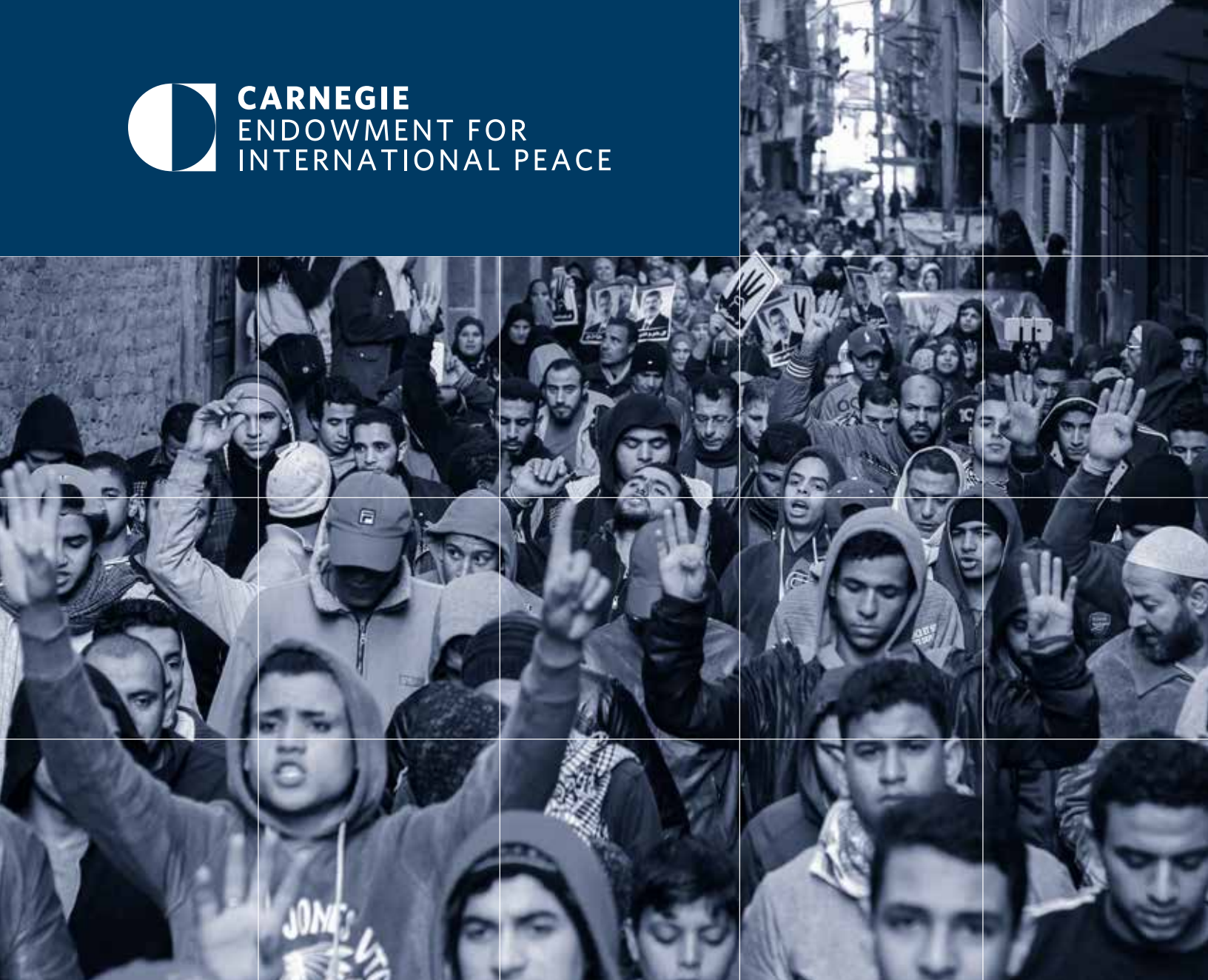**CARNEGIE**
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Islamist Parties Beyond Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood

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About the Author

Marc Lynch is a nonresident senior associate in Carnegie's Middle East Program, where his work focuses on the politics of the Arab world. He is also a professor of political science at the George Washington University, where he recently completed a six-year term as director of the Institute for Middle East Studies. He is the director of the Project on Middle East Political Science, an international network of scholars, and a contributing editor of the *Washington Post*'s Monkey Cage blog. He received a bachelor's degree from Duke University and a PhD from Cornell University and previously taught at Williams College. His recent books include *The New Arab Wars* (Public Affairs, 2016), *The Arab Uprising* (Public Affairs, 2012), and *The Arab Uprisings Explained* (Columbia University Press, 2014). In 2016, he was named an Andrew Carnegie Fellow.

Summary

Arab Islamist parties faced exceptional challenges and opportunities following the 2011 uprisings. After decades of facing authoritarian regimes, they suddenly had to navigate in radically new domestic, regional, and intra-Islamist contexts. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood had the most spectacular rise and fall, but its experience was atypical of other Islamist parties, which adapted more successfully. These changes overhauled the structure, ideology, and strategy of these parties in ways that unsettled long-standing expectations about their ideas and behavior.

Trends for Islamist Parties

- Islamist parties were poorly equipped to deal with the political openings after the Arab uprisings in 2011, but many have adapted to the aftermath in diverse and pragmatic ways.

- The rise and fall of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood was critically important across the region, but its experience was not typical compared to other regional Islamist parties.

- Islamist parties have continued to participate successfully in democratic elections despite domestic and regional pressures.

- The challenges to the organizational coherence and hierarchy of many Islamist movements and the failures of their older leaders have led to internal arguments over leadership, ideology, and strategy.

- Islamist parties that have traditionally positioned themselves as alternatives to violent jihadi organizations are struggling with increasingly radical and sectarian regional trends.

Findings and Recommendations

- Islamist parties should be viewed not as uniquely ideological actors but as rational political movements responding to distinctive political opportunities and challenges in each of their countries.

- Islamist parties will continue to play an important role in the politics of most Arab states, despite the pressures they have faced in recent years.

- Because Islamist parties tend to adapt to the political environment in which they operate, regimes should allow opportunities for their continued participation in formal politics rather than force them underground or into violent resistance.

- Islamist parties have typically positioned themselves as centrist movements, providing a means for Islamically oriented citizens to participate nonviolently in mainstream political life. They gain by defending this middle ground rather than veering toward extreme stances that would ultimately marginalize them.

- The rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic State and other Salafi-jihadi movements challenged Islamist parties by offering a seemingly more successful model of action. The need for effective firewalls against radicalization is why the Islamic State's military and political setbacks, especially in Iraq, could create opportunities for the revival of mainstream political Islamist alternatives.

Introduction: The Imperative of Reinvention

Islamist parties have been rocked by the dramatic political upheavals in the Arab world during the past five years. After a decade of patient political participation, outreach to the West, and careful positioning against al-Qaeda, several Islamist parties—all part of the broader Muslim Brotherhood movement—rapidly took over positions of political power in the wake of the 2010–2011 Arab uprisings. These parties won electoral victories in Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, and they played key roles in Western-backed political coalitions in Syria and Yemen.

However, these openings were just as quickly reversed. Tunisia's Ennahdha Party stepped down from power in January 2014 in the midst of political turmoil, and Libya's Islamists fared poorly when legislative elections were held in late June 2014. Most strikingly, the Egyptian military coup of July 3, 2013, overthrew Mohamed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood figure who had been elected president in 2012, and triggered an intense crackdown against the organization across the region.

These reversals not only undermined short-term political gains by Islamist political parties, but they also disrupted carefully cultivated gradualist political strategies, discredited long-held ideological and strategic convictions, and reshaped the terrain of Islamist politics. Prior to the Arab uprisings, most Islamist parties presented fairly stable and predictable political strategies, organizational structures, and ideological positions. Both the political openings of 2011 and the harsh reversals in subsequent years placed new demands on these movements. Hasty, erratic political maneuvering replaced cautious long-term political strategies as Islamists struggled to grasp new opportunities and respond to new threats. Today, most Islamist parties find themselves navigating in uncharted waters as they struggle with new forms of state repression, social polarization, organizational distress, regional rivalries, international hostility, and intra-Islamist competition.

The failures of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have often been taken as emblematic of a wider pathology in Islamist politics. The poor choices, alienating behavior, and ultimate failure of the Egyptian Brotherhood after 2011 have been explained in terms of the particularities of its organizational structure and Islamist ideology.[1] But other national Brotherhood organizations have responded quite differently, and more successfully, to recent regional political developments. Even inside Egypt, sharply

The failures of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have often been taken as emblematic of a wider pathology in Islamist politics.

different approaches have emerged across generational and ideological divides within the Muslim Brotherhood itself.

The track record of the post-Arab uprising period does not support the conclusion that Islamists are especially ideological actors or that they have been revealed to be inherently incapable of participating in democratic politics. Not all Islamist parties face equally grim prospects, and outside of Egypt some have found new opportunities to advance their political agendas. What does the full spectrum of political adjustments by mainstream Islamist parties say about their current conditions and their likely future political prospects?

Political context, not qualities inherent to Islamist ideology or organization, best accounts for the full range of recent outcomes. These Islamist parties had choices shaped by local political context, and some national parties did better than others in steering through their new environments. Islamist party choices should be understood not as pure expressions of their ideology but as responses to political opportunities and challenges. Their choices are often more tactically driven and less ideologically transformative than they may appear at first blush.

As the influential leader of Tunisia's Ennahdha Party, Rached al-Ghannouchi, explained in an August 2016 interview, changes in his own party consistently followed from the political context. Ennahdha was an underground Islamist movement in the 1990s and 2000s when it resisted an autocratic regime, but it became a traditional political party after the 2011 revolution, when it competed within a democratic system.[2] A similar pattern can be seen across multiple Islamist parties in the region. Pragmatism and caution, not ideological or revolutionary fervor, have been and will likely remain the guiding principles for mainstream Islamist political parties as long as political systems provide such opportunities.

This pragmatism has been sorely tested by both the opportunities and threats in the new regional environment. The impact of the environment can perhaps be seen most dramatically in the fortunes of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, which found its circumstances transformed through its ascent to power, and then through the military coup and state repression that followed.[3] The Brotherhood first gained unthinkable political power, moving from the margins to the center of political institutions and abandoning the secrecy and caution that had shaped its behavior for decades. It found itself competing not only with liberals and the deep state but also with more ideological Salafists such as the Nour Party, which challenged their Islamic credentials.[4]

> **Pragmatism and caution, not ideological or revolutionary fervor, have been and will likely remain the guiding principles for mainstream Islamist political parties.**

After the coup, the Muslim Brotherhood lost the strong, overt presence in society that had evolved over decades through its elaborate network of social services and a tolerated public presence. While it is difficult to know for certain how much of the Muslim Brotherhood's underlying support and

organizational network remains intact, regime suppression of its formal non-governmental organization and political apparatus has forced the organization to go underground. Even if the Brotherhood's social and personal networks have not disappeared, they have been forced to operate under draconian new constraints. The famously disciplined organization is now riven by open struggles over organizational power and political strategy.

Egypt's experience is often understood as typical of the trajectory of all Islamist parties. It is not. Islamist parties have pursued divergent political trajectories, offering useful snapshots of the new political and institutional situations in which they are now operating, following the failure of the Arab uprisings. This requires a rethinking of long-held conclusions about these parties' ideology, strategy, and organization.

The fate of Egypt's Brotherhood represents only one path through a complex new set of trials and opportunities for Islamist parties. Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood, for example, faced a similar, if less extreme, form of social and political repression as Egypt's, yet in September 2016 it chose to enter parliamentary elections and performed well. Tunisia's Ennahdha Party forged a political alliance with its fiercest rival after voluntarily stepping down from power. In Morocco, Islamist parties such as the Justice and Development Party (PJD) and the Justice and Charity Association (Al-Adl wa al-Ihsan) found ways to work effectively within relatively permissive political environments through strategies of electoral self-limitation, reassurance of rivals, and separation between party and movement. In Libya and Syria, Islamist parties positioned themselves between secular groups and jihadists within multipolar conflicts. In Kuwait and Yemen, Islamist parties that had long been part of the countries' mainstream endured through a period of exclusion before returning to the political game.

Egypt's experience is often understood as typical of the trajectory of all Islamist parties. It is not.

The behavior of Islamist parties should be analyzed as pragmatic responses to political conditions shaped by domestic, regional, and intra-Islamist dynamics.[5] This new environment affects all political actors, not just Islamists. Too often, Islamist parties are studied in isolation from the broader political field, which can lead to an exaggeration of their strengths or failings. In an Arab world in transition, all actors are struggling to find effective modes of political action, and all have made bewilderingly bad decisions. The same political turmoil that shaped Islamist behavior also drove the rise of extreme anti-Islamist trends across the Middle East, especially in transitional countries such as Egypt and Tunisia.

Some Islamist parties have done far better in the turbulent politics of the last six years than others. This is not to minimize the complexity and powerful challenges facing many of these Islamist parties in the post-2011 Middle East. Regional and national repression has put immense pressure on Muslim

Brotherhood branches in major Arab countries, discredited their ideology, and poisoned their public presence.[6]

In Egypt and Jordan, the Muslim Brotherhood today is virtually unrecognizable—divided, confused, and stripped of most of its established sources of political power. More successful franchises, such as those in Morocco and Tunisia, seem to be moving away from traditional forms of religious movement organizations in order to remain viable political actors. The rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic State upended the ideological and political strategy of mainstream Islamist parties; to angry and mobilized Islamist youths, these conventional parties seemed archaic. Islamic State losses in Iraq and Syria have tarnished its appeal and shattered its image of invincibility, but its defeat will not likely undo the damage done to doctrines of moderation and nonviolence.

> **Though many thousands of Egyptian Brotherhood members are in prison, in exile, or dead, an organization that large and deeply rooted is unlikely to simply disappear.**

Some, but not all, Islamist parties have faced these pressures while undergoing unprecedented challenges to their internal organizational structures and resources, with new cleavages emerging and old ones widening—all at a time when the established leadership is decapitated or at least weakened.

It would be quite premature to write off these Islamist parties and movements. Their deep roots and their demonstrated resilience, even when facing exceptional regime oppression, suggests that they will likely continue to play a critical part in the region's politics as they have for decades. The fact that Islamist parties in Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia have performed well electorally in the past two years underlines this outlook.

In countries where such parties have fared the worst, such as Egypt, vitally important networks and movements associated with the Muslim Brotherhood still exist on the ground. Though many thousands of Egyptian Brotherhood members are in prison, in exile, or dead, an organization that large and deeply rooted is unlikely to simply disappear. Historical experience suggests that the Muslim Brotherhood is capable of adapting to its difficulties and regenerating itself. The likely failure of competitors to establish political hegemony or stabilize legitimate new political orders will create new openings. The question is which organizational, political, and ideological characteristics will define this regenerated Muslim Brotherhood—and whether new Islamist parties will replicate old patterns of behavior.

Islamist Parties After the Arab Uprisings

Five years ago, it would have been difficult to foresee that Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and its counterparts throughout the Arab world would be up against the difficulties they face today. The organization's ideology, organization, and political strategy seemed relatively stable and predictable, despite the perennial controversies swirling around its ultimate objectives or true nature.

The Muslim Brotherhood had participated effectively in Egypt's 2005 parliamentary elections and had encountered escalating repression in subsequent years. This generated some degree of solidarity with non-Islamist opposition groups. Jordan's Islamic Action Front—the political wing of the country's Muslim Brotherhood—maintained an ongoing, if contested, place as a loyal opposition group. Muslim Brotherhood–affiliated parties also participated in elections in Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, and Yemen. Intellectuals affiliated with the Brotherhood advanced a coherent set of ideas about democracy and nonviolence, appeasing political partners across the region. By way of contrast with al-Qaeda's violent extremism, the Muslim Brotherhood was able to put forward a very different philosophy, strategy, and rhetoric.

Several core characteristics typically defined the political presence of Muslim Brotherhood affiliates in the decades before the Arab uprisings:

- They typically had a tightly hierarchical and structured organization that imposed a high degree of ideological and behavioral conformity on their members.

- They had a significant public presence, even where they were officially banned, with elaborate social service networks and a strong political and media presence.

- They adopted an ideology of centrism (*wasatiyya*), which informed their political practice and religious doctrine and referred to a common set of public intellectuals and thinkers.

- They participated in elections wherever the opportunity presented itself—from those for student unions to those for national parliaments—and typically did quite well.

- They espoused a doctrine of nonviolence by which they sought to differentiate themselves from al-Qaeda, reassure Western governments, and protect themselves from state repression.

- And while they often spoke out on and rallied around salient regional issues such as Palestine, in practice they accepted the nation-state and prioritized national political goals over transnational commitments.

The most profound changes since 2011 can be seen in Egypt, where none of these core characteristics still exists. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood no longer has a strong overt presence in society or an elaborate public network of social services. Its organization now faces internal opposition. The nonviolence it espoused is being questioned by its own members. Its dispersed leadership is less able to exercise control. And the Brotherhood can no longer contest elections.

Elsewhere, Islamist organizations have adapted differently to the new challenges. Some have retained most of the institutional forms and political strategies they had before the 2011 uprisings, while others have jettisoned or altered some of their key characteristics to preserve their overall political and social position. Among Islamist groups the choices have varied. Some have survived repression and chosen to return to political life. Others have engaged in post-Islamist politics by allowing themselves to be co-opted by regimes. Yet others have fought in civil wars or have sought to demonstrate their value to Arab regimes.

Surviving Repression and Returning to Politics

Two Muslim Brotherhood affiliates, those in Jordan and Kuwait, have faced considerable pressure from their respective regimes. After repeatedly boycotting elections, they concluded that this strategy only further marginalized them and chose to return to political life.

In Jordan, the Islamic Action Front was for years at the forefront of political participation by Islamist movements in the region. It took part in several parliamentary elections after 1989, in which it stood as the leading opposition party, and boycotted others over complaints of regime manipulation of the electoral system. However, the decision to boycott elections in 2013 divided the movement, with some of its leaders seeking a more confrontational stance and others pushing to align more closely with the regime. The Jordanian government exploited such rifts within the established Muslim Brotherhood to sponsor the creation of a new Brotherhood organization, while confiscating the assets and revoking the legal status of the old one. In June 2016, the Islamic Action Front, despite such pressures, announced it would contest the parliamentary elections scheduled for September, ending years of electoral boycotts.[7] It did so by placing candidates on multiple electoral lists and calibrated its political message to downplay Islamist slogans in favor of broad alliances. Though the overall turnout was low, the Muslim Brotherhood won sixteen seats in the 130-member parliament.

In Kuwait, the Muslim Brotherhood affiliate, the Islamic Constitutional Movement, had long participated in parliamentary elections and enjoyed a prominent role in political life. More recently, it had been eclipsed by Salafist parties on the Islamist spectrum. The growing autocracy in Kuwait and the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries had taken a further toll on the Islamic Constitutional Movement's political participation. It boycotted parliamentary elections in 2012 and 2013. In May 2016, however, the party announced that it intended to participate in the next round of parliamentary elections. It performed well in the one held on November 26, 2016, winning four out of five seats as the broader opposition won nearly half of the seats.

Its leaders explained its return to participating in elections in practical terms. The boycott had allowed parliament to pass a series of retrograde laws and had distanced the movement from Kuwaiti society. The Islamic Constitutional Movement's resilience and adaptability affirmed its normality within the Kuwaiti political system, as well as the ability of Kuwaiti politics to resist pressure directed against the Muslim Brotherhood from more powerful GCC partners.

Playing Post-Islamist Politics

Other Islamist groups have opted to engage in a form of post-Islamist politics by allowing themselves to be co-opted by regimes. In Morocco, the PJD has done so enthusiastically, thriving in government by accepting the constraints of a monarchical system.[8] Rather than repress, the monarchy invited the PJD to contest elections, and then allowed it to form a government under its leader, Abdelilah Benkirane. The party has experienced both the benefits and costs of governmental authority in a system effectively run by the palace.[9] Its strategy, as the scholar Mohammed Masbah elegantly described it, involved "playing by the monarchy's rules, but without fully aligning itself with the palace."[10]

The PJD found itself taking on significant responsibility, without much power to actually do anything. It gained significant opportunities for patronage and institutional entrenchment in the political system, particularly at the local level, but lost credibility among Islamist sectors of society to the benefit of its Islamist rival Al-Adl wa al-Ihsan. For all the frustrations with the lack of real political change, the value of predictability for Islamist parties was visible, as the PJD found it fairly easy to operate in a system with which it was familiar. It seized opportunities that did not fundamentally challenge the existing political order.[11] The PJD's political strategy paid off in October 2016, when it once again won a plurality in the parliamentary elections—winning 125 seats against 102 for its anti-Islamist rival, the Authenticity and Modernity Party—and was invited to form a new government.

Some Islamist groups have opted to engage in a form of post-Islamist politics by allowing themselves to be co-opted by regimes.

In Tunisia as well, the main Islamist organization, Ennahdha, sought to transform its role amid changing circumstances after it took power in 2011. Ennahdha's trajectory has often been compared favorably to that of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Whereas former Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi refused to compromise, leading the Brotherhood to disaster, Ghannouchi, Ennahdha's leader, found a path toward consensus allowing for the consolidation of a tenuous democratic transition. Ennahdha's decision to voluntarily surrender power in the face of political crisis seems a sharp rebuke of the view that Islamists in power would never agree to step down. The pursuit of political consensus brought the party into a surprising de facto alliance with its former archrival Nidaa Tounes, which had come to power on an intensely

anti-Islamist platform, achieving some political stability at the expense of calls for more rapid political change.

Ennahdha's political realignments were responses to particular political threats and opportunities. For all its efforts to reassure Tunisians and engage in consensus building while in power during the early postrevolutionary period, Ennahdha had faced polarization and suspicion almost as intense as did Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Tunisia's military and security establishment was neither as powerful nor as entrenched as Egypt's, but Ennahdha had to deal with a non-Islamist civil society that was much stronger and well-institutionalized. That is why, in May 2016, the Ennahdha Party Congress voted to separate the political party from the social movement, a step that followed a similar evolution by Morocco's PJD. The practical implications of this separation remain uncertain, as Ennahdha has yet to contest an election under the new arrangement.

In Algeria, the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), the Muslim Brotherhood–affiliated party, had to work within an environment deeply shaped by the bloody civil war of the 1990s. The MSP's accommodating attitude toward the regime was rooted in the traumas of the military coup that followed Islamist electoral victories during the early 1990s and the conflict that ensued. As the acceptable face of political Islam under a violently anti-Islamist regime, the MSP endorsed the regime-led political process and agreed to serve in several governments. The Arab uprisings complicated this by empowering those determined to unsettle, if not overturn, the stagnant political system within which the MSP had found a comfortable place. The party moved to reposition itself as a more independent actor in January 2015, ahead of the anticipated Algerian presidential transition.[12] This signaled an intention to contest parliamentary elections while also reaching out to the opposition, which viewed the MSP as thoroughly co-opted by the regime and hardly an opposition party at all.

> **Some Muslim Brotherhood–affiliated parties have adjusted to new political environments by remaining committed to a strategy of electoral participation.**

These cases all reveal Muslim Brotherhood–affiliated parties adjusting to new political environments by remaining committed to a strategy of electoral participation. Unlike the Egyptian case, these parties survived new pressures and took advantage of new opportunities. Their successes must be weighed against the failures of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood when evaluating the performance and future of Islamist movements.

Fighting in Civil Wars

A third path adopted by Islamist groups outside of Egypt was to redefine themselves by engaging in conflict as part of broader coalitions. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood took an active part in the early organization of the Syrian uprising. As a favored Qatari and Turkish partner, the Brotherhood played

a leading role in the Syrian National Council and in many of the Turkey-based operations of the Syrian opposition. The Muslim Brotherhood lacked a significant presence inside Syria due to then president Hafez al-Assad's fierce repression of the organization after its conflict with the regime in 1982. However, it did have a major external presence, which served it well in the international diplomacy surrounding the 2011 uprising. As the protests in Syria turned into an armed insurgency, in which more radical jihadi groups came to the fore, the Syrian Brotherhood found itself in a difficult position. It struggled to sustain a moderate Islamism in an ever more jihadi environment, even as those jihadi movements adopted the traditional Brotherhood tactics of providing social services and governance. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood benefited from Qatari and Turkish patronage while being targeted by Saudi Arabia's allies within rebel organizations because of the kingdom's hostility toward Muslim Brotherhood organizations.[13]

Some Islamist groups have opted to engage in a form of post-Islamist politics by allowing themselves to be co-opted by regimes.

In Libya, the country's Muslim Brotherhood was one of the many actors that came together in the loosely organized opposition coalition aligned against Muammar Qaddafi. In the post-Qaddafi period, it used its access to Qatari and Turkish financial, media, military, and political assistance to carve out a powerful role for itself. While the Muslim Brotherhood underperformed in the first Libyan elections, it became deeply entrenched in emergent local power centers. It also became a key target, and actor, in the divided Libyan political scene that followed Qaddafi's fall. It struggled to sustain a coherent political and social position, caught between the rise of jihadi trends and an anti-Islamist offensive backed by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. The rising threat of the Islamic State allowed it to regain some traction by positioning itself within the opposing coalition and on the side of the internationally backed Government of National Accord. Polarization remains intense, however, as does suspicion of the Muslim Brotherhood among backers of the House of Representatives, the legislature elected in 2014, and General Khalifa Hifter's Dignity camp.

In Palestinian areas, Hamas, while operating within a very different institutional context and embodying a very different history of both governance and violence, also found itself caught up amid these changes. Regional politics profoundly constrained its ability to govern the Gaza Strip or mobilize support among the broader Palestinian public. Even during the year of Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt, Cairo did little to ease the blockade of Gaza. Since the coup, the regime of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has cooperated closely with Israel in reinforcing the cordon around the territory and has loudly identified Hamas, along with the Muslim Brotherhood, as an enemy. The Syrian civil war emptied the so-called Axis of Resistance (which brought together Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria) of its political value and cost Hamas its base in Damascus.[14] Quiet rapprochement between Israel and many

Arab regimes, driven in part by shared opposition to the U.S.-led nuclear agreement with Iran, increased the financial and political pressures on Hamas. As part of its efforts to adapt to the new situation, in April 2016 the organization announced that it had formally severed its ties with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Demonstrating Value to Regional Powers

A fourth path adopted by Islamist groups has been to avoid pressure by engaging in action on behalf of regional powers. Yemen's Islah Party participated fully in the uprising against President Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime in 2011–2012, and later found a comfortable place within the Saudi-led military coalition against the Houthi rebels. It avoided the broader Gulf crackdown on Islamists by making itself a player in the regional proxy wars, moving smoothly between alliances in a turbulent political field contested by Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Islah itself is a broad coalition, including not only the Muslim Brotherhood but also more extreme Salafi and jihadi networks alongside non-Islamist groupings. After being pushed aside during the regional push against the Muslim Brotherhood, Islah rebuilt its bridges to Saudi Arabia and occupied a central place in the Saudi-led coalition.

> **The diversity of their experiences should mitigate against any simplistic conclusions about Islamist parties or movements.**

In Bahrain, unlike in most of the other GCC states where Islamist parties have represented a political threat, the Muslim Brotherhood's affiliate, al-Minbar, fit comfortably into the regime's sectarian ruling strategy. By mobilizing Sunni support for the regime against the country's Shia majority, al-Minbar made itself indispensable to a fragile monarchy, even at the height of the anti-Islamist regional campaign.[15] This sectarian role offered it protection from the regional crackdown, despite Bahrain's deep dependence on Saudi Arabia.

The diversity of these experiences should mitigate against any simplistic conclusions about Islamist parties or movements. Islamists continue to participate in political systems in which they have the opportunity to do so, but they have also squandered a great deal of the political capital they accumulated during decades of social outreach and opposition politics.

The Egyptian Experience and the Brotherhood Reaction

The experience of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is central to that of Brotherhood organizations elsewhere in the Middle East. Both the successes and setbacks of the Egyptian Brotherhood defined national and regional constellations of opportunity and constraint for Muslim Brotherhoods in other countries. Before the Arab uprisings, Brotherhood organizations in the region

were independent but typically looked to Cairo for guidance and support. The sudden, shocking fall of Egypt's Brotherhood from power in 2013 upended its long-established relationship with these other national organizations. The later choices of these Islamists were made in a context shaped by interactions across domestic, regional, and intra-Islamist domains—interactions embodied by what had happened in Egypt and its repercussions.

The Domestic Domain

Domestically, the Arab uprisings dramatically disrupted long-established political patterns for some Islamist parties—first by opening up pathways to real power and then by forcibly shutting them down. The initial political openings of 2011 were more destabilizing to Islamists than the subsequent, more familiar, repression. Islamist parties had long operated within political institutions in which they accepted that they could not actually come to power.[16] The overthrow of then presidents Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia dramatically removed that cap on their aspirations. The surge of popular mobilization allowed national Muslim Brotherhood organizations to win unprecedented power in elections in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. Brotherhood affiliates also played key roles in opposition coalitions in Libya, Syria, and Yemen that enjoyed significant Western support.

As Brotherhood organizations adapted to changing domestic and regional circumstances, their politically successful moves were overshadowed by the catastrophic failure of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to succeed in its transition. After Mubarak's fall, the Egyptian Brotherhood quickly benefited from unprecedented legal recognition and, ultimately, a degree of formal institutional power.[17] But it struggled not only with the suspicion of non-Islamist political forces and the entrenched power of a fiercely hostile military but also with the new political challenge of an unleashed Salafi movement.

The initial political openings of 2011 were more destabilizing to Islamists than the subsequent, more familiar, repression.

The Muslim Brotherhood's rapid rise to power through parliamentary and presidential elections triggered a fierce backlash. An organization that had long cultivated a reputation for honesty suddenly found itself the object of deep distrust, alienated from a society it had spent decades trying to shape in its own image. Within six months of Mohamed Morsi's election as president, most of the political class had coalesced into the National Salvation Front, which was established in December 2012 with the specific aim of toppling him from power.

Few would dispute that Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood made poor decisions during the post-2011 transition. It was not, however, the only group that was perfidious and incompetent, let alone unique in its political failure during that tortuous period. Every political actor in Egypt made disastrous decisions at the time, deploying extreme and dehumanizing rhetoric and resorting to violence.

Egypt's military ruled disastrously from February 2011 to June 2012, infuriating the political class, seeking to monopolize power, and using force against protesters. The National Salvation Front moved directly toward demanding Morsi's overthrow rather than seeking, first, to alter the president's policies. Activists repeatedly misread the political climate, and then fatefully aligned with the military in Morsi's removal, paving the way for their own repression and marginalization.

That is why focusing on explaining the unique failures of the Muslim Brotherhood by exploring its organizational or ideological pathologies is misguided. The political environment in Egypt was one of deep institutional uncertainty. In the two years after Mubarak's overthrow, the Brotherhood sought an accommodation with the military, which it viewed as the most powerful competitor for power, at the expense of the divided activist sector. Many activists chose to do the same in 2013, to equally disastrous effect.

The crucial presidential election of May–June 2012 took place in the absence of a new constitution, meaning that voters and candidates did not know what powers an elected president would wield. The judiciary dissolved parliament shortly before the election, creating a legislative void, while at the same time the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the representative body of the military, sought to retain key powers. The machinations of the intelligence and security agencies, along with the judiciary, and the fear that they would manipulate or overturn the results weighed heavily on all calculations. Similar institutional fears lay behind Morsi's most notorious political gambit, the "power grab" of late November 2012, in which he claimed unfettered power to pass a new constitution without judicial review by what he viewed as profoundly politicized Egyptian courts.

> **Egypt's military coup shattered the Muslim Brotherhood in ways that have left the organization a fundamentally different political entity.**

Egypt's military coup shattered the Muslim Brotherhood in ways that have left the organization a fundamentally different political entity.[18] The Brotherhood's Egyptian leadership has by and large been neutralized. The organization is now divided between multiple power centers within Egypt and abroad.[19] However, the repression of the Egyptian Brotherhood is not historically unique. Egyptian, Syrian, and Tunisian Muslim Brotherhoods had all survived scorched-earth crackdowns in previous decades, and they returned to play key political roles when conditions changed. Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood has been divided and stripped of its key institutional foundations. It was when they faced the determination of several Gulf states to criminalize the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization that long-standing Muslim Brotherhood affiliates, including Hamas and the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, announced their separation from the parent organization.

The post-coup political environment in Egypt went beyond state repression. The polarization of public opinion around the question of Islamism badly

undermined the Muslim Brotherhood's careful positioning. It became difficult to occupy the center when there was no center. The profound sense of injustice felt by many Muslim Brotherhood members over the coup and the crackdown that followed undermined even the normative value of occupying this center. The seemingly widespread Egyptian public turn against the Brotherhood, undoing in a moment what the organization had spent decades building, raised even more profound strategic and political questions.

Islamist parties appear to do best when they operate within clearly defined institutional rules.

Islamist parties appear to do best when they operate within clearly defined institutional rules, though some national branches have proven more flexible than others when the rules suddenly changed. Self-limiting strategies, such as those pursued by Ennahdha under the guidance of Rached Ghannouchi, typically require far greater concessions than might be dictated by the objective balance of power. Even explicit, consistent efforts at reassurance face resistance over the fears—long stoked by regime media and hostile propaganda—that Islamists provoke among others about their ultimate intentions.

Savvier leaders have accepted that Islamist movements face a higher burden of proof with non-Islamist audiences at home and abroad, and they seek to reassure rather than insist on narratives of persecution and martyrdom. However, this does not mean abandoning hopes for power or self-interest. Such strategies of reassurance and collaboration can often secure partisan interests more effectively than maximalist ones. Islamist parties have considerable experience with playing the long game and will likely find it easier than many anticipate to adjust to the hostile conditions in post-uprising Arab countries.

The Regional Domain

The Muslim Brotherhood has also become more deeply implicated in regional power politics than in previous eras. Brotherhood organizations are more transnationalized, more dependent on state sponsors, and more affected by external events.[20] The evolution of each national Muslim Brotherhood branch cannot be understood outside of the transforming regional environment.

For several years after 2011, the Brotherhood was caught up in the regional cold war between Qatar and Turkey on the one side and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates on the other. Qatari and Turkish support for Brotherhood networks offered access to crucial financial and media resources during the transitions but left them increasingly vulnerable to the perception that they served a foreign agenda. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates mobilized anti-Islamist forces across Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia—and after the Egyptian coup led a global effort to label the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization. In recent years, this regional constellation has evolved, with tensions easing between Qatar and Saudi Arabia amid a heightened focus on Iran and sectarian conflict.

The Arab uprisings have tilted the balance of the Muslim Brotherhood's preoccupations from the national to the regional dimension in important ways. Egypt's coup, by crushing the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership and forcing many leaders into exile, transnationalized the organization in ways not seen since the 1950s. This created an external leadership far less organically embedded in the country's politics and culture, which had a considerable impact on Brotherhood affiliates everywhere else. Regional support for the Syrian uprising has, similarly, activated transnational networks of Islamists working in Syria and regionally to raise funds and promote the cause of the Syrian rebels, while also advancing their own political fortunes at home.

The Arab uprisings have tilted the balance of the Muslim Brotherhood's preoccupations from the national to the regional dimension in important ways.

The direct and indirect effects of the Muslim Brotherhoods' evolving transnational perspective have been underappreciated. Egypt's coup is the most obvious example. The success of the coup emboldened anti-Islamist forces while alarming Islamists in other countries such as Libya and Tunisia. The Egyptian outcome likely pushed Tunisia's Ennahdha into a more cautious posture in which ideology was downplayed in favor of inclusion.[21]

The crisis in Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood, similarly, could not be separated from that of Egypt's Brotherhood.[22] After the Egyptian coup, Morocco's Justice and Development Party took steps toward conciliation, including ceding key ministries to pro-regime parties.[23] In the face of the Kuwaiti regime's support for the coup, the Islamic Constitutional Movement and popular Islamist figures such as Tareq al-Suwaidan found themselves under increasing duress, given the strong support they had shown for Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.[24]

Successful strategies also attracted attention as sources of emulation. Tunisian Islamists carefully studied the achievements of Morocco's PJD. So did some Egyptians. As Egyptian Muslim Brother Izzat Nimr marveled, "Why is [the PJD] succeeding where other political Islam is failing? How after four years in power has [it] retained its popularity?"[25] Nimr located the PJD's appeal in its focus on municipal elections, which allowed the party to build a strong performance record without challenging the national political system.

This sort of learning from the experience of other Islamist parties was more typical than any direct transnational organizational control. Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood members, too, were looking for inspiration, yearning for their own Ghannouchi—a strong leader able to steer the organization through a confusing environment.[26] The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood learned from the ability of their Libyan counterparts to integrate into a Western-backed armed opposition. Personal and organizational contacts facilitated such learning, as did the reporting and arguments on shared online and broadcast media platforms connecting mainstream Islamists across the region.

Transnational Arab media also affected the broader political environment within which these parties operated. The media actively shaped both positive and negative regional attitudes toward the Muslim Brotherhood. Media outlets controlled by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and their allies relentlessly vilified the party, helping heighten the polarization and demonization that took such a toll on its popular reputation. Pro–Muslim Brotherhood media, such as the Qatari Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr, played a similarly divisive role, this time in promoting a contrary narrative of Islamist virtues and the evils of their non-Islamist opponents. Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood media outlets based in Turkey were equally controversial, with some members complaining that they were too doctrinaire and inflammatory in their calls for revolutionary action. Others, however, viewed such outlets as an essential component of political behavior, given the limitations of mobilization under repressive conditions.[27]

Beyond the Gulf, Turkey's policy has been a critical factor in these regional dynamics. As prime minister and then as president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan supported the Muslim Brotherhood in critical ways across multiple domains. Turkey hosted many Brotherhood refugees from Egypt, and its media adopted a fiercely critical stance against the coup and aggressively advanced the martyrdom narrative surrounding the August 14, 2013, massacre of Muslim Brotherhood members by the Egyptian security forces at Rabaa al-Adawiya Mosque. Turkey also worked closely with the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood within Syrian opposition circles. The July 2016 Turkish coup attempt could have profoundly disrupted these Muslim Brotherhood networks and strategies had Erdoğan been removed. While he reasserted control, his narrow escape highlighted the vulnerability of a movement increasingly led from abroad and dependent on unpredictable foreign patrons.

The Intra-Islamist Domain

Less attention has been paid to the significance for mainstream Islamist parties of the dramatic changes of the past five years in intra-Islamist politics. After the Arab uprisings, it seemed the Muslim Brotherhood's political approach had been vindicated at the expense of al-Qaeda's rejection of democratic change. Since Egypt's military coup and the rise of the Islamic State, this narrative of the merits of democratic political participation and the discrediting of jihadism has been reversed.

Egypt's coup had devastating effects on the strategy of democratic inclusion. In turn, Syria's civil war has empowered ever more extreme sectarian Salafi and Salafi-jihadi trends, to the detriment of the Muslim Brotherhood's traditionally cautious pragmatism. The emergence of the Islamic State and the failure of democratic politics have transformed the Brotherhood's terrain.[28] In the year after the emergence of the Islamic State, the Egyptian scholar Khalil al-Anani argued that "the Islamic State is seizing the current moment to present itself as

a role model for young Islamists around the globe, pushing them to adopt its ideology and emulate its tactics and strategy."[29] This bid for ideological hegemony rested in large part on the Islamic State's stunning military and political successes, though its military setbacks in Iraq since then have dulled its appeal. But the Islamic State is only one of many violent jihadi groups now active across the Arab world that seek to recruit fighters among disgruntled young Muslims.

The war on terror against al-Qaeda after the September 11, 2001, attacks against the United States seemed simple and predictable compared to today's complex landscape. Over the past three years, not only have Salafi-jihadi groups risen and democratic aspirations been frustrated, but also a virulent new form of sectarianism and massive public mobilization has emerged in support of the Syrian uprising. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's past statements on political participation and nonviolence seem quaint at a time when democratic transitions have failed. In conflicts such as Syria's, especially, the views of the Arab mainstream appear to have moved at least partially in favor of armed struggle, particularly when defined in sectarian terms. The newly urgent imperative to combat the Islamic State's appeal, meanwhile, offers new opportunities for Islamist parties to present themselves once again as useful barriers to more extreme movements.

Rather than positioning itself as the successful mainstream avatar of Islamist politics, the Muslim Brotherhood is now competing with more extreme Islamist rivals from a relatively ineffectual and inarticulate moderate position. This weakness poses profound questions about the ability of the Muslim Brotherhood to appeal to new recruits, or even to hold on to its current members. If it cannot attract new recruits, or can do so only by resorting to violence, this will make it difficult to position itself in favor of political renewal once conditions change.

Jihadi movements understand the challenge posed by the Muslim Brotherhood. Not long ago, the Islamic State devoted the cover story of its online publication, *Dabiq*, to a denunciation of Brotherhood "apostasy."[30] It could have appeared in any al-Qaeda publication of previous years. While such reactions should open up new vistas for the Brotherhood to reclaim its place in the mainstream, the failure of democratic political participation has deeply undermined the Muslim Brotherhood's position against the Islamic State.

> **Egypt's coup had devastating effects on the strategy of democratic inclusion.**

In Jordan, for instance, the nationalist outrage over the Islamic State's burning of captured pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh forced the Muslim Brotherhood into an unfamiliar defensive posture, caught between the regime and those sympathizing with the jihadists. Protestations by the Islamic Action Front's then-leader, Zaki bin Rashid, that the appeal of the Islamic State only reinforced the importance of the Muslim Brotherhood's "moderate alternative"

fell flat amid the reality of Salafi-jihadi mobilization and the regime's relent-less cultivation of anti-Islamist sentiment.[31] Yet the Muslim Brotherhood again rushed to condemn the assassination of Jordanian nationalist Nahed Hattar in September 2016 by a Salafist, over his posting on Facebook of a cartoon viewed as offensive to Islam. Such persistence demonstrates the importance to the Brotherhood of being perceived as a moderate Islamist force and loyal opposition within the Jordanian spectrum.

Syria's conflict has, similarly, shifted the center of Islamist politics. Mohamed Morsi's June 2013 speech endorsing jihad in Syria shocked many Egyptians, who portrayed it as a radical departure from previous statements. In fact, Morsi's position reflected not movement toward extremism but an accommodation with the new direction in Islamist expression, especially in the Gulf. During the first half of 2013, fundraising and public mobilization on behalf of the Syrian rebels became ever

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more sectarian and militant. Islamist public figures across the Gulf competed to articulate the strongest religious appeals for supporting what they referred to as the "Syrian jihad." At the time, the adversaries of the Bashar al-Assad regime came to be dominated by a wide range of Salafi-jihadi factions other than the Islamic State (which was formally established in April 2013)—from the al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra (now Jabhat Fatah al-Sham) to power-ful groups such as Ahrar al-Sham, which enjoy strong support from regional powers. The war in Syria has blurred the distinctions between Islamist groups and pushed the center of Islamist politics toward endorsing violence. Morsi's fateful June 2013 speech actually lagged behind the standard rhetoric of Gulf Islamists, which revealed less about the Muslim Brotherhood's new extremism than about the ever more radicalized Islamist public arena.

The general radicalization of Islamic politics in the region over the past sev-eral years has had especially significant implications for movements and parties that aspire to occupy the middle ground. Most Islamist parties have continued to position themselves as nonviolent alternatives to Salafi-jihadi organizations. This positioning has typically proved politically useful, both with the public and inside the organizations. If this cultivated moderation fails to pay political dividends, however, Islamist parties may well be tempted to shift toward the new, more extreme and sectarian, middle ground.

The Evolution of Islamist Parties

Islamist parties have proven that they, like other parties, adapt to their politi-cal and institutional context, sometimes effectively, sometimes less so.[32] As Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood member Hazem Said has put it, "The Muslim Brotherhood slogan is 'prepare'—so we must be ready because conditions may change."[33] Such calls for flexibility cannot detract from the fact that there is

a clear ideological component to the Muslim Brotherhood's political thought and practice, which is instilled into its members and which permeates both its public rhetoric and private conversation.

However, there is little reason to believe that Islamists are exceptionally ideological when compared to other political actors. While Islamist ideas do define the goals and identities of Islamist organizations, the concrete implications of those ideas have been challenged quite intensely in recent years, by both external critics and those on the inside. Indeed, Islamist political behavior tends to exhibit a great deal of strategic flexibility rather than a single, static form of politics.

The Brotherhood's adaptation to local realities has been formalized in the doctrine of *wasatiyya*, or centrism.[34] This approach is designed to allow the Muslim Brotherhood to seize the mainstream of Islamist politics—though not of the broader public sphere. *Wasatiyya* has dictated a patient, long-term strategy of societal transformation through political participation, cultural shaping efforts, and organizational development. This particular configuration of ideas stemmed from a series of critical junctures shaped by Egypt's Sadat-era political and economic opening and the emergence of violent competitors, which encouraged the Muslim Brotherhood to embrace political participation and gradualism.

These ideas took hold internally because they seemed to work well as an overarching political and ideological framework in the decade prior to the Arab uprisings. It positioned Islamism within a mainstream political center that appropriated popular issues such as Palestine, opposition to the U.S. occupation of Iraq, and demands for democracy. Because this centrism was both ideologically sympathetic to the organization's self-image and politically effective, the Muslim Brotherhood's leaders were able to hold together its different internal religious and political strands without needing to make difficult choices.

The current regional political context, particularly the developments in Egypt, seems destined to push Islamist parties away from participatory and nonviolent paths. Since the military coup, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has been locked in an existential struggle in which both the organization and the regime have adopted uncompromising and increasingly forceful postures.[35] This requires little by way of ideology or unique organizational qualities to understand. The embrace by some Islamist youths of armed resistance is precisely what would be expected after the Rabaa al-Adawiya massacre and the sweeping repression that followed. For some time, this anger could be channeled into persistent protests to sustain internal morale and offer some outlet to furious members.[36] But when this approach failed to generate popular support or achieve political gains, the argument for more radical, violent action became more compelling.[37]

However, other regional trends are pushing Islamist parties in more participatory directions. As we have seen, the possible alternatives are many. However,

as these parties have considered their options, four major areas in which they have been evolving and adapting are in their organizational coherence, the relationship between party and movement, democratic participation, and the use of violence.

Organizational Coherence

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood had long been defined by its meticulous internal organization.[38] The core of the Brotherhood's organizational success was its elaborate cell structure and high degree of internal socialization, which protected the movement to some degree against state repression. It relied on a rigid hierarchy to transmit instructions from the leadership to the rank and file, while holding regular internal elections to offer some form of accountability to members. This distinctive structure lay behind its successful political mobilization. The Brotherhood's internal organization allowed for an exceptionally high degree of indoctrination, surveillance, and internal discipline. When it came time to manage political campaigns or fight street battles, the Muslim Brotherhood could quickly and effectively activate large numbers of supporters to work in a coordinated fashion.

The Egyptian Brotherhood was especially known for its organizational coherence and ability to avoid major factional splintering. Incidents of internal dissent—such as the formation of the al-Wasat Party, which emerged from a rift in the Brotherhood in 1996, or the disciplining of young Brotherhood bloggers in the late 2000s for challenging the official leadership by openly discussing internal affairs—ultimately affected only a tiny minority of the membership. The few hundred departures, even if by well-known figures, had little serious impact on an organization of its size. However, the period leading up to the Arab uprising had been unusually contentious internally. The Brotherhood elections of 2009–2010 concentrated power in the hands of a conservative faction, driving away many top reformist leaders.[39]

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The Egyptian crackdown took a particularly significant toll on the Muslim Brotherhood's organizational capacity.[40] Thousands of its members were imprisoned, some 500 nongovernmental organizations affiliated with the organization were legally shuttered, the assets of its leading members were confiscated, its public presence was obliterated, and its lines of internal communication were disrupted. The Brotherhood leadership has been unable to maintain effective control in the face of radical reactions of youth cadres and incitement from members abroad.

While it seems that some families continue to meet, especially outside of Cairo, and the skeleton of the Brotherhood remains intact, the leadership has been largely decimated by arrests, killings, and exile. The remaining leaders are struggling among themselves over control, while the connections between

the Brotherhood's numerous cells and the leadership have been severed.[41] Even when Brotherhood leaders have tried to sustain a nonviolent approach, they lack the organizational ability to enforce their doctrines on rebellious and angry members.[42]

As scholar Abdelrahman Ayyash has put it: "The period since Morsi's overthrow has been an unprecedented state of disarray which has in effect created a new organization."[43] This disarray complicates any form of coherent, long-term action by the organization or its ability to maintain discipline among the ranks. Even if the leadership today opted for reconciliation with the regime, it would face great difficulty in compelling members to go along with such a decision.

This situation has produced an intense degree of factional discord and internal argumentation over strategy, leadership, and organizational decisions. The disagreements track across several dividing lines. An enduring generational divide has become ever more salient as older Brotherhood members hearken back to their survival strategies during earlier eras of fierce repression, while younger members agitate for confrontation with the Egyptian regime. Another enduring divide that has taken on new significance is between politically focused Muslim Brotherhood leaders and the more religiously focused rank and file. There is also a divide between different branches of the leadership in exile and an emergent leadership inside the country.

This struggle for control between the leadership faction in Egypt and the other in exile has divided the Egyptian organization in ways deeply unfamiliar to it.[44] The splits are partly logistical, with senior leaders in prison and middle-ranking leaders dispersed among multiple countries, making coordination very difficult.[45] But they also reflect real differences over political strategy and ideology. In place of the consensus strategy of years past, Muslim Brotherhood factions today are sharply divided over the legitimacy of dialogue with the state, the formation of a government in exile, ongoing calls for protests, the use of violence, and even how leaders should be chosen.

Rather than basing their selection of leaders on traditional qualities, such as long service within the organization or relationships with existing leaders, many Brotherhood members now want the standard to be one's current activism. In that way they have rejected internal despotism while demanding genuine organizational democracy.[46] Younger members are openly hostile to the traditional demands for obedience to leaders they view as having failed. In these internal power struggles, the old guard has financial resources and international connections but lacks strong support among young members in Egypt who make up the residual strength of the movement.

The competition has played out not only within the secretive and closed circles of Muslim Brotherhood politics, but also across online platforms and social media. For instance, several figures, including the pseudonymous Mohammad Muntasir, have claimed the status of official spokesman for the Brotherhood. In late May 2016, a website belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood's banned

Freedom and Justice Party went online, over the objections of the party's best-known leaders. Statements issued by official Muslim Brotherhood platforms are now routinely contradicted and denied by others. Such divisions highlight the breakdown of the organization's hierarchy and discipline, long considered among its most vital attributes.

The organization has worked to overcome these differences through a series of internal reform initiatives. The Muslim Brotherhood has always had a relatively democratic process for the selection of its leadership, with members of the Shura Council and the Guidance Office directly elected from within the organization's ranks. In 2009, anger over the perceived manipulation of those processes in the election of a new Guidance Office triggered a wave of resignations by top leaders. Youth activists, with the support of some leaders such as Mohamed Kamal and Mohamed Wahdan, began pushing in February 2014 for new elections to bring people active on the ground into the formal leadership structure.[47] Such elections were discussed throughout 2015, without achieving a consensus that could reconcile the factions. The traditional leadership, mostly in exile, resisted this challenge to their authority, but by spring 2016 had moved toward accepting internal elections.

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Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood is not the only branch to experience a fundamental organizational rupture. Over the past year, as noted, Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood has been the target of an unprecedented challenge to its organizational coherence. Long-simmering internal disagreements came to the surface in October 2013 with the so-called Zamzam Initiative, led by reformist leaders in the party, mostly of East Bank origin. The Zamzam leaders were expelled by the Muslim Brotherhood's Shura Council in February 2014. A year later, the government approved an application from a group including Zamzam leaders to form a licensed charity under the name the Muslim Brotherhood Society. What began as internal momentum for reform evolved—with regime support—into a major split.

The Zamzam Initiative risked fragmenting the Muslim Brotherhood along one of its long-standing divides, namely the relationship between the Jordanian organization and Hamas. The Brotherhood had been split among multiple constituents for over a decade.[48] The divide was both ethno-national and political. East Bankers resented the role of Palestinians in the organization and the focus on Palestinian affairs at the expense of domestic Jordanian politics. Organizational hawks advocated a more confrontational approach toward Jordan's government. Zamzam leader Ruheil al-Ghuraybah explained that "the root cause of the divisions is demographic, since Hamas penetrated the group in Jordan for many years and forced its own agenda."[49]

When the new Muslim Brotherhood Society received official recognition from the Jordanian state, the old Muslim Brotherhood found itself stripped of

legal recognition, while significant portions of the organization's material and financial resources were transferred to the new organization. In doing so, the Jordanian regime triggered an existential battle over the Brotherhood's identity, organization, and purpose.[50] The palace understood that removing the Muslim Brotherhood completely would be dangerous because it would eliminate one of the major channels through which Islamist-oriented youths could participate in politics. So, instead, it moved to create an alternative organization more amenable to its political goals.

This unique government approach of creating a new official Brotherhood and transferring to it the resources of the original organization generated profound uncertainty. The new Muslim Brotherhood Society commanded legal recognition and financial resources but had virtually no legitimacy among the Muslim Brotherhood's broader membership or the public. Four different Islamist parties entered the 2016 parliamentary elections, but, tellingly, it was the candidates affiliated with the traditional Brotherhood organization who succeeded.

The organizational crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood organizations in Egypt and Jordan posed a sharp challenge to their established strategy of using the provision of social services for political and organizational outreach. The effect has been to radically circumscribe, if not end, the opportunity for such social service provision.[51] How the absence of such opportunities will affect the long-term position of Islamist parties is a major question with which its leaders are grappling.

Party Versus Movement

Few recent developments in the Islamist spectrum have drawn as much positive notice as the decision of Tunisia's Ennahdha to separate its political party from its religious movement and rebrand itself the "Muslim democrats," a term used by Ghannouchi himself.[52] This bold move reshaped the Islamist political field in fascinating ways, winning approval from Gulf regimes and local audiences typically hostile to Islamism, while attracting close study by other Islamists.

However, Ennahdha's move was not as novel as it initially appeared. Other Islamist parties had also worried about coexistence between the religious and social facets of their organizations and the more limited, practical agenda inherent in their identities as political parties. Some attempted to respond to pressures from other parties and civil society to firmly demarcate where Islamist movements ended and political parties began. Critics complained that the parties' claim to represent Islam gave them an unfair advantage with religious voters.

Islamists themselves largely rejected these arguments on both ideological and strategic grounds, preferring to enjoy the electoral benefits of a large public outreach apparatus over assuaging the mistrust of their political rivals. Previous efforts to resolve the tension between party and movement by forming

nominally independent political parties rarely produced genuinely distinct bodies. Jordan's Islamic Action Front remained mostly indistinguishable from its parent organization, as did the Freedom and Justice Party from Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Ghannouchi and other Ennahdha leaders approvingly cited the precedent of Morocco's Justice and Development Party, the first to separate a nominally Islamist political party organizationally and programmatically from its religious movement. The PJD was also the most successful of the Islamist parties at finding a place at the center of national politics.

The gambit to separate party and movement is an "old and recurring debate," notes scholar Khalil el-Anani, but one that in previous periods was typically resolved in favor of continued integration.[53] However, the initial promise of genuine democracy after the 2011 uprisings and then the rigors of failed transitions gave more impetus to the idea. Ennahdha's dramatic and highly publicized move to separate those functions took on greater significance in the transitional context, with scholar Khaled al-Hroub calling it "one of the most important steps in the evolution of political Islam since its creation."[54] With such

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a separation, Ennahdha could in principle lose the ability to draw on the movement's social services and resources. But it also gained by being able to recruit from a broader base, adopt positions outside of traditional Islamist concerns, and more easily enter into alliances with non-Islamist actors.

The new push was largely pragmatic, rooted in a recognition that the traditional approach of putting the movement at the service of electoral politics had manifestly failed. This pragmatism meant that the separation will, at least initially, prove as enduring as the new configuration is successful. Ennahdha has yet to go to the polls since its reinvention as a political party. Should its gamble fail to pay off, pressure to reintegrate with the movement would likely resurface.[55]

In Jordan, some Muslim Brotherhood leaders believe a similar separation between party and movement would relieve the relentless pressure on the organization by the regime.[56] The Islamic Action Front, one of the earliest and most successful of the Muslim Brotherhood political parties, had never really separated in any meaningful sense from the broader movement. The veteran Islamist journalist Hilmi al-Asmar has argued that in the new political climate "the duality of the 'party and the jamaa' [group] made these [Islamist] parties ineffective."[57] Such assessments, however, have not yet led to any final decisions.

Even Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood has joined the debate in search of a possible way out of its predicament.[58] On May 7, 2016, the High Administrative Committee of the Egyptian Brotherhood publicly circulated a road map to save the organization through new internal elections.[59] Acknowledging the realities of deep internal splits and the failure of previous initiatives, the committee

proposed immediate new elections to all Brotherhood offices and the convening of a new Shura Council in June. However, little came of it.

This occurred only two months after Amr Darrag, a leading figure in the post-coup Muslim Brotherhood, proposed the separation of the political party from the religious movement as a step in the organization's political rehabilitation.[60] In the context of the internal debate over the restructuring of the Muslim Brotherhood, Darrag suggested separating its political and religious work and promising to refrain from political mobilization for a specific period of time, as a prerequisite for a regime de-escalation against the organization. To date, none of these initiatives has amounted to much, but the debate continues to simmer as Muslim Brotherhood leaders and members search for an effective strategy.

Such a separation seems much more difficult in Egypt than in Tunisia, both because of the political context and the particular experiences of the respective Brotherhood movements. Few Egyptians will quickly forget the experience of the Freedom and Justice Party, the political wing of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, including its active use of Brotherhood social services to win votes during the 2011 and 2012 elections. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood has been so deeply engaged in politics over the past fifteen years that the overlap between its activities has become central to the organization's identity, structure, and practice. It seems unlikely that angry young Brotherhood members— traumatized by intense regime repression, torture, and mass killing— would accept separating the party from the movement. At any rate, the Egyptian regime shows little sign of welcoming a Brotherhood return to public life. It has, instead, intensified its confiscation of Brotherhood assets and its labeling the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization.

The idea of separating party from movement has been clearly established as a viable model for Islamist organizations, even if it seems problematic in Egypt. The enthusiastic reception of Ennahdha's decision by commentators aligned with the hostile United Arab Emirates signaled the possibilities in such a course for embattled Islamists. What a separation would look like in practice, how it would affect the electoral prospects of Islamist organizations, whether their membership would be willing to accept such a separation, and whether Islamists could overcome the suspicions of non-Islamists will all be major questions in the coming period.

Democratic Participation

The question of whether Muslim Brotherhood organizations become more moderate when given the opportunity to participate in democratic politics once structured much of the political science debate over Islamist movements.[61] Yet the debate has always been a frustrating one. An organization can be very moderate in its political demands while deeply radical in its cultural and social vision. The positions of the various Muslim Brotherhoods may be extreme in

relation to Western values, but are quite mainstream in relation to the values of their own countries.[62]

Participation in the formal political process has long been a key marker of the mainstream aspirations of Brotherhood organizations. Even the not infrequent Islamist party electoral boycotts were typically framed as a critique of anti-democratic practices by regimes rather than as a rejection of democratic principles. It should come as little surprise, then, that Islamist parties across the region have continued to contest parliamentary elections even after facing extreme duress.

Egypt, again, is a problematic outlier in the broader Islamist field in this regard. Nor does the Egyptian experience after 2011 offer definitive lessons. The democratic opening was extremely short and took place in the absence of settled constitutional or institutional rules. Democratic inclusion produced wildly erratic behavior by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and by all other political actors. The Egyptian uprising triggered a profound weakening of the state, introducing enormous uncertainty into previously stable institutions. Elections and attempted governance took place in the absence of a new constitution and during a period of rapid and intense social polarization as well as considerable meddling by external actors with a stake in the outcome. The competing pulls of ambition and fear under conditions of profound uncertainty seemed to better explain the Muslim Brotherhood's "impetuous rush to power" at the time.[63]

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The autocratic retrenchment of the last few years in Egypt likely means that there will be few opportunities for democratic inclusion in the foreseeable future.[64] However, political inclusion can take many forms, as can repression, and each of them may have a distinctive impact on organizational identity and behavior. There is a vast difference between participation in semiauthoritarian parliaments, where real governing power is never really at stake, and participation in truly democratic systems, where victory and governance become possibilities. Inclusion in the former may promote more moderate policy goals simply because of the limits of possible action, while participation in the latter can heighten aspirations for radical change. But alternative causal chains are also possible. Authoritarian inclusion could promote radical rhetoric because talk is cheap and will never need to be redeemed. Democratic inclusion could encourage caution for fear of alienating centrist voters.

In short, it has always made more sense to talk about specific forms of inclusion producing specific types of moderation. Authoritarian inclusion seems to have produced a pragmatic, centrist discourse and behavior in Morocco's Justice and Development Party, while democratic inclusion did the same for Tunisia's Ennahdha Party.

Elections played multiple roles in the strategy of participation. Even when the Muslim Brotherhood knew that it could not win, participation was seen as

a vehicle for outreach to the public. Brotherhood organizations also typically worked to establish commanding positions within civil society. Universities were a key terrain for political contestation and training. Professional associations became bastions of Islamist power. Parliamentary blocs, even when unable to enact significant legislation, provided an opportunity to put a spotlight on government abuses and sustain a public presence. Winning governing power was not necessary for this approach—and, indeed, would have placed uncomfortable demands on the Muslim Brotherhood to fulfill demands made from a position of opposition. This long game was disrupted by the rapid political changes that took place starting in 2011.[65]

It is striking how consistently Brotherhood parties have opted for electoral participation, across many different political systems and despite widely varying degrees of repression. Islamist parties that chose to boycott elections at certain times have generally returned to contest elections later. These parties have repeated this pattern in the years since the Arab uprisings. As impossible as it seems today, it would not be a surprise if even Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood were to return to electoral politics in a few years' time, once conditions have changed.

Violence and Extremism

The changing political context after the Arab uprisings has also affected Islamist arguments and doctrines about violence.[66] The mainstreaming of violence across the region since Egypt's coup and the escalation of the Syrian insurgency has fundamentally challenged the logic of nonviolence that governed Muslim Brotherhood practice during previous decades.[67] While considering the question of violence, one Egyptian Brotherhood member, Hazem Said, reframed the mantra of the party's general guide, that "our nonviolence is more powerful than bullets." Said argued that for the Muslim Brotherhood, nonviolence was a tactic rather than a core ideological principle. Jihad, in turn, was a core principle, and at times had to be pursued by the sword. The right question was when to be nonviolent and to what end.[68] While this represented the views of only one member, it is striking that such conversations are now unfolding in public.

This highlights one of the potential dangers of pragmatic reasoning. Where previously nonviolence had been an effective way of seizing the center and reassuring dubious non-Islamists, the new regional environment seems to valorize and even demand violence. As the Syrian insurgency spiked in 2013, jihadi theories and violent practices, which had previously been anathema, came to be openly supported and even praised across many Arab media and social media platforms. At the same time, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood sought to replicate its traditional centrism within this violent environment, making greater efforts than most other Islamist organizations to engage with non-Islamists, reassure minorities, and demonstrate moderation to the West.

Still, by 2015, many Arab regimes had returned to cracking down on open advocacy of jihadi ideas, not only due to pressure from the United States but also because they began to perceive the potential threat such movements posed to their own security.

The regional and Islamist landscape has changed so radically over the past few years that it is unlikely that the Muslim Brotherhood could play a fire-wall role against violent extremism even if it still wanted to do so. Instead, the growing violence of national and regional politics and the degradation of democratic and nonviolent alternatives are quite likely to push the Muslim Brotherhood's political ideas in more extreme directions.[69] Brotherhood views of the use of violence have changed over the past few years for both normative and practical reasons. The traumatic experiences after the 2013 coup had a searing impact on many younger members.[70]

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Nonviolence appears to have failed as a strategy, while those using violence seem to be gaining traction across the region.[71] The principle of nonviolence is more difficult to sustain as nonviolent Islamists suffer repression while wars rage in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. The perceived superiority of the jihadi model rested in part on its own demonstrated success in comparison to the failed mainstream movements. The Islamic State's model was appealing because it demonstrated the advantages of violence for capturing territory, establishing governance, and dominating the public arena. Its steady losses and the prospect of military defeat in Libya, Iraq, and Syria and diminish the allure of this message, but the resilience of al-Qaeda and other Salafi-jihadi networks over the past fifteen years suggests that the core jihadi narrative has put down deep roots.

Conclusion: The Future of Islamist Politics

The travails of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood do not mean that Islamism has faded from the scene. Islamist movements have survived earlier moments of harsh state repression. Despite decades of intense harassment, Tunisia's Ennahdha prevailed to win electoral power within less than a year of former president Zine al-Abedin Ben Ali's overthrow. Syria's Muslim Brotherhood survived near eradication by the Assad regime to take a key role in opposition institutions that emerged after the 2011 uprising. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood withstood the fierce crackdown by then president Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime in the 1950s and 1960s. It seems likely that the Brotherhood will once again return from the current crisis.

However, its return will likely be in a very different form. The Muslim Brotherhood that emerged in Egypt in the 1970s after then president Anwar al-Sadat's political opening looked very different than the organization of the

previous decades. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood developed differently in exile during the 1990s and 2000s than did Brotherhood organizations that remained active under authoritarian regimes. Tunisia's Ennahdha evolved dramatically during the decades of Ben Ali's repression, in ways that were manifested in its behavior and rhetoric during the post-2011 transition. Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood became one of the most forward-looking Islamist political parties during the kingdom's democratic heyday of the early 1990s, but it then degenerated into a retrograde, divided, and marginalized organization after decades of escalating persecution.

The denial of democratic opportunities, the rise of successful violent movements, and the shifting regional and Islamist contexts make it likely that the coming period of Islamist politics will be dominated by non–Muslim Brotherhood organizations. The current environment is highly unfavorable to the Brotherhood's traditional model and welcoming to its Islamist rivals. The Islamist impulse has hardly been subdued by the failures of the Egyptian Brotherhood. Instead, the center of gravity has shifted toward Salafi and jihadi networks offering harder, less accommodating versions of Islamism. While the Muslim Brotherhood's nonviolence and democratic participation defined the Islamist mainstream for decades, this may now be better embodied in Syria, and for many Sunnis in the Gulf, by the highly sectarian Salafi-jihadism of Ahrar al-Sham.

> **The travails of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood do not mean that Islamism has faded from the scene.**

Islamists have tentatively begun to debate these new political realities and to rethink their ideologies and strategies. Those debates, many of them on semipublic social media platforms and websites, offer a vital glimpse into their collective effort to understand and adapt. However, they have made only limited progress toward articulating a new consensus. For Egyptian Brotherhood members, the ordeals of 2013 remain too painful and vivid, and the current lines of division too intense. For Moroccans, Tunisians, and many others, the demands of local politics have consumed the attention of Islamist groups. And in war zones such as Libya and Syria, the exigencies of the conflicts and the pull of more extreme ideologies have often seemed overwhelming.

This environment places an ever greater burden on Islamist parties to engage in strategies of reassurance and preemptive concessions, even as they seek viable new positions in the political and social landscape. The most successful Islamist parties seem to be those that have found an accommodation with new national and regional political conditions, which means working within, rather than fundamentally challenging, existing political institutions. Reform—or at least inclusion—has trumped revolution.[72]

Morocco's Justice and Development Party, Syria's Muslim Brotherhood, Yemen's Islah, Tunisia's Ennahdha, and Kuwait's Islamic Constitutional Movement have all found ways to adapt to new national, regional, and

intra-Islamist conditions. They have done so by reassuring other groups about their intentions and acting with self-restraint, credibly committing to working within the system and not seeking domination. Even Ennahdha's much-celebrated separation of the party from the movement will likely matter more in this national and regional contest of perceptions than it will on the ground.

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood faces a more difficult road than most of its peers. The intensity of the polarization between 2011 and 2013, the extreme ferocity that followed the military coup, and the regime's relentless campaign against the Brotherhood have hardened views about the organization. It has thus far proven unable to find a way back into the political system, or even to reach internal agreement over discovering one. It has also been unable to reassure a hostile Egyptian public or build new political alliances, even as elite criticism of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's regime mounts. Initiatives to overcome the Muslim Brotherhood's unprecedented internal divisions through elections and organizational restructuring have thus far been unsuccessful. Internal dialogues have yet to produce a consensus over a political strategy or key ideological questions about violence and political participation. For now, the Brotherhood is likely to remain consumed by these rifts, isolated from the brittle but authoritarian Egyptian political system. The center of Islamist politics—as with regional politics more broadly—may swing away from Egypt.

The future of Islamist politics will likely be driven more by the evolution of political institutions than by the ideological particularities of Islamists. Islamist parties adapt to local and regional realities, becoming violent in civil wars and becoming democratic when presented with the opportunity to contest elections. The Arab uprisings offered an opening for the unprecedented political inclusion of Islamist parties. The authoritarian backlash after the failure of those transitions now risks pushing Islamist movements away from democratic participation and toward mobilization against political systems. The constituencies mobilized by Islamist movements have not disappeared. The challenge posed by the Islamic State and al-Qaeda demonstrates the desperate need for rebuilding effective firewalls against radicalization. Whether Islamist parties can adapt to these challenges will depend on if they can generate compelling new political strategies and ideological positions that align with the rapidly shifting domestic, regional, and intra-Islamist arenas; reassure non-Islamist skeptics; and effectively counter the appeal of more violent and radical Islamist trends.

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