

July 4, 2019

A Symbolic Day for the The Muslim Brotherhood

Muhammad Morsi (August 20, 1951 – June 17, 2019)

On Monday June 17, 2019 former Egyptian President (June 2012 – July 2013) Muhammad Morsi passed away.

Morsi was elected the fifth president of Egypt in June 2012. In July 2013 he was ousted in a military coup led by then Egyptian Defense Minister, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the current Egyptian president. Since the coup Morsi was in prison awaiting trial. He died in the courtroom. Fearing his death would spark mass riots, Egyptian authorities buried Morsi the same night.

Though Morsi technically ran and was elected as an independent – and not a Muslim Brotherhood candidate – prior to his Presidency, Muhammad Morsi was the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) movement in Egypt. And clearly as President, Morsi strived to implement the MB agenda.

June 17, 2019

The same day Morsi died, **Abdul Majid al-Zuneibat, the head of The Muslim Brotherhood Society (MBS) which is the reform wing of the MB in Jordan**, held a Press Conference in which he **presented the political doctrine of MBS.**

These two events on June 17th – **the death of Morsi and the announcement of the MBS doctrine, reflect the turbulence the Muslim Brotherhood** has experienced following the public outcry, protests and demonstrations across the Middle East which erupted in late 2010 - known as "The Arab Spring."

The Muslim Brotherhood

The **Muslim Brotherhood** *Jamaat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, was founded in Egypt at the end of the 1920's by Hassan al-Banna, an Egyptian scholar, teacher and *Iman* (preacher). Today the Muslim Brotherhood is the largest mass movement in the **Sunni** Muslim world, with chapters in all Muslim states and in some non-Muslim states.

The Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was formed in 1946. Al-Zuneibat led the MB in Jordan at end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. In 2015, he and other reformist MB members severed ties with the MB, created MBS, and declared the MBS the only MB representative in Jordan.

As the most prominent representative of **Political Islam***, **the Muslim Brotherhood**, believes that Islam is a cohesive and comprehensive religious, moral, political, social, and economic structure given to mankind by Allah. Therefore, the Islamic religious codex - **the Shari'ah (literally translated "the path") must be implemented in every aspect of human existence.** Their slogan "*Islam is the Solution*" demonstrates that to the Muslim Brotherhood and their adherents, Islam is flawless.

Throughout its history, the Brotherhood has experienced ups and downs. As the first waves of the **Arab Awakening** were rolling across the Arab world from 2011 -2013, the Muslim Brotherhood **marked Its biggest political achievement. They came to power in Egypt and Tunisia, and Muslim Brotherhood chapters in Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, and Qatar, were gaining support and momentum.**

However, the historical accomplishments did not last long.

Ironically, the Muslim Brotherhood's biggest achievement quickly turned into its deepest crisis. Shortly after coming to power in Egypt and Tunisia, it was clear they had no pragmatic strategy to address the huge economic and societal challenges – corruption, poverty, unemployment, a failing health system, a dysfunctional educational system, lack of housing, lack of basic services, etc.

Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood made critical political mistakes once in power. On the one hand, in order to gain domestic and international support they distanced themselves from their natural allies – the Islamic affiliated organizations. And on the other hand, they were hostile towards important elements of society – like the army, secular political parties, civil organizations, lobbies, etc. And at the same time, they tried to impose their hardline ideology through “Muslim Brotherhood Style Islamization” of the countries in which they had gained power.

The result was a disgruntled public and a government with no political allies. **This eventually led to the military coup that brought down the MB government in Egypt and to the MB being voted out of office in Tunisia.**

Military Coup Ends Morsi's Rule – July 3, 2013

Following the military takeover in Egypt, Muhamad Morsi and MB leaders and activists were hunted and arrested.

In December 2013 the MB movement in Egypt was officially defined as a terrorist organization.

In May 2015, Morsi together with other senior members of the MB were sentenced to death and put in prison.

Egypt's President al-Sisi relentlessly persecutes Muslim Brotherhood members, and hundreds of its leaders are imprisoned.

Today, the MB is also designated a terrorist organization by Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Castle Guardians vs Reform Camp of the Muslim Brotherhood

The **rapid downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood generated a growing political and ideological debate within the movement** centering around two major issues: political flexibility and the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood movement and the modern independent nation-state.

The debate resulted in the emergence of two camps: The “**Castle Guardians**” and the “**Reform Camp**” and the eventual split between the two in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Jordan.

By virtue of its dogmatic ideology, the Muslim Brotherhood is politically, culturally and religiously intolerant and rigid. Both the Castle Guardians and the Reform camps share the belief that the Muslim Brotherhood ideology ([Political Islam](#)) is the right path. Both envision one global political entity – the *Khalafa* (the Caliphate) which will be attained through education and preaching and run by Sharia law; funding social and economic projects; volunteering; and the indoctrination and proselytization the masses - a term known as *da'wa*. Given that, they oppose the idea of an independent nation state which is based upon non-Islamic legislative constructs. Rejecting the idea of nation state, set the Muslim Brotherhood on a collision course with some of the states in which they operate.

What is the main controversy between the "Castle Guardians" and the Reform Camp?

The "Castle Guardians" believe that **compromising the movement's ideology** to gain political allies and accepting the construct of a nation-state, **will lead the MB into an ideological tailspin, and the movement will lose its path, identity, direction and supporters.**

The **Reform Camp** argues that **political flexibility and temporarily accepting the nation state, is MB's only way to can remain relevant and to expand its base of support.**

Symbolically, on the same day – June 17th 2019, as Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood said goodbye to Mohammad Morsi - a "Castle Guardian," **Abdul Majid al-Zuneibat, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood reform camp in Jordan presented the platform of the Reform camp: tolerance, political flexibility, and commitment to Jordan's sovereignty and independence.** The same message of the Reform camp in Jordan is echoed in the Reform camps of MB chapters in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Kuwait.

That profound change does not mean that they have given up their vision of the Caliphate. Rather, it expresses the fact that the Reform camp believes that cooperation and loyalty to the state - while at the same laying the groundwork for the establishment of the Caliphate – does not conflict with the tenets of Political Islam. They accept that **achieving the goal of Caliphate is a long and winding process - and as part of that they will have to tolerate and cooperate with other entities – such as the nation-state – in order to achieve their ultimate vision and goal.** Thus, the Reform camp supports the concept of "Tamqin" meaning – enabling.

The branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine: Hamas – Castle Guardian or Reform Camp?

Some argue a similar process is taking place within *Hamas (Harakat Al-Muqawama Al Islamiyah" – The Islamic Resistance Movement)*, a [branch of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Palestine](#) who has ruled the Gaza Strip since 2007. That argument is based upon a political doctrine Hamas published in May, 2017. Yet, in my June 2017 article [Tasting the Bitter Pills of Reality: Hamas' New Political Pact](#), I argued that Hamas' new political manifesto neither reflects a reform nor moderation as some argued. Rather it reflects tactical pragmatism in the face of the domestic and regional challenges Hamas faces.

I believe that looking at **Hamas' political inflexibility, and their rejection of the nation-state, indicates that Hamas - as of now, is closer to the "Castle Guardians" than to the Reform camp.**

Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in June 2007, violently terminating the rule of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the Gaza Strip. Since then, all the attempted **reconciliations and signed agreements between Hamas and the PA have failed.** One major reason for that, is the fact that Hamas refuses to restore the PA as the governing body in the Gaza Strip. **Hamas considers its rule of Gaza as a fait accompli, and it has no intention of compromising its rule – not even if it means improving the lives of Gazans and the quality of the living conditions in the Gaza Strip.**

One of the major reasons for Hamas' political rigidity has to do with the fact that **Hamas - different from the MB reform wing, believes that accepting the construct of a nation state jeopardizes the realization of the Caliphate.** Therefore, **when faced with the choice between having a Palestinian state in which Hamas will have to share power with the Palestinian Authority – an entity they ideologically oppose - or not having a Palestinian State, Hamas - for now, chooses the later.** That explains the recent statement of Hamas Senior leader, Mahmoud al-Zahar who said: ["When I hear about the principle of a Palestinian State within the boundaries of 1967, I want to vomit, Palestine is just a toothpick \(i.e. it is totally insignificant, negligible\); Palestine is never mentioned on maps; our \(i.e. Hamas\) goal is much bigger \(i.e. Caliphate\)".](#)

Future Direction of The Muslim Brotherhood?

In the chapter "Belly Dancing in the Driver Seat" in my book *Inside the Middle East: Making Sense of the Most Dangerous and Complicated Region on Earth* (March 2016) I explored the Muslim Brotherhood crisis and I predicted the movement's Reform wing would further strengthen at the expense of the "Castle Guardians."

I still stand by that prediction and I see the Reform camp continuing to strengthen. And that is very significant. **The strengthening of the MB Reformist camp which seeks political cooperation and is committed to the sovereignty and independence of the nation-state will contribute to the political stability needed to address the tremendous challenges of the societies.**

*The term "Political Islam" refers to movements and parties in the Muslim world that have the following things in common:

- Their ultimate goal is to create a global Islamic cultural, political, and religious entity known as *Khalafa* / Caliphate in which no other independent or sovereign state exists.
- The Khalafa should be governed and ruled by Islamic law; the *Shari'ah* (literally translated "the path").
- They believe that the *Shari'ah*, the moral and religious law, is the Master Plan given by *Allah* (literally translated "the God") to mankind. As such, it is the manifestation of Allah's ultimate will, and therefore people should live their life only according to the *Shari'ah*. Accordingly, the *Shari'ah* should be the only source of legislation and the supreme governing authority and should govern all areas of life – public and private.
- Any other political philosophy or political system (communism, democracy, socialism, etc.) is unacceptable because it is man-made, therefore it is imperfect, unjust, and doomed to fail. Furthermore, adopting these systems is in defiance of Allah's will.
- They completely reject political frameworks, ideologies, and values that are not Islamic.
- Though they reject democracy, it is legitimate in their view to use democratic elections and democratic government systems, such as parliamentary, multi-party-political systems, etc. as a temporary and tactical tool to achieve their ultimate goal which is to create a global Khalafa.
- They are willing to participate in government as a temporary stage towards fulfilling their ultimate goal - to create a global Khalafa.
- They oppose, and are in direct conflict, with Western values such as gender equity, homosexuality, liberalism, pluralism and secularism. They are less tolerant of diversity, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of thought, human rights, individualism, liberty, open-mindedness, etc. because they view western values as an imminent and existential threat to Islam.
- They create their support and cultivate their power base through creating economic, educational, social, and welfare programs that benefit the broad public, especially people on the lower end of the socio-economic scale.
- They create educational and religious programs and institutions to educate and embed the values and ideology of political Islam in as many people as possible and they use these frameworks as a platform to percolate and spread their ideology as far as possible.
- Absolute and uncompromising opposition to the existence of the State of Israel. The animosity towards Israel is justified upon Islamist theology. According to the ideology of political Islam Jews are not a nation. Judaism, as a religion was once a valid religion, but the Jews betrayed the Divine Mission that they were given by Allah, - to spread Allah's rule and justice upon the land – and therefore he punished them and dispersed them in the world and sent Islam as the real religion to guide mankind. Therefore, in the eyes of political Islam, the existence of Israel is not only unjustified because Jews are not a nation; but the existence of Israel is a direct defiance of Allah's will.

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