

## **Egyptian Politics and the Crisis of the Muslim Brotherhood since 2013**

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### **Introduction**

The ouster of Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi (Muḥammad Mursī), a senior Muslim Brotherhood (*Jam'īya al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, hereafter “MB”) figure, in July 2013, was a significant turning point for the MB. The MB had been the largest Islamic movement as well as one of the most important political actors in Egypt since its foundation in 1928. However, after its ouster, the MB has faced a severe crisis and has been forced to pave an “uncharted course” [Brown & Dunne 2015]. The Egyptian State under Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Sīsī),<sup>1</sup> that is the interim government formed after the ouster, and the subsequent al-Sisi’s presidency, has maintained a crackdown on the MB. The Cairo Court for Urgent Matters ordered the shutdown and asset freezing of the MB and its affiliated associations soon after the ouster. After the explosion at the security headquarters in Mansoura (al-Manṣūra) in the Dakahlīya (al-Daqahlīya) governorate in December 2013, the interim government declared the MB a terrorist organization. The Freedom and Justice Party (Ḥizb al-Ḥurrīya wa al-‘Adāla), the MB’s political wing, was also dissolved by a court order in August 2014. As a result, the MB lost its legal political status and was banned completely. The repressive policy under al-Sisi since 2013 has drastically undermined the MB’s political activities in Egypt. It is the first time for the MB to experience such a repressive policy since president Nasser’s (Jamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir) crackdown in the 1950s–1960s. Under these severe circumstances, the MB has been forced to find a way to survive as an organization. The exclusion of the MB, one of main Islamic political actors in Egypt for decades, from the formal political sphere has brought about a significant change in Egyptian politics.

The aim of this paper is to explore the changes in Egyptian politics by focusing on the MB’s crisis under al-Sisi’s rule since 2013. Firstly, I will examine the state’s repressive policy toward the MB. Then, I will give an overview of the crisis of the MB and its survival strategy to counter this crisis. Finally, I will analyze how MB’s political setback has affected Egyptian politics.

### **I. Repressive Policy toward the Muslim Brotherhood under al-Sisi**

#### **1. The Legitimacy of al-Sisi’s Rule**

The interim government was established soon after the military ouster of Morsi. The process of establishing the interim government strongly defined its legitimacy. In fact, the

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<sup>1</sup> Although the president of the interim government was Adly Mansour (‘Adlī Manṣūr), former chief judge of Egyptian Supreme Constitutional Court, it was underpinned by the military’s support, and al-Sisi, first vice prime minister and defense minister, was the government’s de facto leader.

legitimacy stemmed from the achievement of the military led by al-Sisi, that the military had ‘saved’ Egypt from Morsi and the MB. The background to the collapse of Morsi’s presidency in 2013 was the mounting anti-Morsi discontent among the Egyptian society. The Tamarod (Tamarrud) successfully executed a signature-collecting campaign in a bid for Morsi’s resignation,<sup>2</sup> and organized anti-Morsi demonstrations. The military clearly states that it took action to ouster Morsi because of “the movement and call of the masses of the Egyptian people who summoned the Armed Forces’ in their national and not their political role” [SIS 2013]. “The movement and call” meant the nation-wide anti-MB protests, and the military ousted Morsi to fulfill the demand of this movement and call. Moreover, on July 24, al-Sisi delivered a speech requesting the masses of the Egyptian people to give him their support and mandate (tafwīd) to confront violence and terrorism [Daragahi 2013], which was actually targeted at the MB members and Morsi supporters sitting in protest around Rabaa al-Adawiya Mosque (Masjid Rābi‘a al-‘Adawīya) in Nasser City and Cairo University in Giza.

Al-Sisi’s administration following the interim government is also underpinned by the mass of the people’s anti-MB sentiment. Therefore, it must hold on to the achievement of having helped Egypt escape from the MB as the main pillar of its legitimacy and employ a repressive policy toward the MB in order to maintain this legitimacy. In other words, the repressive policy toward the MB is embedded in the state under al-Sisi. Hosni Mubarak (Muḥammad Ḥusnī Mubārak) also employed a repressive policy toward the MB [Wickham 2002: 214–217], but his main aim was to restrict the MB’s political activities to prevent it from emerging as a political challenger, not to support his legitimacy itself. On the other hand, as for al-Sisi, he is repressing the MB to maintain his legitimacy, and his regime’s continued repression toward the MB confirms his legitimacy. Thus, al-Sisi has to continue crackdowns on the MB and he often implicitly refers to the necessity to repress the MB in his speeches. In his inauguration speech, he stated, “Therefore uprooting terrorism and establishing security is one of the main priorities in the coming phase. This is why we will work to upgrade the police apparatus and enhance its potentials for establishing security and law and order and restoring security with a view to providing peace of mind for the Egyptian citizen” [SIS 2014a]. On the occasion of the first anniversary of “June 30th Revolution,”<sup>3</sup> he proclaimed, “On this day, which marks the First Anniversary of the June 30th Revolution, the dark hand of terrorism still challenges the will and aspirations of the people of Egypt; a terrorism without religion or home; a cowardly terrorism which does not hesitate to take the lives of children or fasting adults” [SIS 2014b].

Al-Sisi still maintains his repressive policy against the MB, such as arresting and jailing

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2 Tamarod aimed to collect signatures to force Morsi’s resignation, and is said to have collected about 15 million signatures by 30 June 2013.

3 The ouster of Morsi is often called the “June 30th Revolution,” named after the date that anti-Morsi mass protests began in Egypt although the MB’s members and supporters called it a “military coup.”

its members, freezing its assets, and ordering bloody crackdowns.<sup>4</sup> As long as his legitimacy is mainly underpinned by the anti-MB voice of the Egyptian masses, he does not have any option other than to maintain his attitude toward the MB until this voice changes. He said, “The problem doesn’t lie with the government and it doesn’t lie with me. It lies with public opinion, with Egyptians. Egyptians are peaceful people and they don’t like violence. They reacted against the Muslim Brotherhood and are wary of them” [MacLellan 2015]. It seems to show that he will not cancel the repression toward the MB by his own choice.

## **2. The Political Re-Exclusion of the Muslim Brotherhood**

The aim of the repressive policy toward the MB since 2013 is to maintain the state’s legitimacy under al-Sisi’s rule. After the ouster, the state arrested many MB leading members: among them were Morsi, the Supreme Guide Mohamed Badea (Muḥammad Badī‘), the first Vice Supreme Guide Khayrat al-Shater (Khayrat al-Shāṭir), the FJP’s chairman al-Katatni (Sa‘d al-Katātnī), and other cadres. The MB’s assets were also frozen by the government, and the MB’s protest movements have shrunk under this harsh crackdown. The political exclusion from the “formal political sphere” [Lust-Okar 2005: 38–40] also curbed the MB’s political activities.

As a moderate and non-violent organization, legal political activities in the formal political sphere had been the most important activities to the MB for decades. The collapse of Mubarak’s presidency in 2011 paved the way for the MB to shed the illegal status it had held since 1954 and rise as a formal political actor.<sup>5</sup> Obtaining legal status by forming its political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party, in 2011, and gaining legal status as a non-governmental organization in 2012, the MB developed politically and became a dominant political force in Egypt.

The state under al-Sisi has tried to cancel the MB’s legal status. Ellen Lust-Okar’s framework of “Structure of Contestation (SoC)” [Lust-Okar 2005], which analyzes the political exclusion and co-optation under Mubarak, is also persuasive in discussing the political exclusion of the MB under al-Sisi. In her argument, incumbent elites distinguish opposition groups as moderates or radicals according to the amount of reform the opponents seek: those who prefer policies far from the status quo are more radical, while those who seek less reform are more moderate. Incumbent elites include the moderates as legal political actors [Lust-Okar 2005: 38–40; 73–75]. Under al-Sisi’s rule, “moderates” means co-opted Islamists, such as the Nour Party (Ḥizb al-Nūr), and other liberal/secular parties. At the same time, the state re-excluded

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4 The severe crackdown on the MB on August 2013 is an example. Thousands of pro-Morsi supporters sat in around Rabaa al-Adawiya Mosque and Cairo University. Security forces harshly evacuated them and at least 638 people were killed and thousands were arrested. The exact number of victims in the incident is unknown [Hauslohner and al-Hourani 2013].

5 According to a former prominent MB member Abou Elela al-Mady (Abū al-‘Alā Mādī), the MB’s illegal status was the main factor which facilitated the crackdown by the government against the MB and blocked the MB’s development as a political force [from an interview by the author on September 9, 2000].

the radicals, namely the MB, from the formal political sphere as illegal, and maintained the stability of their rule by instituting a divided SoC, by which they divided the opposition elites. In Egypt since 2013, it has been al-Sisi's basic policy to include opponents with weak mobilization capacity as legal parties and to re-exclude from the formal political sphere his most powerful challenger—the MB, with its strong mobilization capacity—as an illegal organization.

From the perspective of Lust-Okar's framework, the MB and its affiliated groups have been re-excluded from the formal political sphere as illegal organizations under al-Sisi. He seems to have reconstructed the divided SoC by almost the same measures as Mubarak, but his anti-MB policy is stricter than Mubarak's. While the MB was tacitly allowed political participation to a limited extent under Mubarak,<sup>6</sup> al-Sisi prohibits the MB's political activities without any exceptions. Actually, al-Sisi has repressed the MB as the major opponent to eliminate its political influence under his rule. Along with the use of force mentioned above, it is the re-illegalization of the MB that makes its crisis more serious, because it is more crucial for opposition political actors to be excluded from the formal political sphere as illegal organizations under the divided SoC. The illegalization of the MB clearly shows the firm intention of al-Sisi to politically exclude the MB in order to maintain his legitimacy. As a result, in the divided SoC under al-Sisi, the MB's political activities have a low profile because of strict political exclusion.

## **II. The Crisis of the Muslim Brotherhood**

### **1. The Muslim Brotherhood's Shrinking Political Activities**

The state's repression policy toward MB under al-Sisi excludes them from the formal political sphere as an illegal organization. Of course, the MB has made efforts to overcome these dire straits. Soon after the ouster, the MB took the initiative of the National Alliance Supporting Legitimacy (al-Taḥāluf al-Waṭanī li-Da'm al-Shar'īya wa Rafḍ al-Inqilāb), which included about 40 Islamic parties and groups. The MB-led National Alliance organized anti-military demonstrations to demand the reinstatement of the ousted Morsi. It has also become active in the campuses of Egyptian universities since the fall of 2013. However, Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb (Ibrāhīm Maḥlab) issued a decree in October 2014 dissolving the National Alliance as well as any of its political arms. The Freedom and Justice Party was also dissolved by a court order in August 2014. As a result, the MB lost its legal foothold in the formal political sphere. Moreover, in April 2014, the Alexandria Court for Urgent Matters ruled that the High Presidential Elections Committee could not accept current or former MB members' bids for presidential or parliamentary elections.

As Beverley Milton-Edwards discusses, “the state, under al-Sisi, has also succeeded in

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the MB, although illegal, was allowed to field its members as independent candidates in the parliamentary elections or professional association elections under Mubarak's rule [Fahmy 2002: 81–85; 143–148].

undermining the internal cohesion of the Brotherhood. The top leadership is inaccessible (in jail or exile), and those lower down the ranks lack experience and capacity to lead and engage in the strategic oversight demanded for survival” [Milton-Edwards 2016: 52]. Although a strong leadership is critically necessary to overcome the repression, it is quite difficult for the MB today. The MB’s English website *Ikhwan Web* uploaded a new statement which holds fast to demanding Morsi’s reinstatement and calls for mass protests: the MB “will remain faithful to its principles, endeavor to recover the freedom for which blood flowed in the 2011 Revolution, and retrieve the usurped popular will, restore legitimacy and reinstate the democratically elected President and institutions, and underlines the need for nation-wide unity around the shared principles of all political parties, groups and symbols that are invited to rally around” [Muslim Brotherhood 2016]. As the statement said, “rallies” or protest demonstrations are the only option for the MB, but the state’s harsh crackdowns rapidly reduce the scale and frequency of these MB-led protests.

For example, hundreds of Egyptians rallied to protest al-Sisi’s decision to hand over two islands in the Red Sea, Tiran (Tīrān) and Sanafir (Ṣanāfir), to Saudi Arabia in April 2016, but the demonstration was organized mainly by youth through social network services (SNS) and the MB failed to show its presence in the demonstrations. The MB’s political activities today are shrinking and are at their lowest ebb in Egypt for decades.

## **2. Internal Divisions within the Muslim Brotherhood**

The repression towards the MB has brought about the absence of strong leadership, and further caused internal divisions within the MB. Since the first half of the twentieth century, the MB has had a long history of internal divisions, such as the secession of Muhammad’s Youth Group (Jam’īya Shabāb Sayyidinā Muḥammad) in 1939–40 [Lia 1998: 247–251] and the split of al-Wasat Party (Ḥizb al-Wasat) in 1996 [Wickham 2013: 76–95; Yokota 2007].

However, the state repression under al-Sisi has been the harshest since Nasser’s crackdown in the 1950s–60s and the leadership has been weakened seriously. A leading MB figure, Amr Darrag (‘Amr Darrāj), former minister of planning and international cooperation, recognizes the severe rift within the MB and said that internal divisions are inevitable for a big organization like the MB.<sup>7</sup> There are many interesting and detailed papers and articles about the MB’s rift (see also Hashem [2016] and Lynch [2016]). As Mokhtar Awad and Nathan Brown argue, “since Morsi’s ouster, Brotherhood leaders have insisted that their ‘strategic’ decision was non-violence, but that they were unable to restrain angry youths, especially those outside the movement, or that their own ‘counter-violence’ is an expected reactionary response” [Awad & Nathan 2015]. The MB’s leadership by senior members “no longer has absolute authority in managing the organization’s affairs” [Fahmi 2015].

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<sup>7</sup> From an interview conducted by the author on October 31, 2016.

The confusion in the chain of command in the MB provokes and promotes the internal divisions. The main point of dispute within the MB is whether it should continue non-violent activities or embark on violent confrontation with the military and police. The MB’s leadership continues to insist on non-violent activities while the young members, who gained greater voices during the absence of many senior members, are inclined towards violent action. So far, whenever a division has occurred within the MB, the strong leadership has intervened in favor of its senior members, giving the highest priority to maintaining the integration of the organization. However, since the MB’s leadership has been weakened by harsh crackdowns, such an intervention is almost impossible today. Therefore, these internal divisions are likely to continue until the state’s repressive policy ends.

### III. The Survival Mode of the Muslim Brotherhood

#### 1. From Political Activities to Social Activities?

The MB has been excluded from the formal political sphere and faces an existential crisis today. Milton-Edwards analyzes the MB’s efforts to adapt in detail, and describes it as “survival mode,” focusing on the MB’s political aspect [Milton-Edwards 2016: 50–52]. In this paper, I would like to analyze the MB’s survival mode focusing on its social activities.

The MB has been conducting social welfare activities in Egypt since its foundation in 1928. To analyze the MB in Egypt it is essential to investigate its social activities as well as its political activities. As a comprehensive Islamic movement [al-Bannā 1992: 121–123], the MB developed various social activities based on its Islamic ideology in Egypt: medical clinics, publishing companies, schools and kindergartens, mutual aid organizations, and so on. As shown in Figure 1, social activities are the foundation of the MB and political activities are conducted on this basis. In the MB’s long history, it has been not only a religious and political organization, but also a social welfare organization.

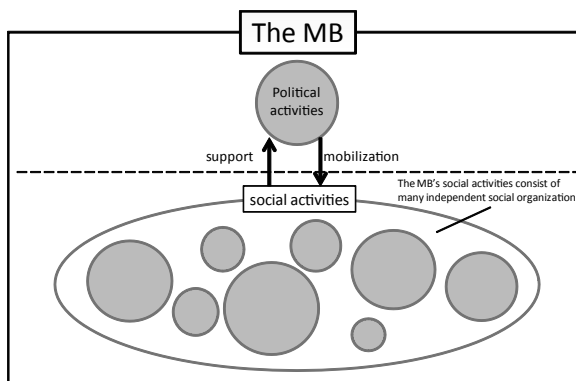


Figure 1: the MB’s structure  
Source: Author

While the MB's social activities have had a long history since its foundation in the first half of the twentieth century, its political activities started substantially in the 1980s. The MB can be regarded as a movement that has a firm and wide social foundation, and the conduct of its political activities depends on this foundation. According to Abdel Hamid al-Ghazali ('Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Ghazālī), then advisor to the Supreme Guide, the foundation of the MB's structure is based on social networks in Egyptian society built through its social welfare activities, and its social activities divisions are larger and have more members than its political ones.<sup>8</sup> In fact, its social networks functioned as a political mobilizing machine in the 2011–12 elections after the collapse of Mubarak's presidency.

After the designation of the MB as a terrorist organization in 2013, the MB's social activities were also prohibited and its assets frozen, and more than 1,000 affiliated organizations were put under investigation. These repressive measures were a critical threat to the MB because they targeted the networks built through its social activities. If the repression of its social activities were to continue, this would be a critical blow to the MB because it would cause the collapse of its foundation, depriving it of the possibility of re-establishing itself in the future.

However, the actual situation is a little bit different. When I visited one of MB's clinics in Cairo in March 2014, it opened normally and there were many visitors and patients. The clinic's director then explained to me that his clinic's assets had also been frozen but that, after they applied for permission to re-open, they received approval before long.<sup>9</sup> Since then, the clinic has offered medical services as usual. The director said that this was the same as other clinics belonging to the same medical association affiliated to the MB. Considering this case, the MB has succeeded in avoiding a fateful crisis to some extent.

Under the disadvantageous circumstances today, the MB has shrunk or has been forced to shrink its political activities, but maintains its social activities, the organization's critical foundation. It seems to be the main reason why the MB's leadership upholds its non-violent strategy while its young members are inclined to put their priority on direct political activities. Perhaps the senior members have found the way to ensure the survival of the organization by protecting its social activities, because any violent confrontation with the government would give rise to opportunities for the government to repress its social activities again.

## **2. The Muslim Brotherhood's Ideological Crisis**

The MB's survival mode above affects its ideological aspect. It is Hasan al-Banna (Ḥasan al-Bannā), the founder and the first Supreme Guide of the MB, whose ideology is indispensable and fundamental to the MB's activities. His ideology became the guideline

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<sup>8</sup> From an interview conducted by the author on 28 March 2004.

<sup>9</sup> From an interview conducted by the author on March 1, 2014. When the author visited the clinic in February 25, 2015, it opened as usual.

of the MB's activities and supplied its theoretical framework in the first half of the twentieth century. Even today his ideology is regarded as the most important pillar of the MB's activities.<sup>10</sup>

One of characteristics of al-Banna's ideology is gradualism, or in other words making progress one step at a time. In his article 'To the Youth (Ilā al-Shabāb),' he explained the gradual development of Islamization, which starts from individuals, then spreads to families, the society, the government, and the nation, and finally reaches to the Islamic world [al-Bannā 1992: 177–178]. This gradualism is a non-radical theoretical framework for the MB's activities to develop social reforms based on Islamic values, not through seizing power radically and violently, but by gradual steps starting from an individual's Islamic belief. It is a reformist approach from the bottom up. This gradualism underpinned the MB's moderate and non-violent activities, and combined the social activities with political activities, which maintained the MB's integration. Whenever political mobilization was necessary, in such a case as parliamentary elections, the MB's social networks that were built through social activities worked to support its political activities.

However, this gradualism has been blocked by the harsh repression of the state. The MB cannot mobilize its social networks for its political activities anymore because of its political exclusion. Mubarak tacitly allowed the MB's activities in the formal political sphere, and the MB could combine its social activities with its political activities. On the other hand, al-Sisi does not allow the existence of the MB in the formal political sphere, and the linkage between its social activities and its political activities is weakened and has almost disappeared. As a result, the MB cannot conduct comprehensive activity based on the linkage of these two activities. Although the MB's leadership employs a survival strategy by maintaining its social activities, the ideological theory to support the survival mode does not exist today. Many young members wonder whether this policy is truly a strategic withdrawal or not. It seems to be promoting an increase in young members who are not satisfied with the leadership's non-violent survival strategy. Furthermore, it is difficult for the MB to overcome its ideological crisis today because there are almost no ideologues outside prison who can re-construct its ideological framework.

#### **IV. The Change of the Egyptian Politics since 2013**

##### **1. The Muslim Brotherhood under Pincer Attack**

The MB's crisis has been further complicated by other political actors. The MB has been attacked not only by al-Sisi, but is under a pincer attack by the state on the one hand and by

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<sup>10</sup> According to an interview by the author with Gomoa Amin Abdel Aziz (Jum'a Amīn 'Abd al-'Azīz), then vice Supreme Guide, on August 14, 2014, he said that al-Banna's ideology had been the foundation of all the MB's activities since the foundation and that every member had to read his articles. The MB's official website *Ikhwan Online* (Ikwān Ūn Lāyn) always has a section for al-Banna's and many members often contribute articles about him. See < <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/> >.



radical Islamic movements on the other, and consequently its presence and organizational foundation in Egypt is being undermined. Today, the MB “is especially vulnerable to the discourses, in the wake of the Rabaa Square violence perpetrated by the state, of Islamists radicalized arguments which veer towards violence” [Milton-Edwards 2016: 52]. As discussed above, its political exclusion undermines the political legacy the MB has achieved over the past decades.

Radical Islamic movements have often adopted critical stances against the MB. Ayman al-Zawahiri (Ayman al-*Zawāhirī*), leader of al-Qaida, harshly criticizes the MB in the journal *Inspire*: “It is also a battle of striving politically to expose to our people that there are some from the groups that are associated with Islamic work such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Sisiist-Salafists and Ghanoushies who lead to loss in religion and this world. They allied themselves against it with the enemies of Islam and the enemies of the Ummah from the secular military and the corrupt politicians” [adh-Dhawahiriy 2016: 19]. Islamic State (IS) also features the MB in its journal *Dabiq* criticizing that the MB is a “devastating cancer” as it cooperates with the West and is following democracy originating from the West [Dabiq 2016: 28]. These radical Islamic movements regard the MB as non-Islamic and their loud hostile voices are further undermining the MB’s presence.

In Egypt since 2013, radical Islamic movements have become active during the MB’s political setback. The representative example is the Supporters of the Holy House (Anṣār Bayt al-Maqdis), which has made repeated terrorist attacks in Sinai Peninsula. It became active after the ouster of Morsi, and pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in November 2014, changing its name to “Islamic State in Sinai.” Other radical Islamic movements, such as the Hasm Movement (Ḥaraka Ḥasm) and the Soldiers of Egypt (Ajnād Miṣr), are also active in Egyptian cities. While the radical Islamic movements are becoming active, the MB has maintained an inward-looking survival mode which has decreased its presence. Furthermore, the Egyptian state is employing a policy to identify the MB with other radical Islamic movements and repress it.<sup>11</sup> As a result, the MB is being undermined by this pincer attack.

## **2. The Influence of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Setback over the Egyptian Politics**

Since the ouster of Morsi, the MB has been almost completely excluded from the formal political sphere. If the number of MB’s members and supporters accounted for a large proportion of Egyptians, the political exclusion of the MB could worsen the political polarization of Egypt.<sup>12</sup> Figure 2 shows the result of an opinion poll conducted by Pew

<sup>11</sup> For example, although the MB denied any involvement in the explosion at the security headquarters in Mansoura in December 2013, the interim government declared the MB as a terrorist organization.

<sup>12</sup> As the MB has not officially opened a list of its members so far, being afraid of crackdowns by the state, the number of its members are unknown. According to the author’s interviews with the MB members and Egyptian intellectuals since 2000, it varies ranging from hundreds of thousands to ten million.

research Center in Egypt between April 10 and 29, 2014,<sup>13</sup> when the voices hoping for al-Sisi to assume the presidency culminated in Egypt just before the presidential elections in 2014.

Ouster of Morsi	Favor	54
	Oppose	43
View of al-Sisi	Favorable	54
	Unfavorable	45
Favorable/ good view of Military	June 2013	73
	April 2014	56
Favorable/ good view of MB	June 2013	63
	April 2014	38

Figure.2: Egyptian’s view after the ouster (%)

Source: Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, “One Year After Morsi’s Ouster, Divides Persist on El-Sisi, Muslim Brotherhood” (May 22, 2014)

According to the poll, there remain a certain number of Egyptians who support the MB. However, it would be an exaggeration to suppose that 30–40% of Egyptians supported it. On the other hand, those with a favorable/ good view of the military declined by 17% after the ouster. If those who increased in their distrust of the military because of the ouster were mainly MB members or supporters, the number of MB members and supporters can be estimated to be 10–20% of Egyptians. Actually, the MB won 20% in the parliamentary elections in 2005, which were conducted relatively freely under Mubarak’s presidency. Anyway, it is undeniable that a certain number of Egyptians still support the MB. Thus, as long as the MB is politically excluded, there is concern that these citizens are politically marginalized and that their voices or demands cannot be reflected in Egyptian politics. As they cannot express their demands through elections, the only option left to them is to take to the streets, but it has become almost impossible because of the severe crackdowns. Thus the marginalization of the MB’s supporters could promote the polarization of the Egyptian society and damage national integrity.

The MB’s political setback also influences other Islamic movements, such as the Wasat Party, the Building and Development Party (Ḥizb al-Binā’ wa al-Tanmiya), the Nour Party and so on. The Islamist political program to pursue its goal through elections, which the MB has been advancing since the 1980s, and has urged the other Islamic movements to follow, has been stalemated. As a result, the MB and the Islamic movements that have followed its line have been forced to reconsider the course and method of their political activities. The setback of the MB, which has been the main stream of Islamic movements politically and socially in

<sup>13</sup> See Pew Research Center’s URL <<http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/05/22/egypt-survey-methods/>> (accessed on December 12, 2016). Zogby Research Center’s opinion poll in September 2013 also shows the similar tendency, see its URL <<http://www.zogbyresearchservices.com/blog/2013/11/26/zrs-releases-september-2013-egypt-poll>>.

Egypt for decades, has decreased the Egyptians trust in Islamic movements as a whole,<sup>14</sup> and has reinforced the stagnation of Islamic movements in Egypt as a whole.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have discussed the MB's crisis and the change in Egyptian politics after the ouster of Morsi in 2013. The aim of the al-Sisi regime's repressive policy toward the MB is not only to prevent the MB from re-emerging as a political challenger but also to maintain the legitimacy of al-Sisi's rule supported by the mass of anti-MB opinion. For the purpose of maintaining it, he firmly holds on to this repressive policy by cracking down with force and excluding the MB from the formal political sphere.

On the other hand, the MB is at its lowest ebb in decades and most of its leading senior members are under arrest due to the state's severe crackdown. The absence of strong leadership is causing rifts in the MB. The main points of dispute internally are about violent activities against the state. While young members are inclined to employ violent activities, the MB's leadership by senior members persists in continuing its non-violent policy by protecting still functioning social activities as the MB's foundation. However, the repressive policy has cut the linkage between the political activities and the social activities of the MB. It has caused the stalemate of the MB's basic ideology, namely al-Banna's ideology.

The MB is under pincer attack both by the state's repression and by the hostile propaganda of radical Islamic movements. The MB's setback today is one of the main factors in the expansion of radical Islamic movements. Furthermore, the MB's setback has resulted in the political marginalization of a certain number of Egyptians who still support the MB, and has caused other moderate Islamic movements, which followed the same line as the MB, to reconsider the course of their political activities.

The MB's existential crisis brings about a negative influence not only over the MB itself but also over other Islamic movements in Egypt and Egyptian politics itself. Contrary to the intention of the state under al-Sisi, the political exclusion of the MB, which has been a main political actor in Egypt for more than eighty years, could well lead to the instability of Egypt in the future.

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<sup>14</sup> According to an opinion poll published by the Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research on January 27, 2015, 47% of Egyptians are not willing to allow religious parties [Osman 2015]. In the parliamentary elections in 2015, al-Nour Party, the only Islamist party participating, gained 11 seats out of total 596 seats.

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