On Brotherhoodization, Empowerment, and Employment: A Never-Ending Discourse



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Just as the famous physical law states that matter cannot be created or destroyed, the discourse surrounding Brotherhoodization, empowerment, and employment remains endless. Fifteen years have passed since the January 25 Revolution, and nearly thirteen since the coup. Yet the accusations levelled against the Muslim Brotherhood by its opponents during the period of political polarization that followed the revolution, which paved the way for the coup and continued afterwards, persist without renewal or innovation. These accusations completely disregard the changing local, regional, and international circumstances, and even the transformation of the group itself, which was the target of these accusations and whose rise to power or continued rule was the objective. This objective was indeed achieved; the group was completely dissolved, and its leaders and members were imprisoned or exiled, in addition to those who were killed.

The current wave of hostility against the Muslim Brotherhood can only be explained by the continued fears of its opponents (those who have usurped power, those who have joined them, those who appease them, and those who fear them) of the group's ever-present spectre, the blood of its martyrs that haunts them, and the expectation of its resurgence, based on other regional experiences, particularly those of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Nusra Front in Syria. Added to this is the feeling among these opponents that, despite 13 years having passed since the removal of Morsi's rule, they have failed to fill the void left by the Brotherhood, nor have they been able to build strong parties capable of replacing it in any potential genuine competition, even years from now.

This applies to the pro-government parties, which benefit from all the resources of power, and even to the -opposition parties, which failed to field a single electoral list in the last elections and were forced to join the pro

government camp to secure a few parliamentary seats, adopting the principle of "something is better than nothing".

There is no stopping talk about the Brotherhood's intention to "Brotherhoodize" the government and empower themselves, nor is there stopping talk about them being merely a group or a functional tool employed by successive Egyptian governments, or even other governments in the region, to achieve their goals, and then they turn their backs on them, meaning they turn from friendship to enmity. These are absurd claims that are not based on evidence.

Between Islamization and Brotherhoodization

The talk of Brotherhoodization, which emerged after Dr. Mohamed Morsi's presidential victory, was part of a broader discourse about the Islamization of Egypt and the alteration of its identity. When the promoters of this discourse realized they were "like a ram butting its head against a rock, only to weaken itself", they found themselves facing the vast majority of the Egyptian people, who were deeply attached to their religion and identity. Therefore, they shifted their accusation to "Brotherhoodization," entrusting the task to a bearded man who grew a beard without awareness or evidence. Some might claim to have presented a lengthy list of Brotherhoodization manifestations, including 13,000 government positions, a claim that was refuted at the time. It is worth reiterating this refutation, perhaps it will benefit those who are open-minded or attentive.

That discourse was entirely false, and the recent claim by someone that Morsi rapidly Brotherhoodized the state and that society was not in favor of the Brotherhood is a continuation of denial that refuses to see the truth as it is. The Egyptian people elected Morsi; they elected the Muslim Brotherhood to the People's Assembly and the Shura Council, and they endorsed the Brotherhood's vision in two public referenda. The figure of 13,000 promoted by the Nour Party—far from being exaggerated—included many people who were not members of the Brotherhood, as well as members of professional and labor unions, student federations, and youth centers, who assumed their positions through elections, not appointments, and who were already in their posts before Morsi himself became president.

The Muslim Brotherhood's "Sahih" platform has spared us the trouble of providing a detailed response to the Brotherhood's lie. The platform quoted the "Alternatives" Center for Studies as saying that the percentage of "Brotherhood" members in leadership positions in the state did not exceed 2% to 5%, a very small percentage that is not enough to impose "complete subjugation and Brotherhoodization of the state." The platform also explained that Hisham Qandil's cabinet consisted of 35 ministers, and that the number of Brotherhood members did not exceed 8 in the last formation, while the sovereign portfolios (Defence, Interior, Foreign Affairs), finance and the economy were in the hands of technocrats from within state institutions. In the famous governorate movement that preceded June 30, 2013, 17 new governors were appointed, of whom only 7 were from the Brotherhood. According to the Arab Network for Human Rights Information, the state's key positions (high-level job grades) remained, by a percentage exceeding 95%, in the hands of employees of "Mubarak's state," who showed fierce resistance to any decisions issued by the presidency.

Militarization vs. Brotherhoodization

Those who repeatedly advance the Brotherhoodization narrative remain completely silent about the state's militarization since 1952, a trend that intensified after 2013. Look around you; examine the list of governors to see how many have military backgrounds (17 governors in the 2024 reshuffle and 14 in the 2026 reshuffle were from the army, police, or intelligence services). Beyond the governors, the vast majority of provincial secretaries

general, city and district heads, and heads of public authorities are former military personnel.

Militarization was not limited to senior positions; it extended to all new civil service jobs. New candidates for any position, whether in religious endowments, education, local government, etc., are required to undergo six months of training at the military academy. Even PhD holders from Al-Azhar University are subjected to a similar course to indoctrinate them in military science and conduct.

The Security Perspective on Empowerment

The "empowerment" narrative, which many writers are now actively reiterating based on security reports, is itself an old one. It emerged after a police raid in the early 1990s on the well-known software company "Salsabil," owned by Khairat al-Shater, the Muslim Brotherhood's deputy supreme guide, and other businessmen. The police found a detailed plan for the Brotherhood's activities and future objectives on their computers. This is where the term "empowerment" originated, and Al-Musawwar magazine published some of these documents under this term. The publication of this plan at that time garnered more sympathy for the Brotherhood, as they were seen as not doing anything criminal and as employing modern scientific methods in planning and management. The plan to expand within society was not inherently a crime; rather, it is the duty of any movement, organization, association, or party with a vision to promote, as long as it is done peacefully. Similarly, planning to participate in union, student, parliamentary, and even presidential elections is not a crime. Only authoritarian regimes consider it a crime!

Any political force that seriously prepares to challenge authoritarian rule will face the same fate as the Muslim Brotherhood. Consider what happened to Sami Anan, Ahmed Shafik, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, Hisham Geneina, Hazem Hosny, Yahya Hassan, and Ahmed Konsowa. Look at the Hope Cell, raided by the police in 2019, which comprised a mix of leftists and liberals planning to contest the 2020 parliamentary elections in Egypt. Those arrested included former members of parliament, journalists, and political activists. And consider what happened to Ahmed Tantawi when he attempted to run in the last presidential elections and later when he tried to form a political party.

Mutual benefits or exploitation?

The third fallacy is that of exploitation, namely that the ruling authorities in Egypt and elsewhere treat the Muslim Brotherhood as a functional entity or a tool employed by the regime to achieve certain policies, then neglected or discarded. While this might be true of small, decorative entities, it is utterly untrue of a large, historically rooted, and widespread entity—whether in Egypt or in dozens of other countries—with a long history of public service and confrontation with corruption and tyranny.

The nature of things is that the relationship between ruling regimes and competing forces fluctuates between cordiality and confrontation. This has been the case in Egypt with the Muslim Brotherhood, the Wafd Party, and even the communists. These three movements have experienced diverse relationships with the authorities, ranging from peaceful coexistence to outright confrontation (at the hands of the regime, of course). Sometimes one of these forces cooperates with the regime to align visions and achieve gains. This cannot be considered exploitation by the regime; rather, why couldn't the opposite be true—that these forces are exploiting the regime to achieve some of their own objectives? These same forces entered into confrontations with the authorities when the latter sensed their danger. This happened with the Wafd Party during the monarchy and during the republic, and it happened with the communists in both eras, and it was also repeated with the Muslim Brotherhood. This is politics, which is not understood by authoritarian regimes and their mouthpieces, nor by elites who have not practiced political action

and are content with theorizing and empty rhetoric!

—Let us delve into history for a moment and ask: Did Nahhas Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister, employ Hassan al Banna, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, when he asked him to withdraw his candidacy for the elections at the behest of the British? Or was it Hassan al—Banna who employed him to secure some of the Brotherhood's demands as the price for withdrawing, such as the official abolition of prostitution in Egypt and the right to open branches throughout the country, after the group itself had been threatened with dissolution by a British decree? And did Sadat employ the Brotherhood for his own benefit, or did they employ him to achieve their vision? Yes, Sadat needed popular support to confront the leftist challenge, and he found this support in the Brotherhood, who shared the same desire to confront communist ideology. However, they also gained significant advantages from Sadat, as he allowed them to engage in public activities (without legal authorization), permitted them to republish the magazine "Al—Da'wa," allowed their preachers to move freely throughout Egypt, and enabled them to win seats in student unions, etc. Even the Brotherhood's support for the Afghan mujahideen was undertaken at their own initiative and according to their own vision at that time, not solely at the behest of Sadat or any other ruler.

At the time, the Muslim Brotherhood sought to counter the spread of communism, which they regarded as a threat to the Islamic nation and its identity. This aligned with the desires of some rulers, even if it later became clear that these rulers were acting at the behest of the United States. Did the Saudi regime utilise the Muslim Brotherhood for its own benefit in the 1970s and 80s to counter communist and nationalist movements? Or did the Muslim Brotherhood utilise the Saudi government and its resources to spread its vision and proselytising programmes both within and outside Saudi Arabia?

It was a mutually beneficial arrangement, in which each party gained from the other. While the ruling power was always the stronger, this did not prevent the weaker party from reaping gains for its project, gains that accumulated over time. This is what some describe as "empowerment."

The renewed campaigns against the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and abroad confirm that, despite their weakness, they still pose a real challenge to the Egyptian regime and other authoritarian regimes, and indeed to all the forces that hate Islam in the world. This does not mean that the Brotherhood is free from mistakes, as they are human beings who make mistakes and get things right, but in all of that they are striving, and every striver has a share.