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Critical Review: The Impact of Political Prisons on Political Participation (The Case of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood)

Abstract

Many revolutionary figures throughout history proved their corrupted intention whenever they reached authority (e.g., the Iranian revolution, Burma’s Aung Suu Kyi). Some political leaders in Egypt claim they own it all depending on whom they represented in the latest major social uprising, and they define what is moral or who shall be the target for future political manoeuvres of the ruling military regime. With no one taking the lead for democratising the system, and the ex-minister of defence, incumbent President Abdelfattah Al-Sisi allegedly caught up in an internal fight with a corrupt government, the country’s better future seems to be a long and arduous struggle away. This paper addresses the overlapping and misleading

media and political utterances of Egyptian opposition, who either takes a popular stand or loses followers through democratisation itself.

Keywords: political prisoners, revolutionary change, conceptual analysis, political integration

Przegląd krytyczny: wpływ więzień politycznych na uczestnictwo w życiu politycznym (przypadek egipskiego Bractwa Muzułmańskiego)

Abstrakt

Historia dostarcza świadectw skorumpowanych intencji wielu rewolucjonistów, którzy objęli władzę (np. rewolucja irańska, Aung Suu Kyi w Birmie). Niektórzy aktorzy sceny politycznej roszczą sobie pretensje do legitymizacji dowolnych działań z ich strony. Za przykład mogą posłużyć przywódcy niedawnych społecznych ruchów wolnościowych w Egipcie, którzy przypisują sobie prawo decydowania o tym, co jest moralne, i kto zostanie przyszłym celem podejmowanych manewrów politycznych. Tymczasem, panuje reżim wojskowy. Wydaje się, że nikomu nie zależy na staraniach na rzecz demokratyzacji systemu. Jakkolwiek były minister obrony Abdelfattah Al-Sisi twierdzi, że toczy walkę z korupcją w tonie własnego reżimu, kraj czeka jeszcze długa droga, by unormować sytuację. W niniejszym artykule poruszono kwestię wzajemnie sprzecznych i rodzących dezorientację wystąpień medialnych i politycznych egipskiej opozycji, w których wybrzmiewają tendencje populistyczne i które sprawiają, że opozycja przegrywa na zasadach, zgodnych z procesem demokratyzacji, zmuszają ją do zajęcia popularnego stanowiska lub przegrania samego procesu demokratyzacji.

Słowa kluczowe: więźniowie polityczni, zmiana rewolucyjna, analiza pojęciowa, integracja polityczna

Theoretical approach

- This paper relies on the analysis of conceptual media and political speech (Guzzini 1–24) of the Muslim Brotherhood and their affiliated media organisations in Turkey. The conceptual analysis covers (the MB's opposition to the ruling military regime in Egypt) discourse from 2013 to the present to focus on what lies behind the mega media projects, which are mainly supported by the Turkish political regime, and to reflect on the Egyptian reality that the MBs themselves are not handling reasonably. Also, their fallacies have made them a target for public disgrace and are a reason for the lack of support for their appeals. No sides are taken in this paper. The only concession made is that the MB seems to be undergoing an existential and identity crisis, which affects its ongoing political and media performance.
- The conceptual analysis focuses on keywords or approaches targeting Egypt's politics and the ruling regime of Abdelfattah Al-Sisi. This analysis addresses the strengths and weaknesses among significant media and political figures representing the MBs or the opposition in Turkey.
- This paper tries to determine how political prisons have been the main factor in the MBs' struggle for power and how they are affected by or affecting the political change process through victimhood, imprisonment, or proclaimed superiority. In other words, the issue under study is how political prisons have been used in Egypt to stymie Muslim Brothers' and other minor groups' political aspirations. It is to be borne in mind that the members of these political formations have visited a political prison at least once in their lives. My objective in the article is to track potentially imprisonment-related alterations in MB speech, which seems sometimes problematic and sometimes – pragmatic.
- This paper also addresses the political imprisonment experience among MBs before the 2011 elections and how political prisons have not only become home to heroic politicians and fighters for democratic values, but also a mandate for one's truthful intention behind Islamic Jihadism or Political Islam struggle.

Limitations of the study

The MBs and other political groups have relied mainly on secrecy and private top management among the most influential members, whether inside the MB, the Liberalist groups, or others. Other influential civil society organisations have been led in recent years primarily by pro-regime or pro-MBs who rely on top secret management files. Therefore, this paper relies on public initiatives and announced plans of the opposition or the leading military regime, which reflects positive,

meaningful public changes in the country as advertised by the leading politicians. Finally, this paper addresses the MB experience in Turkey, not the entirety of the Middle Eastern countries the MB has ever been influenced by, such as Qatar or the Saudi regime.

Introduction

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) of Egypt seems to struggle with the pressure that has led to its members' division and internal conflict. While some of its low-profile members are going through an ordeal of long-term imprisonment, others, who are in the diaspora, are struggling with one another for control over the Political Islam ideology.

Hence, there does not seem to be any other political group taking the lead in the political change process or trying to pressure the regime to work on a democratic, peaceful transition of authority. Besides, it seems that without the Turkish government's support Muslim Brothers would not go that far with their political interests and call for a revolutionary change in Egypt. Therefore, many of the MB political and media figures claim that overthrowing the military regime in Egypt by the diaspora, by analogy to the Iranian revolutionary model, could happen at any time. However, these plans for change seem stalled until further notice due to the ongoing regional political changes.

Moreover, the opposition media does not seem to be influencing the public to revolt. They are only after making their voices heard. Other than that, there seems to be an overlapping Liberalist-Islamist media speech trying to bring together as much support as possible for the MB cause, which has been freeing their political prisoners. However, such confusion among the public as well as the closest allies to the Muslim Brotherhood operating on the home ground made it easier for many supporters to move forward by forming their own Political Islam mini-support groups.

Then, conflict loomed into view, with yet another wing of the Muslim Brotherhood trying to take it to another level by reconsidering the political negotiations with the military institutions in Egypt or outside allies (e.g. imprisoned members of the MBs).

Additionally, some critically-oriented politicians reject democratisation in favour of establishing another Islamic state in Egypt that would rely mainly on Islamic laws. Such demands has been showing up among some of the Islamist opposition in Turkey. They believe their significant losses in 2013 were mere results of relying on secularists' political alliances and state-building, which included participating in elections and allying with political groups other than Islamists who do not consider Islamic Shariah the only valid set of laws.

Besides, the Liberalist media and political figures do not seem to cooperate on any political opposition alliance or public mobilisation through media. Furthermore, many of the Liberalist or Islamist-Liberalist politicians decided to take steps towards their own independence, disapproving of other forms of opposition and sometimes praising Al-Sisi's regime itself (E.g. Poet-activist Yasser Elomda or Liberalist Hossam El-Ghamry in Turkey).

As far as the Muslim Brotherhood represents the far extreme right in the Egyptian-Arab political spectrum, they have not managed to become a powerful mainstream on a leading or ruling level. Although they did manage to work on a bottom-up social and political change a bit over the last couple of decades, the far extremist religious practices and their so-called religious awakening made them a target for long-lasting imprisonment by the ruling Arab-military regimes.

Occasionally, the public hate speech of the MBs towards Egyptian non-extremist Muslims or non-Muslims brings up accusations of terrorism crimes or disturbing the social peace. They are often sent to prison on these charges and miss out on the many ongoing political, economic and societal developments. As a result, their ability to communicate their political goals and understand social change is compromised. This is especially true given the rising education rate of men and women in many Muslim countries. These challenges usually lead MBs to contest the status quo, which seems exclusivist and missing on a co-existence concept or raises doubts on what extent the MBs may even abide by the changes needed for the country. For example, the oppressive utterances of many MB supporters made them believe they hold control over the public's religious choices and practices under Morsi's presidency.

Since the military coup in Egypt in 2013, the Muslim Brothers have made it clear that they are on a revolutionary quest to change the country socially and politically according to what they believe is the ultimate goal of Islamic ideology. While some internal or external Egyptian activists claim their participation in the same revolutionary movement, the movement seems to be taking its toll on many.

These pressures give the MBs the upper hand in claiming what works for the people and what does not based on their popular Islamic relationship with the impoverished in Egypt, who accounted for most of their constituency in 2012. Additionally, the MBs seem to be gaining more regional acceptance from many Muslims who see the MBs as leaders of the crusade against the West or globalisation.

However, the Liberalist and Socialist activists seem to favour more of a modern state, but led by the military, should the Islamist opposition be unwilling to cooperate with Egyptian opposition groups. Consequently, this leads to uncertainty over who may call for a revolution and who shall assume the leadership in changing the country's politics. However, the pros and cons of

each side of the political spectrum in Egypt have been evident over time. Multiple political figures in the diaspora seem to be leaning toward MBs with a view to popularity, forsaking the ultimate goals of their so-called liberal or socialist ideologies, which contradict the core values of Islam, such as transparency and honesty.

Meanwhile, many MB members have not managed to draw the line between what works for religious practices and what – for building a democratic state. In other words, any Islamic preacher may call for violence any day. Although many have claimed to be the voice of a political revolution, the MBs have ignored the other revolutionary phases toward a better future for the country by allowing for a more open study of the validity of the Political Islam movement or what it may offer. While many revolutionary activists before had considered the MBs to be their political representatives when in power in 2012 since they got the ballot box power, it seems that MB presidency was a disastrous choice. To make matters worse, many MBs lacked public experience as they spent multiple years as political prisoners.

Political imprisonment pre- and post-2011 revolution

Until recently, Egypt's political prisons seemed to be a favoured place for everybody who hated the ruling regime and could not keep their mouth shut (Aboubakr 261–262). Many activists, post the Arab Spring, visited political prisons once or twice for their anti-regime political activities that ranged from investigative journalism to protesting any new laws that control the press or freedom of expression.

President Abdelfattah Al-Sisi is not backing down from building new prison establishments (Chaabane). Also, the acting government is trying to bring up new accusations against many Egyptian activists, whether for disturbing the public order, spreading false news, or calling for the ruling regime to step down (Shaker 1–8). Thus, the ruling regime does not fear sending more politicians to prisons, which would guarantee that the only voice heard is the president's voice.

Meanwhile, members of the MB or denounced figures have been a target, and as they claim, thousands have been imprisoned for political reasons. Some have lost their lives due to the deteriorating imprisonment conditions.

Political prisons in Egypt once seemed to be the norm for many of the MBs, making them public heroes and courageous political leaders in the eyes of the major public, regardless of how many of them lost their focus after late or early release (Aboubakr 262–263) due to the torture policy in Egyptian prisons (DeGregorio 343–361).

In addition, the political imprisonment after the 2011 revolution (Seif Al-Dawla & Atallah 8–11) looks like it has taken another form of MB political propaganda, as they started to use it to advocate against the mere autocracy of the ex-military

general Abdelfattah Al-Sisi. Later, the MBs gained experience through direct access to multiple human rights or journalism groups to advocate for their political prisoners as faithful future leaders of change in Egypt or to bring about more pressure on the so-called oppressive regime in Egypt.

Similarly, MB's top leadership struggled to reach out to the supporters of political prisoners as the toll of imprisonment or enforced disappearances reached another level of fear and backlash in the aftermath of the absolutist management of MB President Morsi. Moreover, the military in Egypt had fears of the MBs turning over the political order.

This resulted in the military coup eliminating the top MB influences and members of the cabinet by sending them to prison under diverse political accusations, which led to the reshuffle of the whole MB ideology and political goals (e.g., MB discourse, which once revolved around their struggle for power in a revolutionary collective act, transitioned to fight against the war on Islam itself represented in ex-president Mohamed Morsi's overthrow).

The old-*neo* imprisonment struggle of the MBs as a form of political domination and revenge by the military has led some of the top MB leaders, like Mohamed Elbeltagy, to call out for a civil war or bloodshed in the Sinai peninsula to protect the newly formed MBs regime (Elbeltagy). This resulted in the civil war formula of 'your military tanks versus our militant Islamist groups in Sinani', which turned the focus of many political allies as well the MBs themselves from major political goals.

The performance of the MBs before the 2011 social uprising among other politicians was never meant to be absolutist or exclusivist since the MBs themselves had been banished for years to Egyptian prisons. However, the so-called first transparent and democratic elections in Egypt made them believe that once they had the ballot box, they could gain control of the political system in the country. Afterwards, many of their vocal figures blamed the military and the inexperienced young activists for the turnover of Morsi's presidency so soon after a year in power.

Although early on after ousting Mubarak MBs denied seeking full power or ever radicalising the society into becoming a more Islamic, similarly to the Iranian or Taliban models, as it would be in the military's favour to call out for another massive wave of public protest, the MBs claimed this strategy of protesting and ousting the president to be their magic act of changing one regime after another in the whole Arab region. Adversely, this led to another wave against the MB themselves, which proved their lack of commitment and failed promise towards their peer politicians, besides the shortcomings of their political vision.

The MB's political leaders and media figures have missed out on what it means to promote a revolution that includes a radical change of the political system or a transformation of the obsolete societal values towards a more progressive and

empowering system. These misled and mixed conceptions about sociopolitical change have led to the top-elite clashes between the Islamist wing (Abdelrahman) and other Liberalist-Socialist figures (Ismael).

Accordingly, many of the politically imprisoned MB supporters have considered giving up on political activism for the sake of an early prison release and getting reunited with their families over the long-lasting promotion of an Islamist state (Rights and Freedoms 2021). Additionally, the current president, Abdelfattah Al-Sisi, seems to be aware of the MB's present struggle inside prisons, advocating for pardon as was the case with Mubarak or Al-Sadat, who let multiple of the MB prisoners out in order to maintain the political stability of the regime. Besides, Al-Sisi has called recently for a possible reconciliation (Al-Sisi) with various opposition figures under one condition that they will not seek power change like with Mubarak's regime whenever he released any of the MB leaders. Nonetheless, this reconciliation seems flawed, and the MB does not have any other choice but to rely on propaganda to eliminate other rivalries.

This call for reconciliation has shaken the pre-established visions for the future of the Egyptian opposition from the far right to the left wings, from those who wish to avenge the lost opportunity to rule the country to others who see no harm in negotiating power with the military (Nada). Reconciliation with the ruling regime seems to be winning over the MBs and their supporters, failing to keep the same level of enthusiastic criticism of the Egyptian president on air and broadcasting from Turkey. Additionally, the Turkish and Sudanese exert regional pressure on the MBs to limit their share of media or political campaigns. MBs could lose a lot in the forthcoming deals.

Correspondingly, multiple MBs have not avenged the multiple phases of unfair imprisonment under Al-Sadat or Mubarak's regimes, and politicians do not see a trustworthy complete reconciliation with the ruling regime as possible. In addition, many families and political activists who have suffered harsh imprisonment conditions and unfair military trials anticipate further social unrest among the different socio-political factions. This means reconciliation is unlikely without breaking down the previously established expectations of Islamic ex-political prisoners like Sayed Kotb, whose writings were exclusivist. Many MBs see their political group as a leader among the opposition since they were backed by the Islamist wing in Turkey and other countries. At the same time, the Liberalist-Socialist activists struggle to gain any public support. Whether Al-Sisi acknowledges the MB's validity to exist or not in the future, the pro-Al-Sisi media have greatly contributed to turning society Islamophobic and advocating against the MB's return to power.

Unfavourably, if the MBs try to reintegrate themselves with the Liberalist-Islamist type of political groups, this will make the political divisions even more complex, adding to the significant disparities among the pro-regime and opposition

Liberalists, which may eventually fail. Liberalist Islamists assume promoting extremism as part of their freedom of speech or press when compared to minor influences of the Liberalist or Socialist speeches.

Political participation and media influence

This paper tries to elaborate on what went wrong, why it persists in the MB's political leadership and how it continues to shape their media and political speeches (Shehata 53–61) through analysing the media content broadcasted outside Egypt and the dichotomies of a blurred Islamic vision.

Victimhood vs. supremacy

The MB calls for the public to change their government have always relied on how victimised or superior they are as a result of a better understanding of Islam. Their target have been the less educated Muslims across the region. MBs presented their prison episodes as a fight for the bread and basic needs of the people. MBs called on the public in 2012 to vote for the most religious political leadership led by an MB candidate. Nevertheless, MBs knew they only got to power thanks to non-MB constituencies who wished to vote for change and assure revolution would be duly followed up during the presidency.

MB public supporters went on to claim supremacy over the public in political leadership and spirituality. Their eternal victimisation (Devasia 219–239) served as the only proof, at which point their political imprisonment turned into a form of revenge at the hands of non-MB supporters. MBs claim superiority and authority to make righteous claims of what is accepted or forbidden in a sacred Muslim society. Nevertheless, once Mohamed Morsi got to power, he acted as the favoured candidate for all the Egyptians, not only the revolutionary figures and their street supporters (Özdemir 76–123). MB's bottom supporters went on to push away all non-Islamist figures from having access to the highest decision-making positions, which later led to their engagement with the military in toppling the MB's president himself, whom they once voted for.

This is obvious in multiple media figures' approach in Turkey, as they claim not to be members of the MB. However, every now and then they show their distress and discontent with the non-Islamist political figures. The present approach of many MB youths is to denounce the MB leadership to gain public support. But they do not let go their claim for power. Furthermore, some of the ex-MBs tried to move forward by showing their support for some Liberal-Islamist figures who tried to form a so-called Liberalist alliance of politicians opposing the Egyptian military regime (Nour, 2021).

On the other hand, this political mess has not helped the Egyptian opposition to move forward or make any difference over the years of the diaspora efforts. The primary public has lost interest in any social uprising since all the people have seen was struggle for power and not a real change in the policymaking process.

Social uprisings vs opposition work

The media have discussed what mobilised the public in Egypt to revolt (Hessler) in the speeches given by the likes of Mohamed Nasser or Zawba. These media ignored that military insiders may have wanted to get rid of Mubarak and his family in 2011. Mubarak wished to transfer power to his son Gamal, relying on a corrupt presidential election. Thus, mobilising the public for another massive social uprising may have not been the effect of the MBs' revolutionary speech, as they never genuinely controlled the public.

Furthermore, the Arab Spring arose from common distress and public dissatisfaction with their politicians everywhere in the world (e.g. Greece and France) and not only in the Arab region (Syed 56–77). However, multiple media figures tried to argue the goal of the 2011 uprising was MB presidency and their majority of votes in the parliament. Also, MBs fail to come to terms with the fact that the massive demonstrations in June 2013 were a public demand to topple the first elected civilian president who laid bare the falsity of MBs claims who were not democratising the system.

Moreover, when the MBs realised they were getting trapped by the military who persuaded the public to forego the idea of democratisation and fighting corruption, they decided to start from scratch, trying to cooperate with other Egyptian factions, like the Liberals or Socialists. However, the MB media figures did not acknowledge other political forms of change, and they wished to get back to historical claims of eliminating all versions of political transformations other than the Islamist one. MBs in exile seemed to lose interest in leading the outraged public, but they were keen on benefiting from any attack on the regime.

In effect, MBs have come to believe Liberalism, Socialism, or Secularism are outside or extended influences of past colonisation, regardless of how valuable those paradigms are in mobilising the public towards change (Nasser, 2017b). Hence, the MBs believe only Islam motivates the public to take up the sacred war of social transformations (Monir). It is worthwhile to assess the content of most TV shows aired from outside Egypt and supported by MB media figures. They present a dire wish to turn over the military regime instead of working on trust-building (Nasser, 2019b) with other factions. What is more, twenty years ago, none of the Islamists or Wahabi figures claimed the lead in representing a better human rights status or fighting for social justice in any Arab country. Currently, many Islamists claim their

interest in fighting for equality as a secondary goal for democratising the system. Even so, the articulation and formation of their media speech ignores equality between men and women, between Muslim and non-Muslim or even the poor and the rich.

As a result, the MB media always try to hide their discontent with other political ideologies and claim their approval of Liberalism or Socialism as long as they do not contradict the intentional Islamization of the society. Despite contradicting the accumulative work of the diverse and adaptive opposition, MBs forget the need to work on mutual trust, which comes through hardships and a shared understanding of the struggle for power under a dictatorship (Sallam 4–5).

Generally, MBs – with no shame – denounce secularism by emphasising its limitations and adverse effects to filter outsiders' influence on their fellow supporters (Nasser, 2021). Conversely, MBs overwrite secularism with Islamic values to show the Muslim world how scientific (Nasser, 2020) or humanist Islam is as a religion (Alsagheer). Nevertheless, this secularist-Islamic merger sometimes wins other factions' support in times of elections or whenever they call for a major upheaval.

Religion vs politics

The struggle between politics and religious figures has shaped Egyptian politics over the last twenty years and have determined the political fate of Islamic politicians. This has been caused by MB work on public dissatisfaction with the government. The public has never understood why or how Islamists failed over a year in power. Then again, no one seemed to wait for an Islamic solution to end poverty and heal the malfunctioning health care system, for instance.

On the other hand, the current government led by Al-Sisi has never shied away from propagating Islamic solutions to appease public discontent by reminding the public to do more prayers and have faith in their God's will and live by austerity measures. Regardless of how Al-Sisi became the president of Egypt, he does not seem to be giving up on Political Islam itself. He uses Islamists (e.g. Salafist pro-military Alnour *Enlightened* party) to cover up for his failure or corruption, following in the footsteps of the ex-president of Egypt Al-Sadat who vanquished Socialists by appealing to Islamic groups to act accordingly.

This dilemma never ends, and MBs get lost in the so-called fit-all solution to the problems of Egypt. Looking at the kind of solutions offered by Islamic figures in Turkey, they do not seem to work even for President Recep Erdogan himself. MBs have been keen on reinventing the wheel by claiming Islam is one big solution to all of Egypt's economic and sociopolitical problems, regardless of how it was proved wrong on many occasions. Therefore, it would be hard to establish a public stand

against violations of human rights in Egypt, the fight for which has been mainly appropriated by MBs and their fellow regional allies, or to reconsider what went wrong, at what time, and because of whom the democratisation process has stalled.

Co-existence vs exclusion

The newly established government in 2012 was supposed to act for common good and not MB's hierarchy among different public institutions (Fahmy). Also, MBs did not have enough access to the military or security institutions, which were considered a priority for protecting the newly governing regime. They quickly failed in controlling the different leading government offices, from public finance to foreign affairs. Hence, this was a chance to democratise the system, which went to waste. Furthermore, the majority of political Liberalists or Socialists (Abdelfattah, 2012) Egyptian figures admitted that the vulnerable government of MBs was more exclusive than inclusive (Nour, 2013). On top of that, many of the MBs' political or media figures abroad thought they had won a big deal by gaining the protection of Turkey (Zawba, 2021). This resulted in an even more exclusivist media speech, hated by every non-MB (Nasser, 2019) figure who had ever supported the turnover of the Mubarak regime.

Besides, televised episodes were released by Hamza Zawba, who once acted as the Spokesperson of the MBs, frequently blaming the Liberalist or the Socialist wings for bringing all the political and economic crises that followed the MBs' significant loss in the presidency. This public shaming of the more civilian-like compared to the religious and political figures continues. Non-MBs were even accused for the Rabaa square massacre (Elshamy). In fact, the military coup was behind this massacre. It relied heavily on public support to cover up the killings of the MB supporters in 2013, who, back then, were eager to challenge the military power and relied on political violence instead of popular support.

Nevertheless, the armed military personnel did use aggression while trying to control the anti-regime protesters in November 2012 on Mohamed Mahmoud's street (Taha), when all the aggression was aired on TV. Charges of disturbing the transitional period led by the military council were raised. The military tanks also smashed Copts' bodies in front of the Maspero nation-based TV institution in October 2011, when they protested the demolition of a Church in Aswan city that was claimed to be illegally built by Aswan's governor. MBs did rechallenge the military for another massacre by approaching a restricted military area, where they claimed the ex-president Mohamed Morsi was held hostage.

MBs have always claimed bloodshed was part of their ongoing struggle to preserve eternal justice and fairness when they protested in the 2013 military coup (Zawba, 2019). Later, they went on to protest against the military decision by

claiming it was a move against Islamizing the nation (Zawba, 2016), even though that was not the main reason Mohamed Morsi himself was elected. MBs' supporters lost their lives or were ready to lose theirs as martyrs. Such a miscalculation for the situation ended in the massacre led by both the military and MBs themselves, who blamed non-MB activists for the bloodshed in 2012–2013.

Populist vs elitist politics

It seems clear that most opponents of the ruling regime are not angry populist protesters who mobilised the public to revolt once before in 2011. Many of them ended up in prison and lost their social and professional rationale for living in Egypt. Nonetheless, the vast majority of the opponents represent the elitist politicians who have found another means for challenging the ruling military regime by calling for yet another populist revolution. Therefore, the main target of the present opposition in the diaspora is to replace the military regime with another that seems as religiously popular as possible. Although many of MBs once denied that their religious background impacted their public work when they were in power in 2012, many of them have gathered other political and media figures to reclaim their moderate public image among the majority of Egyptians. Moreover, other Liberalist politicians have decided to move forward by persuading the most powerful of all political groups, MBs from Turkey (Kamal), into an alliance in an attempt to eliminate the military rule in politics. They have been trying to implement the Turkish model in this fight.

Whereas the public in Egypt has been squeezed by the harsh socioeconomic conditions over the last ten years, the political opposition in the diaspora seems to be out of touch. Many of them are so bold as to repeat that bloodshed is for the sake of a better future for all people that claim the president's affiliations with Israel to justify bloodshed. These narratives clearly overlook that sombre reality of many Egyptian families having lost a beloved one, whether they got severely injured in a public protest, died in a political prison, or lost focus due to the restrictions on political activism. The Egyptian opposition aims to fight against the ruling regime forever. It expects the public to follow in its lead (Nasser, 2017) regardless of the changing political goals it targets, as previously explained.

The Regime vs the opposition civil work

MBs relied on civil or charity work to align themselves with the people's needs. However, this established a new form of social relationships between those who knew better about Islam and those who did not. Afterwards, this led to the emergence of powerful, engaged upper-level, and well-educated MB

members among human rights or community research groups. Plus, foreign activists involved with global media and legal institutions advocated for the rising political power of MBs in the Arab region. Over the past decade, the military rule and its consecutive governments have been willing to take over civil society work in Egypt. This is obvious when analysing the tight grid of restrictive laws aimed at controlling foreign funds for the so-called independent civil society in Egypt. Another military tactic is to make sure MBs do use it to promote opposition's support like they always have from inside Egypt. While MBs have not done much more than (Brechenmacher 41) align civil work with their newly claimed robust regime of Islamists, the rising sentiment of rejecting foreign influence seemed to be in the same vein as the strategy used by Mubarak's regime to keep the societal aspirations under control.

The Maat Organization for Peace, Development, and Human Rights received massive support from U.S. and EU donors to elevate the state of development and human rights in Egypt. That said, a recent investigation by an Italian journalist (Napoli) exposed Maat for its image clearing of the Egyptian regime to make it look more humanitarian and progressive regarding many socio-political issues.

In the meantime, MBs developed their national and international civil work into a more global movement for the so-called democratisation of the system (e.g. Najda Human Rights Organization). Finally, both sides try to build bottom-up local support on each side of the spectrum planned by pro-regime supporters inside Egypt or pro-MBs working in the diaspora, redirecting the public aspirations towards Islamist or non-Islamist goals. Therefore, the massive media campaigns led by both sides seem to reroute public interest through civil society organisations. This may cause future social conflicts if not cleared through media or counter-campaigns set at filtering the air for a better understanding of the conflict of interests.

Conclusion

The people of Egypt do not seem to decide on which front they would fight or continue to sacrifice their basic needs due to years of de-politicisation and the lack of a proper socialisation system. Nevertheless, MBs seem to target business moguls and prominent figures across the region by reclaiming their powerful religious influence on many intellectuals to support their media campaigns. For the moment, the poor have failed the MB and never protested since 2013 to promote the MB comeback. MBs, on the other side, are ignorant or arrogant in their media for not calling for transitional justice or any democratic transformations. Currently, more vulnerable supporters of the MB are turning their backs on politics and MB charity. However, their media influencers claim to fight for the democracy they see or wish for.

The reintegration process of the newly or previously released members of the MB does not seem to be going fine since the ruling regime has been restricting their businesses and regular interests from outside Egypt. Besides, the clear intention of imprisoning as many members of the MB as possible, with the newly built rehabilitation centres by the government, looks like it will be taking its toll on the MB, who have been outraged and ready to explode. The government of Egypt seems to be easy-going on building new prison facilities and ignoring any political freedoms, even for the most Liberalist side of activists. In other words, the more MBs insist on becoming part of the political scene in Egypt, the more political prisoners will be locked up for years until they give up on politics or their Islamic ideology. Nonetheless, the government of Egypt is not working that hard on reintegrating as many ex-members of the MB as possible; instead, silencing them is easier and softer than accepting such a large-populist Political Islam group from expanding in society all over again.

In the end, MBs claimed their readiness to sacrifice their lives and families for the sake of bringing about an Islamic state. However, this has never seemed to be a public demand. Also, MBs acted with heroic manners in favour of leading the public to a better political awareness level. Such heroism turned out to be dark in times of despair like the one seen since 2013 until the present time. Also, political misconceptions seem chaotic and lack rationality among MBs themselves. Many of them admitted to leading by trial and error. It may take them another decade to reintegrate and appeal to average Egyptians with shared goals that everybody inside the country aim for. Hence, the emotional religious aspirations of many of the MB's followers seemed to be one of the most precious experiences they would never forget, making them reconsider their whole political ideology with some stubbornness about the changes needed. Some current division lines run between the rich and the poor, the most educated and the less uneducated. Whether they shall present themselves as a Political Islam group or integrate among other socialist or Liberalist movements in the future does not seem to be decided yet.

Until now, none of the political factions, governmental or otherwise, has developed or promoted a more inclusive political change plan for a shared future of the country, joining forces with, for instance, feminist movements that have been suppressed by pre-existing political powers. Multiple socio-political dilemmas have been overcome by the ruling regimes. The state of human rights has not improved for religious and ethnic minorities (e.g. Bahais, Shiites, Sinai Bedouins) as they do not feel empowered after years of the proclaimed political stability established by military rule or by the revolutionary work of the MB. Likewise, MBs claimed the military regime in Egypt manipulated them into believing they had complete power over the nation since they won most votes in both the parliamentary and the presidential elections. Obviously, once the parliament got elected, the military institution was unwilling to give up its public budgetary discretion for a scrutinising

policy. MBs continue to find significant excuses for their mass losses in politics to give themselves a chance to start over spiritually as if nothing bad happened.

MBs went on claiming to be fighting with the military regime for a more civilian control over politics. However, this was not even the case. As an example, the Mohamed Mahmoud massacre in 2011 was a mere result of the major deal established between the military and MBs to prepare for the parliamentary elections instead of amending the constitution first. The latter option was preferred by the opposing political groups in the election. Finally, the opposing non-MB groups called for major protests to amend the constitution first instead of allowing the Islamist wing to win over all the other political factions in upcoming elections, which was readily anticipated. Therefore, these protests led to the violent oppression managed by military personnel who imprisoned young Liberals or Socialists, held virginity tests on female activists, and received public Islamist support. Afterwards, MBs failed to keep on negotiating with the military for power, believing that the presidency would have guaranteed them full access to the nation's most powerful institutions.

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