Yetim et al. 2020, p. 44).

After the 1945 general elections, the MB's relationship with the government, particularly under Prime Minister Ahmed Mahir Pasha, became increasingly strained. The movement faced raids on its headquarters, the confiscation of its properties, and escalating repression, especially following Mahir Pasha's assassination. Al-Banna sought to alleviate the pressure on the MB by paying a condolence visit to the new prime minister, Mahmoud Fahmi al-Nukrashi Pasha, demonstrating that the movement did not pose a threat to the political elite. During this period, the MB was officially recognized as a social, political, and religious movement by the Ministry of Social Affairs, following its application under the "Law on the Establishment of Charitable Societies" enacted in 1945 (Mercan 2019, pp. 95–96).

However, the MB's brief respite ended with the return of Nukrashi Pasha as prime minister, ushering in one of the most challenging periods in the movement's history (Canbegi 2013, p. 112). Internal disputes further exacerbated the situation, with the expulsion of key figures such as Ibrahim Hassan and Ahmad al-Sukkari in 1947 (Güney 2017, pp. 137–38), a year marked by crisis and division within the MB. To navigate this leadership crisis, al-Banna appointed Saleh al-Ashmawi, head of the Special Unit/Secret Organization, as his deputy, thereby strengthening the armed wing's representation and capabilities (Mitchell 1993, pp. 52–55).

The Special Unit's involvement in armed and bombing attacks within Egypt led to a severe crackdown by the Nukrashi Pasha government. On 8 December 1948, Military Order No. 63 officially banned the MB, freezing its assets and arresting many of its members. The assassination of Nukrashi Pasha shortly thereafter intensified the pressure on the movement. Despite al-Banna's condemnation of the attacks and his assertion that the perpetrators were "neither brothers nor Muslim", the MB was held responsible, leading to al-Banna's assassination on 12 February 1949 (Helbawy 2010, pp. 72–73). The movement, now fragmented and weakened, struggled to regroup and faced significant challenges until the election of Hasan al-Hudaybi as General Murshid in October 1951, marking the beginning of a new phase with a more moderate and institutionalized approach (Erkilet 2000, p. 240).

3.2. *The Muslim Brotherhood Under Nasser: Repression, Adaptation, and Internal Struggles*

The assassination of Hassan al-Banna marked a pivotal crisis for the organization (Mercan 2019, p. 106). The Brotherhood managed to partially relieve the pressure it faced through an alliance with the Wafd Party in 1950 (Helbawy 2010, p. 75). During this

period, the movement survived by adopting the tactics of retreat and secrecy, leveraging its established social networks and political connections to withstand state repression. With the lifting of martial law in May 1951 and the Wafd Party's unilateral annulment of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in October 1951, the Brotherhood officially resumed its activities. A new leader, Hassan al-Hudaybi, was elected as General Guide on 19 October 1951, despite expectations that Salih al-Ashmawi would assume the role. Al-Hudaybi, a respected Egyptian judge with ties to the palace, was chosen to resolve the leadership crisis following al-Banna's death and to steer the Brotherhood away from actions that could further endanger the movement (Zollner 2009, p. 20).

Contrary to expectations that he would be a symbolic figurehead, al-Hudaybi actively led the organization, making critical decisions, including the disbandment of the Special Unit, the Brotherhood's militant wing. This move, however, sparked opposition within the leadership, particularly from members aligned with the military structure (Mercan 2019, pp. 109–11). The participation of Brotherhood members in the conflict against British forces in the Suez Canal region, prompted by al-Ashmawi (Helbawy 2010, p. 75), and al-Hudaybi's alliance with King Farouk against the Wafd Party, deepened the internal divisions (Mercan 2019, pp. 112–13). Following the Free Officers' coup in July 1952, these leadership tensions reached their peak. The coup, led by officers including General Muhammad Naguib, brought new expectations and debates within the Brotherhood, particularly regarding its future role in Egypt's changing political landscape.

In the wake of the coup, an opposition faction within the Brotherhood, led by Salih al-Ashmawi, grew stronger. This faction sought to transform the Brotherhood into a political party, leveraging the new political environment. However, al-Hudaybi resisted this push, arguing that the Brotherhood should remain a social and religious movement. Despite significant internal opposition, al-Hudaybi eventually resigned but returned to his position as General Guide after receiving strong support from the Brotherhood's base. This internal support bolstered his standing both within the organization and in his interactions with the Revolutionary Council (Mercan 2019, pp. 120–22).

Al-Hudaybi's close relationship with General Naguib initially increased the Brotherhood's legitimacy in Egyptian society. However, this also attracted the ire of Gamal Abdunnasser, who viewed Naguib as a rival and sought to undermine him by strengthening ties with the Brotherhood's Special Unit. This culminated in a coup attempt within the Brotherhood, where a faction backed by Nasser occupied the organization's Cairo branches and demanded al-Hudaybi's resignation. The coup ultimately failed, and al-Hudaybi responded by expelling the key dissidents, thereby consolidating his leadership (Helbawy 2010, pp. 76–77).

Despite these efforts, al-Hudaybi's attempts to dissolve the Brotherhood's military wing did not secure the movement's future. As Nasser consolidated power, he turned to increasingly repressive measures against the Brotherhood, particularly after realizing that al-Hudaybi's stance made the movement unusable for his political objectives (Mercan 2019, pp. 126–27). In January 1954, the Brotherhood was officially dissolved following violent clashes between its members and pro-Nasser youth. A wave of arrests followed in October 1954, targeting members of the Special Unit accused of attempting to assassinate Nasser (Wickham 2013, p. 27). The Brotherhood, which had initially welcomed the Free Officers' coup, found itself decimated just 29 months later, with six members executed and thousands imprisoned (Mitchell 1993, p. 96).

From 1954 to 1970, the Brotherhood became a primary target of Nasser's regime (Wickham 2013, p. 27). However, following the Suez Crisis of 1956, which elevated Nasser as a national hero, the Brotherhood experienced a brief respite. Nasser, no longer perceiving the Brotherhood as a significant threat, allowed the release of many imprisoned members in 1957 and 1958. These members began reorganizing, with some aligning around figures such as Abd al-Fattah Ismail and Ali al-Ashmawi. Although under house arrest, al-Hudaybi tacitly supported the underground reorganization of the movement, recognizing

its potential to regroup and resume activities despite the regime's repression (Zollner 2009, pp. 39–40).

The intense persecution of the 1950s and early 1960s, however, led to ideological radicalization within the Brotherhood. Influenced by Sayyid Qutb, who advocated for a more confrontational approach against the regime, a faction within the Brotherhood began to emerge (Mercan 2019, p. 132). Qutb's ideas, particularly his concepts of jahiliyyah (ignorance) and hakimiyyah (God's sovereignty), became the foundation of this radical wing, which formed a secret organization reminiscent of the disbanded Special Unit. This group, known as the "1965 Organization", was accused of plotting to overthrow the state. The repression that followed marked the third major wave of persecution against the Brotherhood, further weakening the organization (Pargeter 2021, p. 30).

The execution of Sayyid Qutb in 1966 and the re-imprisonment of many Brotherhood members deepened the internal divisions within the movement. The moderate faction, adhering to the traditional Brotherhood line, continued to advocate for gradual social transformation, while the radical wing, influenced by Qutb's ideology, increasingly called for armed struggle against the Nasser regime (Mercan 2019, p. 135). This radical faction criticized al-Hudaybi's leadership as indecisive and weak, accusing him of collaborating with an unjust state (Zollner 2007, p. 420). In response to these growing internal tensions, al-Hudaybi, with input from other senior Brotherhood leaders and scholars, authored the book *Du'ât Lâ Qudât (Preachers, Not Judges)*. This work, although published officially in 1977, was circulated among imprisoned Brotherhood members in 1969 and offered a reinterpretation of key concepts such as jahiliyyah and hakimiyyah. Al-Hudaybi's book aimed to counter Qutb's radical ideas and reaffirm the Brotherhood's commitment to a more flexible and moderate interpretation of Islamic principles, emphasizing gradual social change rather than violent confrontation (Wickham 2013, p. 29).

The departure of leading figures from the Brotherhood's radical wing, such as Shukri Mustafa, who founded al-Takfir wa al-Hijra, signalled a return to the traditional, more moderate ideology within the movement (Mercan 2019, pp. 139–40). Despite not being as charismatic as al-Banna, al-Hudaybi successfully maintained the Brotherhood's unity and functionality during a period of intense repression and internal discord (Munson 2001, p. 489). The movement began to recover following Nasser's loss of power after the June 1967 war and faced a radically different political landscape with Nasser's death in October 1970 and the rise of Anwar Sadat to the Egyptian presidency. Under Sadat, the Brotherhood experienced a new era of relative openness, allowing it to re-establish itself and continue its role in Egyptian society, albeit under strict government oversight. The internal debates and ideological shifts that occurred during Nasser's rule, however, would continue to shape the Brotherhood's strategies and identity in the years to come.

3.3. Sadat's Political Strategy and the Muslim Brotherhood

Anwar Sadat sought to distinguish his governance from that of Gamal Abdel Nasser by marginalizing the Nasserist socialist opposition and positioning religion as the cornerstone of his legitimacy. To achieve this, he used the MB as a counterbalance to the social opposition against his authority. In line with his vision of fostering closer ties with the West and promoting a liberal economy, Sadat removed Nasserist socialists from power and increasingly incorporated religious motifs and symbols into his public image. He presented himself as the "Believer President", frequently appearing in religious programmes and mosques. In the 1971 Constitution, he added the phrase "the principles of Islamic Sharia are the main source of legislation", thereby facilitating a rapprochement with the MB (Mercan 2019, p. 141).

As part of this strategy, Sadat gradually released MB members between 1971 and 1975, allowing the movement greater freedom, particularly in universities (Wickham 2013, p. 30). The disillusionment with Arab nationalism following its failure to meet expectations, and the humiliation of the defeat against Israel, shaped political consciousness in universities around Islamist activism. Various Islamic groups coalesced under the banner of Al-Jama'at

al-Islamiyya. The MB's traditional leadership, the hawkish figures of the Special Unit released from prison, and Al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya worked together, enabling the MB to strengthen its presence in universities. However, debates arose among university youth regarding the gradualist and reformist approach of the traditional MB leadership versus the more revolutionary tactics of the Special Unit and its successors, including the 1965 Organization. This ideological split led to the formation of the MB's youth organization by some members, while the more militant factions continued under the name Al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya (Pargeter 2021, pp. 31–36).

Until his death in 1973, al-Hudaybi aimed to influence politics through the MB's social institutions, encouraging members to participate actively in student unions, professional organizations, and civil society. His strategy of expanding the MB's influence in Egyptian society was continued by his successor, Omar al-Tilmisani. With Sadat's policy of economic liberalization in 1974 and a degree of political openness, the MB revived its long-held desire to participate in parliamentary elections (Mercan 2019, pp. 142–45). In the 1976 elections, six independent candidates affiliated with the MB won parliamentary seats, marking a significant step in the movement's strategy to use politics as a means. However, this political engagement was short-lived. In 1977, al-Tilmisani sought to formalize the MB as a political party to expand its influence, taking advantage of the new Political Parties Law. Sadat, unwilling to contend with the opposition of a legal party, proposed that the MB operate as an official association under the Ministry of Social Affairs. Al-Tilmisani rejected this offer, fearing it would compromise the movement's independence. As a result, the MB remained an intra-system movement, active in publishing and lobbying within the parliamentary system, but refrained from becoming an official political entity (Wickham 2013, p. 31).

By the late 1970s, the tactical alliance between Sadat and the MB began to deteriorate. Sadat's economic policies, which exacerbated social and economic inequalities; his pivot away from religious identity in favour of presenting himself as a modern leader with strong ties to the West; and his signing of the peace treaty with Israel following his visit to Jerusalem provoked intense criticism from the MB (Mercan 2019, p. 146). In response, Sadat adopted a harsh stance, emphasizing a strict separation between religion and politics and declaring that he would not tolerate the use of religion for political purposes. This led to the fourth wave of repression against the MB in 1981, with the arrest of many members, including al-Tilmisani and senior officials, and the banning of numerous publications (Wickham 2013, p. 31). This period of repression culminated with Sadat's assassination in 1981 by Khaled al-Islambuli, a member of the al-Jihad organization, during the anniversary celebrations of the October War.

3.4. Hosni Mubarak, the Arab Spring, and the Muslim Brotherhood

Hosni Mubarak, who took the presidency after Sadat, initially adopted a relatively moderate approach (Canbegi 2013, p. 140). He sought to combat radical elements within Islamic movements while easing pressure on moderate groups such as the MB. By releasing many MB members imprisoned during Sadat's rule, Mubarak maintained a tolerant stance towards the group until he consolidated his power and built his social base. During this period, the MB revised its political agenda and began taking steps towards participating in election politics (Pargeter 2021, p. 38). Following the 1983 Electoral Law, General Guide Omar al-Tilmisani revived the idea of forming a political party that would complement, rather than overshadow, the MB's social activities. This initiative was largely driven by the middle generation, who had joined the MB in the 1970s through the student movement (Mercan 2019, p. 149).

On the other hand, the success of the moderation policy pursued by al-Tilmisani was closely related to the departure of senior figures in the leadership close to the Special Unit (Pargeter 2021, pp. 38–40). The debate on the revolutionary vs. gradual methods, which continued in the leadership cadre after al-Banna, ended in favour of the gradualists in line with the traditional MB ideology. The ideological tension that re-emerged with the

return of the expatriated leadership to Egypt, this time manifested itself as two wings of gradualism. In other words, while the revolutionary perspective, which embraced armed and extra-systemic struggle, was largely extinguished, the figures close to Qutb's line began to represent "the conservatives" within the gradualist line, accepting the intra-systemic struggle with clear boundaries. Opposing this line was the reformist line, which included demands for democratization, direct integration into the political system and moderation, especially represented by the middle generation. As a result, the revolutionary–gradual debate in the leadership of the MB, which started in al-Banna's last years, has evolved into the conservative–reformist debate that continues to this day.

During Mubarak's era, the MB became increasingly visible in the political arena through trade unions, professional organizations, and parliamentary elections. Prominent figures from the 1970s university generation, such as Abdulmunim Abu al-Futuh, Abu al-'Ala Madi, and Isam al-Aryan, formed alliances with other Islamic organizations, enabling the MB to dominate trade unions and professional organizations. These unions, which were especially active during events such as the 1977 Bread Riots and the Camp David Accords, played a crucial role in expanding the MB's popular base without directly confronting the regime. Consequently, the MB gained control of key unions, including the Doctors' Union in 1984, the Engineers' Union in 1986, and the Pharmacists' Union in 1988 (Soage and Franganillo 2010, pp. 43–45). However, al-Tilmisani's proposal to form a political party was rejected by the MB's leadership due to concerns over potential repression. Instead, the MB opted to participate in elections through alliances, demonstrating its potential as Egypt's largest opposition movement. In 1984, the MB secured eight parliamentary seats through an alliance with the Wafd Party, and in 1987, under the "Islamic Alliance" with the Socialist Labor Party and the Liberal Party, the MB became the main opposition bloc with thirty-six seats (Pargeter 2021, p. 39).

Mubarak, perceiving the MB's growing influence as a threat, responded by manipulating the political environment. The 1987 parliamentary elections were annulled by the Constitutional Court, and a new electoral law was introduced. In protest, the MB and the Wafd Party boycotted the 1990 elections (Mercan 2019, p. 154). Some Islamic groups, frustrated by the regime's repression, turned to armed struggle, prompting Mubarak to adopt harsher policies in the 1990s. Although the MB emphasized its anti-violence stance, Mubarak, increasingly wary of the MB's influence, launched a wave of arrests targeting the movement in 1994–1995, weakening its social and political presence.

Despite this repression, the MB pursued a non-violent, moderate strategy, participating in the contested 1995 elections, though it won only one seat due to Mubarak's coercive tactics. This outcome intensified internal debates between the conservative and reformist wings regarding the formation of a formal political party. The younger reformists, led by Abu al-'Ala Madi, argued for formal integration into the political system, while the older conservatives believed it was premature. This dispute led to the formation of the Wasat Party by the reformists in 1996 and marked a significant division within the MB. The conservative wing, represented by Mustafa Mashhour (1996–2002) and Me'moun al-Hudaybi (2002–2004), dominated the MB's leadership following the death of Muhammad Hamid Abu al-Nasr in 1996. Although the MB participated in the relatively transparent 2000 elections and won 17 seats, it spent much of this period recovering from the sanctions of the late 1990s. Under the leadership of Mohammad Mahdi Akif, who took over in 2004, the MB began to reassert itself on the political scene, particularly during the 2005 elections, when it won 88 seats (Mercan 2019, pp. 157–60).

This electoral success highlighted the MB's potential in fair elections but also reignited internal debates between the conservatives and reformists. Akif, who sought to balance the two wings, published a draft party charter in 2007 that included references to Islamic Sharia alongside democratic principles. Mubarak, uncomfortable with the MB's rise, responded with renewed repression, which strengthened the conservative wing's position (Wickham 2013, pp. 129–30). The internal elections of the MB and the 2010 parliamentary elections, marked by government manipulation, further deepened the division within the

movement. The MB's failure to win any seats in the first round of the 2010 elections led to its withdrawal from the second round (Wickham 2013, pp. 148–50), contributing to widespread disillusionment and setting the stage for the anti-Mubarak opposition that culminated in the 2011 uprising.

The 2011 uprising, part of the broader Arab Spring, eventually led to Mubarak's ousting and brought the MB into a position of power for the first time in its history. Initially cautious, the MB later threw its organizational support behind the protests, established the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), and emerged as the dominant force in the post-Mubarak elections. Although the MB initially decided against participating in the presidential elections, it ultimately nominated Mohamed Morsi, who became Egypt's first civilian president. However, the MB struggled to distinguish between its role as a movement and as a political party, leading to tensions with other revolutionary groups. These challenges, combined with Morsi's inability to manage relations with other political actors, culminated in a military coup led by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on 3 July 2013, which ousted the MB from power (Merican 2019, pp. 162–73). The movement, once again facing severe repression, largely chose a strategy of peaceful resistance rather than armed struggle, consistent with its traditional ideology. Today, the MB continues to focus on survival through clandestine activities and exile, navigating one of the most challenging periods in its history.

4. Assessing the Evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood

While branches of the MB in other countries have also undergone similar transformative processes (Bozkurt and Ünalımsı 2022), the central MB stands as a significant example of a social movement that has undergone various transformations throughout its nearly century-long history. Initially recognized as one of Egypt's most successful social movements during the British colonial period, the MB rapidly expanded its activities, establishing an armed wing and engaging in institutional politics shortly after its inception. Hassan al-Banna, the movement's founder, prioritized the Islamization of Egyptian society and believed that social struggle could not be separated from political engagement. His approach to politics, however, was not aimed at a wholesale overthrow of the existing political order. Instead, al-Banna favoured an intra-systemic struggle, utilizing all possible means to penetrate and influence the political arena from within.

Al-Banna's perspective shaped the MB's traditional ideology, yet significant internal disagreements among its leadership led him to reluctantly endorse armed struggle—a strategy he often sought to avoid. This endorsement was driven by several external pressures, including the unrest caused by British colonial forces, the Egyptian royal regime's disregard for popular demands, and the ongoing struggle against British and Zionist forces in Palestine. Applying Peter Waldmann's (2005, pp. 241–43) theoretical framework, it becomes evident that the MB's shift towards armed struggle was a response to state aggression and the absence of institutions capable of defending oppressed groups, such as the Egyptian and Palestinian peoples. Moreover, the formation of the MB's armed wing can be further understood through Hazen's (2009) concept of "intra-group rivalry" and Alimi's (2011, p. 96) idea of "intra-movement power struggles". When a faction within the MB, dissatisfied with the perceived passivity of the movement's methods, broke away to form the "Society of the Youth of Prophet Muhammad", al-Banna, concerned about losing the youth who were vital to the organization, conceded to the demand for armed struggle. This internal conflict, which continued to influence the movement for decades, allowed the armed wing to maintain its existence as a parallel entity, even though its power fluctuated over time.

The persistence of the MB's armed wing from the 1940s until the late 1970s can also be explained by structural factors, in line with the theoretical assumptions. Hazen's (2009, pp. 283–85) "structure of political opportunities" framework is particularly relevant, as it highlights how the Egyptian government's reluctance to address popular demands, combined with its rejection of the MB's repeated attempts to participate in institutional politics, fostered long-term radicalization within the movement. Furthermore, the harsh

repression during Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime, which included widespread arrests and torture of MB members, intensified the belief within a faction of the movement that armed struggle against the state was not only justified but necessary. This belief was further reinforced by ideological shifts and new framings that emerged in response to what was perceived as "ignorant rule"—a concept rooted in the idea that the existing political order was inherently corrupt and opposed to Islamic principles.

The impact of external factors on the MB's armed struggle cannot be overlooked. The Second World War, for example, created an environment in which arms were more readily available, and Germany's attempts to support anti-British groups through figures such as Haj Amin al-Husseini provided additional resources for the MB's militant activities. This aligns with Hazen's (2009, p. 285) "resource mobilization" explanation, which posits that the availability of resources, such as weapons and external support, is crucial for sustaining an armed struggle over the long term. Alimi's (2011, p. 100) concept of an "unfavorable opportunity/threat ratio" further explains the longevity of the MB's armed wing, as the movement's deteriorating relationship with the political system led to increased support for radical approaches within its ranks.

Despite the theoretical emphasis on the role of "charismatic leaders" in the transformation of movements into armed groups (Hazen 2009, p. 296), the case of the MB suggests that this factor alone is insufficient to explain the movement's trajectory. Hassan al-Banna, despite being a charismatic leader, was unable to prevent the demand for armed struggle from gaining traction within the movement. In contrast, the efforts of al-Hudaybi and al-Tilmisani—leaders who were not particularly charismatic but were strategically adept—played a more significant role in steering the MB away from violence. Their insistence on dismantling the armed wing, coupled with the support of the Guidance Bureau, gradually redirected violent tendencies away from the MB and allowed the movement's traditional ideology to reassert itself.

For the MB, armed struggle has been an incidental aspect of its broader identity as a social movement. The movement's primary focus has remained on political engagement, which has been intertwined with its social activities since its early years. However, the MB's efforts to transition into election politics faced numerous obstacles due to the Egyptian political regime's repressive policies. The MB's attempts to participate in elections began as early as 1941 under Hassan al-Banna but were met with consistent opposition, resulting in the movement being unable to secure parliamentary representation until 1976. Even then, the MB's participation was limited to fielding independent candidates, as it was not permitted to establish a formal political party until the aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution in 2011.

Herbert Kitschelt's (2006) theoretical framework on the "social movement party" provides valuable insights into the MB's ongoing aspirations to engage in institutional politics. He suggested that social movements may seek to form political parties when they perceive ideological conflicts with existing parties, believe in their potential to garner widespread support, and represent underrepresented groups (Kitschelt 2006, pp. 281–82). Although the MB faced persistent barriers to political participation, these factors contributed to its sustained interest in becoming a political party. However, Barbara Zollner's (2021) assumption that "political influence" is the main determinant of a social movement's transformation into a political party offers a more nuanced explanation. She argued that movements are likely to pursue party formation only when they believe they can exert significant influence within the political system (Zollner 2021, pp. 380–82). This perspective helps explain why al-Hudaybi, recognizing the limited opportunities for political success during his tenure, chose to focus on civil society activities rather than push for party formation. This strategy, rooted in the intellectual legacy of the al-Hudaybi era, remained relevant throughout the Sadat and Mubarak periods, when the political environment was relatively more open but still constrained.

The MB's eventual decision to establish the Freedom and Justice Party after the 2011 revolution illustrates the complexities of the movement's approach to political participation.

Initially hesitant to field a presidential candidate, the MB was ultimately swayed by the momentum generated by its success in the parliamentary elections, leading it to believe that electing a president from its own ranks would enhance its influence over political decisions. However, Zollner's (2021) argument that the boundaries between social movements and political parties should be clearly delineated adds another layer of analysis. She contended that the MB's failure to distinguish between its role as a society-based movement and a political party led to miscalculations in its assessment of "political influence" following the revolution (Zollner 2021, pp. 385–86).

As a result, the MB has demonstrated a remarkable capacity for adaptation and transformation over the course of its history. Despite the challenges it has faced, including severe repression and internal divisions, the MB has managed to maintain its identity as a hybrid organization that balances social and political activism. The movement's ability to dismantle its armed wing, despite the allure of radicalism, underscores the importance of strategic leadership. Even in the face of the 3 July 2013 coup, the MB has avoided resorting to violence, opting instead to pursue a strategy that keeps both its social and political wings engaged. The survival of the MB, despite decades of repression, can be attributed to its robust social movement infrastructure, which remains integral to its organizational strength and resilience.

On the other hand, although the MB's evolution might seem like a linear transition from a social movement to a political entity, its history reveals a far more complex reality. The MB has continuously navigated between its social and political identities as part of a broader strategy for survival and legitimacy. Depending on the external pressures and internal debates, the organization strategically emphasized one identity over the other. For instance, during times of severe repression, such as under the Nasser regime, the MB retreated from formal political engagement, focusing instead on its social and religious activities to preserve its base. Conversely, in more favourable political environments, such as after the 2011 revolution, the MB actively pursued political involvement. The MB's decision to resort to armed struggle also reflects this adaptive strategy. Initially resisted by figures such as Hassan al-Banna, the establishment of the MB's armed wing was a response to both internal pressures from more radical factions and external threats, such as state aggression and the ongoing Palestinian crisis. Armed resistance was never a permanent feature of the movement but was employed strategically during periods of heightened external threat or internal division. These shifts indicate that the MB's evolution was neither linear nor straightforward. Instead, it was marked by strategic adjustments, moments of withdrawal, and "points of rupture" where the MB oscillated across social activism, political participation, and armed struggle. This flexibility allowed the MB to survive harsh repression and remain relevant in Egypt's changing political landscape.

5. Conclusions: Lessons from the Muslim Brotherhood's Experience

The historical trajectory of the MB illustrates a movement that aspired to evolve from a social entity into a political force. However, it often found itself lacking the political opportunities to fully realize this transition. Despite these limitations, the MB consistently chose to operate within the political order, striving to minimize direct confrontation with the establishment while maintaining its commitment to peaceful methods and distancing itself from violence.

This approach has been crucial in helping the MB sustain its social base, even amidst severe repression. The movement's ability to repeatedly recover from setbacks is rooted in its cautious strategy of survival. However, this very caution, which allowed the MB to navigate a repressive political landscape, also hindered it from taking more decisive and courageous actions. Over time, this "moderate opposition" stance, which initially served as a protective shield, gradually morphed into a status quo position that often fell short when bold leadership was required. The trust deficit between the MB and revolutionary groups after Mubarak's ousting is a testament to this status quo mindset.

Key figures within the MB have acknowledged these limitations. Mohammad al-Fiqi, former Chairman of the Egyptian Parliament's Financial and Economic Committee, offered a critical reflection.

"We can say that there is a little bit of disregard for revolutionary groups. This also applies to the revolutionary youth who came out of the MB. If we were wiser now, maybe we wouldn't have taken the decision not to include the MB in the Council of Revolutionary Youth. If we were wiser now, maybe we could do more for the revolutionary youth. All these are issues we are working on now". (interview with Mohammad al-Fiqi, 2023)¹

On the other hand, Salah Abdel Maksoud, the Morsi-era Minister of Information, has a differing approach in the details of this commentary.

"I don't think the Muslim Brotherhood seized the political opportunity in Egypt correctly. In retrospect, the group made a mistake by deciding to participate in the presidential elections in an unfavourable domestic, regional, and international climate. It was forced to enter the electoral race because it could not agree with its allies on finding a compromise candidate to compete with the candidate of the deep state that wanted to repeat Mubarak's rule". (interview with Salah Abdel Maksoud, 2023)²

The MB's pattern of prioritizing the maintenance of its base over more expansive political engagement, combined with its rigid and closed hierarchical structure, has led to a perception of the movement as one that often neglects other groups to protect its own interests. This strategy has allowed the MB to survive numerous crises, yet it has also limited the movement's potential alliances within Egypt. Internally, this rigid structure has fostered an environment where lower-ranking members struggle to make their voices heard, creating a closed system in which only a small circle decides on the political strategy. While this has helped the MB avoid association with armed struggle, it has also led to an inert organizational framework.

Given the current climate of repression under Sisi, with many leaders and members forced into exile, it is clear that the MB is not on the brink of extinction. Drawing on its historical experiences, the movement is most likely to endure and navigate through this challenging period. However, this time, survival alone will not suffice. The repetition of past challenges, previously encountered during its opposition years, after the experience of governance has sparked significant internal questioning, particularly among the younger generation. The traditional strategy of "waiting and watching" seems to be increasingly inadequate. This is due not only to external pressures from the political regime but also to internal organizational dynamics that are seen as contributing to the current crisis. The rigid hierarchical order, which even the offspring of the leadership cadre question, is leading to notable ruptures within the younger generation and has contributed to the emergence of dual leadership structures in London and Istanbul.

Jamal Hashmat, a prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership and a former parliamentarian, offered a more defensive response when addressing scenarios suggesting internal divisions within the movement.

"This was the perception of the side that has now ceased to exist, having led to its exit from the group despite all the legal interpretations and media declarations claiming it was the sole representative of the Brotherhood and that it had support both inside and outside. This is a falsehood against the truth. There is only one person responsible for operations and an expanded Shura Council abroad, as those inside Egypt are under siege, living in fear of state terrorism, and unable to produce anything within Egypt in its current state. This was the realistic reading of the Muslim Brotherhood's activities under the supervision of one authority to whom the Brotherhood owes loyalty". (interview with Jamal Hashmat, 2023)³

In contrast to the perspectives offered by the three aforementioned leaders, Mohammed Muntasir, the former official spokesperson of the Muslim Brotherhood, provided a more critical and severe assessment of the factors that contributed to the internal division within the movement.

“The leadership of the group, after coming to power, was closing its ears, while members of the group and some of its leaders were trying to advise and warn of the mistakes the group was making, mistakes that were clear to many of the rank and file and some of the leadership. The leadership’s responses were always reassuring messages from the group, which led to shock after the coup, given the poor performance of the leadership managing the organization. There was a lack of transparency from the Brotherhood leadership who were not imprisoned, regarding what had happened, what the group had miscalculated, or how the coup against the president had happened in such a way, under the claim that it was not appropriate to speak about it at that time. For the first time, many of the group’s members lost trust in the leadership after their poor performance during the rule of President Morsi, may God have mercy on him. Even attempts at reform, change, and reuniting the group to restore its strength after the coup and to stand against the regime were met with surprise by the rank and file when they saw some of the group’s leaders standing in the way of this effort, working to remove the leaders who had adopted a revolutionary approach. All of this made the divisions easier this time, with more than one faction emerging within the group, each claiming to be the legitimate Guidance Office or something similar”. (interview with Mohammed Muntasir, 2023)⁴

On the other hand, discussions around the necessity of organizational transformation are taking place internally, as highlighted by Mohammad al-Fiqi’s statement.

“There are rumours that there will be a network-type structure in the coming period. There may be a change in the organizational structure in order to provide the expansion that the organizational structure cannot provide, but not as an alternative form of structuring, but as a complementary form of structuring. It will also have a great impact on political activity. We had a good experience in the past, where a party was formed and it was slowly becoming independent. But this experience failed in the end. Of course, lack of experience was the main reason for this failure. If we had taken the necessary precautions, maybe we wouldn’t have done this”. (interview with Mohammad al-Fiqi, 2023)

The historical experience of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) offers critical insights for understanding its evolving strategy amid its current challenges. Future research should investigate whether the MB might adopt a more moderate approach as it navigates these difficulties. Questions arise about how the movement could renegotiate its role within the Egyptian political order and whether it might shift its focus back to social endeavours, particularly through trade unions and professional organizations, reminiscent of its previous strategies. Notably, the perspectives shared by various MB leaders reveal significant differences in their assessments of the situation, indicating a lack of consensus on the best path forward. It is essential to explore whether the MB’s efforts to transition from a social movement to a political entity can be viewed as unsuccessful, or if alternative frameworks could provide a different interpretation of this transformation. While internal organizational dynamics undoubtedly play a role in shaping these outcomes, the significance of structural factors must not be overlooked. The MB’s ability to maintain a moderate stance without succumbing to radicalization highlights a noteworthy aspect of its resilience. However, for the movement to effectively navigate its current landscape and potentially redefine its socio-political structure, it must critically engage with its historical experiences. Future studies could pose questions about the lessons the MB can draw from its past and how these insights might inform its restructuring efforts. The diverse viewpoints among the leadership further emphasize the complexity of this undertaking. Ultimately, an in-depth

examination of these themes will provide valuable perspectives on the MB's potential trajectories moving forward.

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Notes

- ¹ In-depth interview with Mohammad al-Fiqi; 25 April 2023; Istanbul.
- ² In-depth interview with Salah Abdel Maksoud; 27 April 2023; Istanbul.
- ³ In-depth interview with Jamal Hashmat; 25 April 2023; Istanbul.
- ⁴ In-depth interview with Mohammed Muntasir; 9 May 2023; Istanbul.

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