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Aaron Jacob Wolfson

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**Accommodationist Islamist Political Organizations:
Authoritarian Settings and US Foreign Policy**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Samy Ayoub, Supervisor

Jeremi Suri

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Aaron Jacob Wolfson

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Abstract

Accommodationist Islamist Political Organizations: Authoritarian Settings and US Foreign Policy

Aaron Jacob Wolfson, MGPS & MA
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Supervisor: Samy Ayoub

Islamist parties tend to be the most developed political parties in authoritarian Middle Eastern and North African states. When elections are called for, Islamist groups historically outperform their competitors to win seats in parliaments and effectively compete for executive office when applicable. In lieu of designating a broad group of ideologies as “terrorism,” the US needs to develop an understanding of their goals and behavior so that it can engage with these groups effectively. Doing so would be to the benefit of the states Islamist groups represent and US interests within those areas.

Through use of some primary, but mostly secondary literature, this research seeks to show how these groups should be understood and, thus, engaged. Under authoritarian regimes Islamist groups seek a balance between action and survival. When participating in democratic mechanisms of governance Islamist groups tend to cooperate with groups of other ideologies, showing a general trend of moderation. However, moderation is not guaranteed, and instances exist showing that radicalization may be more likely in certain conditions, especially when Islamist-Islamist cooperation is democratically viable.

The report focuses on three groups in the Middle East and North Africa during the late 20th - early 21st centuries; al-Wefaq (al-Bahrain, 2001-2016), the Justice and Development Party (Morocco, 1997-2017), and the Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt, 1981-2013). Each case provides a different political and social context, showing how groups of similar Islamist ideologies reacted to their political and social realities.

The report finds that the United States needs to develop an understanding of political Islamism within certain contexts, especially in contrast to its radical relatives. Conflation of the two will neither enhance US interests in the region nor prevent the ascendancy of Islamist groups in states with democratic mechanisms of governance. Rather, acceptance and willingness to work from good faith will need to be the lynchpin of American foreign policy. Finally, regional concerns will need to be considered, but should not outweigh local concerns. The US must be aware of the concerns of allies such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, and Israel over Islamist success, but should not defer to these states in making policy.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Islamist political organizations have experienced episodes of vibrant success and disastrous failure throughout the previous decades. Oftentimes, failure appears to be a consequence of success or, conversely, success is derived from failure. Many Islamist activists have experienced both success and failure within the same country in the span of a few years. Islamist political organizations often represent the greatest threat to established authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa as the only existing political organizations capable of winning free and fair elections.¹ Outside the region Islamists have not obtained the same success, indicating their operation in repressive political systems result in more Islamist success at the ballot box than in more open political systems.² Yet, despite the various results experienced by Islamists, American policymakers lack a rich contextual understanding of Islamist political organizations globally, but especially in the Middle East and North Africa. Far too often American policymakers view Islamism as a short-lived trend, or worse, as a monolithic ideology. Many obfuscate Islamists with radical movements such as the Islamic State or argue that even if more moderate Islamists reject the Islamic State, they still have the same desired end goal.³ Occasionally, American policymakers vote on whether to classify Islamists as terrorist organizations, seriously impacting the ability of significant portions of populations to participate in governance. Yet, despite the confusing nature of American foreign policymaking and Islamist political organizations, there is a dearth of accessible and implementable literature. While one can

¹ Hamid, Shadi. "Arab Islamist Parties: Failing on Purpose?" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2 No. 1. 2011. p69.

² Kurzman, Charles & Naqvi, Ijlal. "Do Muslims Vote Islamic?" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 21 No. 2. 2010. p54.

³ Ehrenfeld, Rachel. "The Muslim Brotherhood Evolution: An Overview" *American Foreign Policy Interests*. Vol. 33. 2011. p76.

opine for an American foreign policy with rich contextual understanding and consistent appreciation for human rights, the contemporary expectations of office require a policymaker to forego such individualistic analysis or ideological consistency.⁴ Rather, an understanding of Islamist organizations needs to be developed that provides informative power in an easily digestible format.

This paper seeks to provide such a format through the case studies of three Islamist political organizations of different sects, locations, and regime types. Despite these differences, a basic understanding of Islamist political organizations that participate in distributive politics can be acquired. As such, the value of this study comes not from the inclusion of obscure documents that show a unique rationale in specific circumstances, but rather the ability to identify trends that transcend specific contexts or sectarian differences. Akin to a study of Labor parties globally, this study treats Islamists as a loosely defined ideological movement. Islamists, in general, have a stated desire to “Islamicize” the society in which they operate.⁵ Islamicization, however, differs significantly depending on a myriad of factors ranging from geography to culture to history, etc. Definitions of Islam, and thus “Islamicization” of society, vary significantly within the Middle East as a region, between states, regions within states, cities, and even individuals within a family. Islamist organizations typically refrain from explicitly defining its interpretations of sharia due to the plural nature of Islam – any publicized interpretation would contradict and alienate subsets of members and the voting public. Interpretations of Islam by radical Islamists such as the Islamic State and al-Qaeda are treated as special cases within the plural nature of Islam and are disregarded in this study. As such, the primary focus is on

⁴ Suri, Jeremi. *The Impossible Presidency: The Rise and Fall of America's Highest Office*. Hatchett Books. 2017.

⁵ Roy, Olivier. *The Failure of Political Islam*. I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 1994. p24.

“accommodationist” Islamists, or Islamists that accommodate to existing state institutions and power in the attempt to Islamicize society from within these institutions. What is termed “rejectionist” Islamists, or those such as the Islamic State and al-Qaeda which operate outside the institutions of the state with the intent to overthrow the state and its structures, are ignored in this study.ⁱ

Three case studies will be used: al-Wefaq from Bahrain, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the Moroccan Justice and Development Party. These specific cases are under study as they each operated in a significantly different political context, from which trends in their behavior can be derived and applied to US foreign policy. One political organization represented a majority population in a minority-rule monarchy, another as an ideological counterbalance to a secular authoritarian regime, and finally, as an alternating counterbalance and legitimizing party in a centralized monarchy. It is also worth noting that while this study focuses on these political organizations around and before the Arab Spring, the lessons learned from this time are still applicable to other Islamist political organizations and to US foreign policy post-2011.

Al-Wefaq provides a particularly useful case as it is the only Shi’i Islamist political organization in this study. Like the Justice and Development Party in Morocco, al-Wefaq operated in a monarchical system with limited representative power. However, in contrast to the Moroccan case, al-Wefaq represented a sect contrary to that of the royal family. Formally banned in 2016, this study focuses on the impact of the political society throughout the early 2000s and into the Arab Spring, a period in which the society achieved the largest number of seats of any political organization in the elected parliamentary house. A major goal of al-Wefaq involved increasing political participation of a neglected majority population while attempting to withhold legitimacy from the royal family. Each decision to participate in the regime’s power structure was carefully considered with this

dichotomy in mind. In other words, barring exceptional circumstances overthrow of the government was highly unlikely so al-Wefaq concluded that power must be achieved within the structure of the government. However, operation within these arenas legitimized the regime itself. Al-Wefaq navigated this dichotomy successfully until the government crackdown during the Arab Spring delegitimized it in the eyes of al-Wefaq's constituents. As a result, all members of al-Wefaq resigned from government, leading to the banning of the party a few years later.

This study seeks to place the Brotherhood within broader context of accommodationist Islamist political organizations. Focusing on the Mubarak and Morsi years of the Brotherhood, the power-survival dichotomy becomes readily apparent. Throughout this period, the Brotherhood consistently balanced the importance of organizational survival with its desire to transform Egyptian society into its perception of an Islamic community.⁶ The Brotherhood concluded that Islamicization required political power, but that political power and organizational risk were intimately intertwined. Too much power and the Brotherhood could be perceived as a threat to Mubarak specifically and pro-regime institutions such as the armed forces more generally. Too little power and the Brotherhood believed that its ability to penetrate and Islamicize society would be effectively counterbalanced by the regime. Akin to al-Wefaq, the Brotherhood also considered the legitimizing factors of participation in regime-controlled political structures. Additionally, along with Morocco's Justice and Development Party, the Brotherhood placed significant importance on local representation in governance, while the regime attempted to co-opt such representatives. Converse to both al-Wefaq and the Justice and Development Party, the Brotherhood also created or infiltrated extra-

⁶ Hamid, Shadi, & McCants, William. *Rethinking Political Islam*. Oxford University Press, 2017. p28.

governmental organizations such as labor unions in addition to the education and health sectors. The societal penetration provided the Brotherhood a wider base of support that allowed it to adopt a leading position in the final years of the Mubarak regime and eventually win the Presidency under Morsi. However, this victory was short-lived as, while Mubarak was removed, the army maintained its powerful position and its opposition to the Brotherhood, eventually leading to its overthrow and subsequent ban from Egyptian politics.

Finally, the Justice and Development Party (JDP) of Morocco provides an intermediary case study. The only extant political organization under study, the JDP has thus far navigated the participation-legitimacy and power-survival dichotomies relatively successfully. The JDP also provides an effective case study for understanding the strategy of regime co-optation. Not only does participation legitimize the ruling regime, but it also presents the regime with the ability to co-opt participating political organizations by reducing the power-survival dichotomy. Co-optation is ultimately designed to attract elites of a political organization and retard the momentum of popular movements.⁷ Co-opting elites allows elites to remain in power, with little to no fear of suffering imprisonment or the destruction of the political organization they utilized for power. This security, however, comes at the cost of reneging on previous party positions that the regime perceives as implicitly challenging its survival and/or legitimacy, blunting popular movements and reinforcing the regime hierarchy. The Moroccan monarchy has been particularly adept at co-opting opposition political organizations.⁸

⁷ Karakoç Jülide. *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: before and after the Arab Uprisings*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. p 25.

⁸ King, Stephen J. "Sustaining Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa." *Political Science Quarterly*. Vol 122, No 3. 2007. p 457.

As seen through these case studies, three interlinked concepts play a significant role in the decisionmaking process for Islamist political organizations. These concepts are the power-survival dichotomy, the participation-legitimacy dichotomy, and the co-optation strategy. It is worth noting that a variety of other variables affect the decisionmaking of Islamist organizations, however these three are readily apparent and effectively cover the most visible concerns of these organizations. The power-survival dichotomy is omnipresent within authoritarian regimes as the regime sets the rules for political involvement and retains the power to alter the rules of participation without notice. The regime maintains control of the requisite toolbox to destroy, or at the least severely weaken, Islamist organizations that threaten regime survival. Islamists tend to favor survival over power accumulation in such settings, leading to the self-imposition of constraints to power.⁹

The participation-legitimacy dichotomy, also referred to as electoral and regime games,¹⁰ means that participation in the regime's institutions results in the increased legitimacy of the regime. While much literature on Islamist participation focuses on whether participation leads to moderation based on theories of democratic cooperation,¹¹ or debates on Islamist-democracy compatibility,¹² this study eschews such an approach based on the assumptions participation in democratic mechanisms of governance implies compatibility to some degree and that cooperation occurs pragmatically in these contexts

⁹ Hamid, Shadi. "Arab Islamist Parties: Losing on Purpose?" *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 22, No. 1. 2011. p73.

¹⁰ Mainwaring, Scott. "Party Objectives in Authoritarian Regimes with Elections or Fragile Democracies: A Dual Game." in *Christian Democracy in Latin America: Electoral Competition and Regime Conflicts*, ed. Scott Mainwaring & Timothy Scully. Stanford University Press. 2003. pp3-29.

¹¹ Drevon, Jerome. "The Constrained Institutionalization of Diverging Islamist Strategies: The Jihadis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Salafis between Two Aborted Egyptian Revolutions." *Mediterranean Politics*. 2016. p1.

¹² Robinson, Glenn. "Can Islamists Be Democrats? The Case of Jordan." *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 3. 2007. pp373-387.

between Islamists and other political parties. Moderation, conversely, appears to result from the credible threat of or actual repression more often than participation.¹³ Empirical evidence shows that Islamists ally with other Islamist or conservative movements when possible and may adopt more radical policies and reject cross-ideological consensus as a result of such an alliance when repression is incredible.¹⁴

Finally, the co-optation strategy is a regime strategy to capitalize on the cumulative costs of participation for opposition organizations. In addition to increasing regime legitimacy, participation can also result in a demoralizing and demobilizing effects among a group's supporters, provide the regime a greater repressive capability due to the registration of party members, and alienate some supporters when pragmatic cooperation with the regime occurs.¹⁵ In co-opting organizations, the regime attempts to take advantage of and exacerbate some costs of participation on the organization's members while providing organization elites continued access to power, dependent on the non-opposition to important regime policies. Essentially, co-optation blunts organizational momentum by decapitating opposition movements and retaining the allegiance of party elites.

Despite the aforementioned costs of participation, Islamist opposition groups still participate in democratic mechanisms of governance due to the perceived benefits. Opposition organizations experience three primary benefits to participation. First, participation may force the regime to break its own rules to maintain power, showing its reliance on brute force over popular consent.¹⁶ Second, while legalization and registration

¹³ Hamid, Shadi. *Temptations of Power: Islamists and Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East*. Oxford University Press. 2014. p 141.

¹⁴ Koss, Maren. *Resistance, Power and Conceptions of Political Order in Islamist Organizations: Comparing Hezbollah and Hamas*. Routledge. 2018. p 189.

¹⁵ Wegner, Eva. *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes: The Party of Justice and Development in Morocco*. Syracuse University Press. 2011. p xxix.

¹⁶ Schedler, Andreas. *Electoral Authoritarianism*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006. p 14.

provides the regime a greater ability to repress Islamists, it also provides Islamists access to people who refrained from active participation due to fears of detention. Finally, participation allows access to policy decisionmakers and media, granting Islamists a broader audience than non-participation could provide.¹⁷ The broader audience grants Islamists an effective method to preach Islamic morals in the attempt to Islamicize society. By participating in distributive politics, Islamists perceive that the benefits of participation enable them a greater probability of Islamicization of society than nonparticipation.

These case studies provide a groundwork for better understanding how American foreign policy should address accommodationist Islamist organizations. Firstly, the notion that the US needs to adopt positions that place the support of democracy and human rights in foreign lands as its predominant foreign policy is ideologically attractive but impractical. American politicians may espouse these terms and argue for their imposition abroad vociferously, but US foreign policy has preferred pragmatism to ideologic policymaking throughout its history, and especially since the Second World War. While Americans and others may perceive US foreign policy through such an ideological lens, it has not consistently adopted such policies and there are few indications that it will pursue ideology-driven policies in the near future.

More realistically, the US needs to adopt an appreciable understanding of the differences in types of Islamist political organizations and the methods in which accommodationist Islamist political organizations operate within authoritarian political systems. In the US, the distinction of Islamist political organizations is typically based on competing perceptions of radicalism and moderation. However, this dichotomy is deficient in its explanatory power for political organizations that operate in the center and only

¹⁷ Wegner, Eva. *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*. p xxx.

provides utility along the fringes of Islamist political organizations. Rather, viewing Islamist political organizations as accommodationist or rejectionist provides much greater utility for US foreign policymakers as it distinguishes Islamist political organizations based upon their perceptions of the political system in which they operate. For instance, rejectionist Islamist political organizations are unlikely to be of much diplomatic interest to US foreign policy, but of significant interest in terms of national security or regional strategic interests. Conversely, accommodationist Islamist political organizations can and should be approached diplomatically in order to better understand their political concerns and goals. Likewise, it is a common practice in US foreign policy to engage with opposition groups globally and accommodationist Islamist groups should not be treated differently than other ideological groups that operate in opposition to their government.

This paper elucidates three major and interlinked conundrums facing accommodationist Islamist groups: the co-opting strategy, the participation-legitimacy dichotomy, and the power-survival dichotomy; and how the US can develop better policies to achieve such results. These conundrums are faced by all accommodationist Islamist groups, albeit at varying degrees that often depend on the geopolitical context in which they operate. For instance, al-Wefaq faced the participation-legitimacy and power-survival dichotomies throughout its existence, but due to the differing identities between al-Wefaq's constituents and the royal family in Bahrain, al-Wefaq never feared regime co-optation. The Brotherhood and JDP experienced all three conundrums, but while the Brotherhood's most significant concern was the power-survival conundrum, the JDP's lies in co-optation by the regime. Understanding the effects of these conundrums on Islamist decisionmaking will undoubtedly lead to a more effective US foreign policy.

Chapter 2: The Bahraini Islamists: Al-Wefaq

Al-Wefaq is a Bahraini Shi'i Islamist movement that portrays itself as the main representative of the Shi'a majority in Bahrain. Throughout its tenure as a legal entity, it operated as an accommodationist Islamist movement that participated in the regime's political institutions. Yet, it also rejected the legitimacy of the regime based on al-Wefaq's perceptions of sharia and its opposition to the regime's perceived sectarian agenda. Despite its rejection of the regime's legitimacy, it chose to participate in the political institutions of the regime because it did not believe it could affect, limit, or prevent change outside of the regime's institutions. As such, al-Wefaq navigated the dichotomies of power-survival and participation-legitimacy but did not face the issue of regime co-optation as its constituency differed from the regime on the basis of identity. In other words, as a Shi'i Islamist political movement under a Sunni monarchy, al-Wefaq did not face threats of co-optation as the regime had limited legitimacy to co-opt al-Wefaq representatives and constituents.

This chapter will be divided into three primary sections; a short summary of the political context in which al-Wefaq operated, the participation-legitimacy dichotomy, and a conclusion.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Bahrain is a young state, founded in 1971, and the youngest kingdom in the world, having become a kingdom in 2002. It has a bicameral legislature with the lower house, the Council of Representatives, elected by popular vote and the upper house, the Consultative Council, appointed by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa. Unlike bicameral systems in democratic states, the upper house in Bahrain has significantly less restrictions in exercising its veto of lower house legislation and, more importantly, lacks a public

constituency as it is only accountable to the royal family. For this reason, the upper house actively prevents legislation that could be perceived as harmful to the political security of the royal family. Additionally, Bahrain consistently receives low ratings from Freedom House, never receiving a score above partly free during the period under study, usually due to government arrest of reformers and opposition leadership.¹⁸ As such, the political arena is heavily skewed away from opposition activists and political societies in order to ensure the political survival of the al-Khalifa royal family.

Al-Wefaq is an oppositional Shi'i Islamist political society that was founded in 2001 and dissolved in 2016 by the government due to dubious government charges of al-Wefaq-directed sectarianism and terrorism. The society boycotted elections in 2002, due to the aforementioned primacy of the upper house in the constitution, and in 2014, due to the regime crackdown during the Arab Spring uprisings. Yet, al-Wefaq participated in the two elections between those years, winning 17 and 18 seats out of a possible 40 seats in 2006 and 2010 respectively. In both election cycles, al-Wefaq was the largest political bloc in either house, as most representatives were independent. However, no member of al-Wefaq received an appointment to the upper house. Al-Wefaq's political experience in Bahrain has been varied as it has seen great success at the elections, but little ability to affect change, all while being consistently hindered and harassed by the government.

The society espouses a general Shi'i Islamist ideology but focuses on Bahrain-specific issues, especially revolving around discrimination and sectarianism, class-based rights including redistribution of wealth, and electoral rights of Bahraini citizens. Article 2 of its "Political System of al-Wefaq" publication states:

¹⁸ "Bahrain." Freedom House. March 21, 2013. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2005/bahrain>.

Al-Wefaq is an Islamic political organization, bound to the principles of sharia and born from the struggles of the Bahraini people, that takes care of the homeland and the citizen. It works for the development and prosperity of society, the reinforcement of national unity, and affirms the complete vision derived from the Noble Quran and the Sunnah of the Honorable Prophet.¹⁹

This article clearly emphasizes the Islamic nature of the society in addition to aspects particular to Bahrain. Article 4, however, places sovereignty in the hands of the people and calls for public participation in decision-making processes. This is unsurprising considering al-Wefaq was the only legal Shi'i political society – increased public participation would ostensibly increase al-Wefaq's voting bloc. Furthermore, increased participation would provide the “people” of Bahrain greater access to the regime “elites” who are implicitly accused of constraining the voice of the people. Article 5-2 elucidates the nature of al-Wefaq's interpretation of sharia stating that the basis of its “Islamic method to political reform relies on wisdom and logic and the debate on which is better” in a given context. This form of logically derived policy indicates an emphasis on consultation over literal interpretation of the society's perceptions of the pillars of sharia. Again, the implicit assertion is that al-Wefaq debates on policy benefits for the people, whereas the regime elites declare policy based on elite interests. Article 5-3 solidifies the Bahraini nature of the society and its emphasis on local concerns such as discrimination, and access to equal political, social, and economic opportunities, all popular grievances of the Shi'i minority. Article 5-6 calls for a constitutional monarchy. Article 6 calls for an Arab-Islamic identity

¹⁹ “Political Program of al-Wefaq.” al-Wefaq. 4 January 2006. [AR] <https://web.archive.org/web/20060211083909/http://www.alwefaq.org:80/wefaq/modules/aboutus/article.php?storyid=9> [translation my own]

and the spreading of virtue, justice and equality and removal of moral, administrative, and financial corruption. The subsequent 46 articles cover rights and duties of members in addition to the society's internal structure, mechanisms, and finances.²⁰

Through the analysis of the first six articles, the juxtaposition of the principles of sharia as binding for al-Wefaq and the society's calls for broader political participation exhibit the dual nature of the political context in which the society operated. The public perception of al-Wefaq as an Islamist organization may have provided the organization an ability to participate by the regime-imposed conditions of participation by allowing the organization to limit explicit references to Islam but maintain its Islamic nature. It also may have resulted in al-Wefaq's focus on domestic Bahraini concerns that led to the adoption of populist rhetoric. As Al-Wefaq eschews non-Bahraini ties, including a specific renunciation of post-revolutionary Iran's *vilayet-e-faqih* doctrine by Isa Qasem, the de facto spiritual leader of the society,²¹ it also adopts rhetoric that is designed to appeal to the majority Shi'i population of Bahrain. Its focus on local Bahraini concerns such as discrimination and unequal access to educational and vocational opportunities identifies the Shi'i majority as the "people" struggling under the constraints imposed by the elites, as represented by the al-Khalifa family and its Sunni identity. These aspects of its political platform exemplify al-Wefaq's desire to affect change locally and in regime type and regime behavior within the confines of its understanding of Islamic morality and ethics and interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah. While the society clearly opposed the regime and desired the imposition of constraints on regime policymaking, it still viewed participation

²⁰ "Political Program of al-Wefaq." [AR]

²¹ Machlis, Elisheva. "Al-Wefaq and the February 14 Uprising: Islam, Nationalism and Democracy – the Shi'i-Bahraini Discourse." *Middle Eastern Studies* 52, no. 6 (2016): 978-95. p 988.

in such a skewed system as its most effective messaging platform, providing al-Wefaq with a broader audience to “Islamicize.”

THE POWER-SURVIVAL DICHOTOMY

Al-Wefaq’s position as the main political body of the majority population of Bahrain consistently pitted al-Wefaq against regime loyalists. As al-Wefaq broadened its constituency and increased its power, it represented a greater threat to regime survival. If a revolution were to replace the al-Khalifa family during al-Wefaq’s existence, it was extremely likely that al-Wefaq would have formed the main body of the new order, as it was the largest, most organized, and most disciplined political society in Bahrain.²² Furthermore, al-Wefaq had developed a reputation among the Bahraini Shi’is as a successful provider of social services and morality campaigns the regime neglected.²³ The ability of the organization to penetrate society and provide public benefits the regime refrained from providing directly challenged the regime’s standing in Bahraini society. Yet, al-Wefaq consistently refrained from attempting to maximize its power in order to minimize its threat to the regime and increase its chances of organizational survival. The society imposed constraints on its electoral ambitions, secularized its platform, and attempted to limit the regime’s ability to repress the organization by broadening its constituency through the forging of political alliances with non-Islamists and Sunni Islamists alike.

²² Kraetzschmar, Hendrik & Paola Rivetti. *Islamists and the Politics of the Arab Uprisings: Governance, Pluralisation and Contention*. Edinburgh University Press, 2018. p168.

²³ Zweiri, Mahjoob & Zahid, Mohammed. “The Victory of al-Wefaq: The Rise of Shiite Politics in Bahrain.” *Research Institute for European and American Studies*. No. 108. 2007. p9.

Al-Wefaq's decision to participate in the 2006 and 2010 elections was largely based on its realization that affecting change within Bahraini society according to its perceptions of Islamic morality could only be achieved through participation in politics. Furthermore, Article 4 of the 2005 Political Societies Law No. 26 mandated registration and participation of political societies in order to continue operation as legal entities.²⁴ The society thus concluded that in order to prevent a reduction in its power and maintain organizational survival, participation was required. Additionally, its previous boycott of elections in 2002 resulted in a level of discontent within its constituency, which viewed the boycott as distracting to the society's main political issues of poverty, housing, and employment.²⁵ The discontent limited al-Wefaq's public appeal and weakened the society as a political actor by disrupting its momentum as an extra-governmental organization during the 1990s.²⁶ In choosing to participate in the regime's political institutions, al-Wefaq desired a broadened public appeal, increased legislative power, and to redevelop its lost momentum. These goals motivated the society to participate in the regime-controlled political sphere, which enhanced the society's ability to spread its message and broaden its constituency and power.²⁷

Through participation, the society attempted to obtain enough political power to foment change in society while limiting its threat to the regime through self-imposed constraints on its electoral goals. Unlike most political organizations that attempt to win as many seats as possible, al-Wefaq only contested seats it expected to win. This voluntary limit on the opportunity to maximize power represents an example of al-Wefaq showcasing

²⁴ Kraetzschmar, Hendrik, & Paola Rivetti. *Islamists and the Politics of the Arab Uprisings*. p168.

²⁵ Wright, Steven. "Fixing the Kingdom: Political Evolution and Socio-Economic Challenges in Bahrain." *Center for International and Strategic Studies*. 2010. p7.

²⁶ Mershed, Abbas Mirza. "The Islamic Movement and its Chances of Developing into a Party." 2008. p12.

²⁷ Mershed, Abbas Mirza. "The Islamic Movement." p15.

its threat to regime was minimal while portraying a electoral victory to its constituents.²⁸ Al-Wefaq won all 17 seats contested in 2006 and all 18 seats contested in 2010.²⁹ In both elections al-Wefaq approached elections without the possibility of obtaining a majority, constraining its claim to power and limiting regime fears of a lower house controlled by the opposition. This self-constraint permitted pro-regime parties to coalesce in opposition to al-Wefaq proposals, preventing any major al-Wefaq proposed legislation from passing. Clearly, the strategy of self-constraint limited al-Wefaq's power, perhaps to a point of making the society ineffective, but also significantly increased the chances of organizational survival. Control of the lower house and the success of al-Wefaq legislation would have consistently pressured the appointed upper house to reject multiple laws, threatening the legitimacy of the bicameral system as designed and likely resulting in some form of regime repression of the society or abrogation of the Constitution as had happened in 1974.³⁰ Rather, self-imposed limitations on seats limited the society's power, but also limited the incentive for the regime to repress the organization or cancel the new legislative system.

A major aspect of al-Wefaq's strategy to obtain enough power to affect societal change but limit its threat to the regime and minimize the likelihood of repression was a strategy of signaling. Al-Wefaq's most important signal that it had undertaken moderation and portrayed a limited threat to the regime was its removal of direct appeals for the implementation of sharia from its platform in 2005.³¹ Sharia as a source of law is a commonality of all Muslim-majority states in the Middle East. However, sharia has vastly different interpretations based on school of jurisprudence, history, culture, and geographic

²⁸ Hamid, Shadi. "Arab Islamist Parties: Failing on Purpose?". p70.

²⁹ Kraetzschmar, Hendrik, & Paola Rivetti. *Islamists and the Politics of the Arab Uprisings*. p170.

³⁰ Mershed, Abbas Mirza. "The Islamic Movement." p2.

³¹ Machlis, Elisheva. "Al-Wefaq and the February 14 Uprising". p 985.

location among other variables.³² Furthermore, the implementation of sharia is largely considered a hallmark of Islamist organizations. Brown, Hamzawy, and Ottaway argue, “it would be difficult to qualify a movement as Islamist if its platform did not include the implementation of the sharia.”³³ By signaling that it lacked the intention to implement its interpretation of sharia in legislation and that it was willing to forego overt references of sharia from its platform, al-Wefaq hoped to limit the regime’s ability to portray the society as inflexible and radical. Additionally, the removal of sharia from its platform allowed al-Wefaq to depict itself to the Bahraini public as having moderated previous beliefs and, more importantly, as capable of and willing to compromise.

The signaling of its willingness to compromise also allowed the society to forge alliances with secular and Sunni Islamist societies, limiting the ability of the regime to single out al-Wefaq for repression. Al-Wefaq understood that many of its primary goals, such as constitutional reform, were shared by other opposition societies. It therefore attempted to create an oppositional bloc with the National Democratic Action Society, an Arab nationalist secular party, and the Nationalist Democratic Assembly, the Bahraini affiliate of the Iraqi Ba’ath Party.³⁴ This bloc expanded the number of societies that challenged the legitimacy of the regime, increasing each society’s power, but also lowered the risk of repression by limiting the ability of the regime to isolate any single society. In other words, what was formerly a unique demand of al-Wefaq became a demand of the Bahraini opposition.³⁵ Additionally, al-Wefaq maintained alliances with al-Asalah, a

³² Olivier, Roy. *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. Columbia University Press. 2004.

³³ Brown, Nathan J., Hamzawy, Amr, & Ottaway, Marina. “Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 2006. p8.

³⁴ Al-Ekry, Abd al-Nabi. “Al-Wefaq and the Challenges of Participation in Bahrain.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 2008.

³⁵ Zweiri, Mahjoob & Zahid, Mohammed. “The Victory of al-Wefaq.” p14.

Salafist movement, and al-Menbar, the Bahraini Muslim Brotherhood affiliate when issues of secularization, women's rights, and other forms of liberalization were perceived to be infiltrating Bahraini society. The ability of the society to forge these alliances with a variety of societies spanning secular to salafiyya, helped al-Wefaq mitigate the likelihood of organizational death. While contesting more seats and obtaining a majority in the lower house would have provided more power to affect change, the alliance-based approach provided multiple benefits; it signaled moderation and the ability to compromise, which limited the overt threat to the regime, and also provided relative safety to the society from regime repression.

THE PARTICIPATION-LEGITIMACY DICHOTOMY

The participation-legitimacy dichotomy operated throughout al-Wefaq's existence. As previously mentioned, al-Wefaq boycotted the 2002 elections in protest of the uneven bicameral system created by the 2002 Constitution. However, the society soon realized that affecting significant change from outside the system was impossible without resorting to violence, which the society tenaciously avoided in the context of a pseudo police state. Thereafter, in 2006 and 2010, the society participated in both elections and won between 40-45% of the available seats in each election. However, with the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011 and the regime's harsh response to the demonstrations at the Lulu roundabout, al-Wefaq representatives resigned from Parliament in protest. Al-Wefaq's strategy of withholding participation in some contexts and participating in others centered on its perception of the legitimacy of the regime and the society's ability to affect change within regime institutions.

The decisions of al-Wefaq to participate in or boycott elections is derived from the understanding that political societies are more effective when they participate in mechanisms of governance. This is especially true for small states such as Bahrain in which the central government can easily extend its control beyond the capital city. As such, participation was deemed to be a more effective strategy to affect societal change than a militant struggle against the state. Participation, however, implies tacit acceptance of the political system and legitimizes both the regime that imposed the system and the system itself. In cases when the regime legitimacy was low, or participation was not viewed as effective, the organization chose to abstain from elections. Conversely, when the regime was perceived as legitimate, or withholding of participation was seen as ineffective in comparison to participation, the society took part in governance.

The first election after the 2002 Constitution was boycotted by al-Wefaq due to the perception that the elected lower house would have limited ability to legislate due to powers of the unrepresentative upper house and rampant gerrymandering of electoral districts. The decision to boycott elections was particularly meaningful as the al-Khalifa regime had instituted the electoral reforms of 2002 to broaden the regime's legitimacy as tribal affiliations that had traditionally proven sufficient were viewed as insufficient in the post-traditional Arab Gulf.³⁶ In other words, reform was synonymous with regime survival and the participation of major political societies legitimated the reforms.³⁷³⁸ By withholding participation in the 2002 elections, al-Wefaq protested the system as proposed by the reforms. The calculus of the society centered on the idea that participation would

³⁶ Zweiri, Mahjoob & Zahid, Mohammed. "The Victory of al-Wefaq." p9.

³⁷ Wright, Steven. "Generational Change and Elite-Driven Reforms in the Kingdom of Bahrain." *Sir William Luce Fellowship*. Paper No 7. 2006. p11.

³⁸ Wright, Steven. "Fixing the Kingdom." p6.

reinforce the uneven distribution of power between the upper and lower houses of legislature and imply tacit acceptance of the electoral districts.

Conversely, in 2006 al-Wefaq decided to participate in the parliamentary elections. As mentioned before, participation was chosen due to the perception that the society was limited in its effectiveness outside the political system and its eschewal of violence. Al-Wefaq had made no gains on its political aims while outside the political system despite repeated protests and other nonviolent direct action.³⁹ However, the decision to participate was not without significant drawbacks. Notably, a faction in the society that was against normalization of the regime and its political system split from al-Wefaq in November 2005. This faction, al-Haqq, rejected the legitimacy of the 2002 Constitution and believed that participation would legitimize the Constitution.⁴⁰ Along with al-Haqq's refusal to legitimize the regime came regime repression against the organization. Within three months of its formation the regime detained and released al-Haqq's leader, Hassan Mushaima, likely due in some degree to al-Wefaq's advocacy for his release along with other activists.⁴¹ Participation, in this case, cost al-Wefaq some of its members and constituents, legitimized the regime and system, but also provided al-Wefaq with an avenue for recourse with the regime.

The 2010 parliamentary election, conversely, brought little debate within the society over participation. Any legitimization of the regime that could be withheld had been exhausted by the society's participation in the previous election cycle considering minimal systemic change had occurred since 2006. This lack of major political changes in the time

³⁹ Louër, Laurence. *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*. New York: Columbia University Press in Association with the Centre D'études Et De Recherches Internationales, 2012. p 255

⁴⁰ Wright, Steven. "Fixing the Kingdom." p8.

⁴¹ Kinninmont, Jane. "Assessing al-Wefaq's Parliamentary Experiment in Bahrain." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 2008.

between the elections meant al-Wefaq had little reason to eschew participation as the gains of participation were far greater than the costs of legitimizing the regime and its institutions. There was little likelihood of another internal schism and the society had been fairly effective in parliament, even if its major goals of constitutional and electoral reform had not been achieved. Rather, participation provided hope to the society and the ability to make progress on popular issues such as poverty, housing, and education that mattered to its constituents.

However, the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011 and subsequent regime crackdown made al-Wefaq reconsider its position within government. If al-Wefaq were to remain in government, it could be perceived as al-Wefaq's acceptance of regime tactics against the people. Conversely, leaving government would open the group to direct repression.⁴² Al-Wefaq decided that the proper course of action was to withdraw from the government in protest of the violent crackdown on protesters.⁴³ The withdrawal of al-Wefaq's parliamentarians caused significant concern for the regime, which feared that the lack of any Shi'i political society in government would only invigorate the protesters and reinforce perceptions of a divide between the regime and the people. Regime overtures to al-Wefaq were reportedly significant, including ministerial posts, however, the society rejected them due to the fear of being perceived as co-opted by the regime and the perception that protesters would accept nothing short of revolutionary change.⁴⁴ In sum, al-Wefaq saw continued participation in the regime's political system as granting legitimacy to the regime, but providing little to no power to the group itself. Its constituency

⁴² Conduit, Dara & Akbarzadeh, Shahram. *New Opposition in the Middle East*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2018. p105.

⁴³ Matthiesen, Toby. *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring That Wasn't*. Stanford University Press. 2013. p13.

⁴⁴ Conduit, Dara & Akbarzadeh, Shahram. *New Opposition in the Middle East*. pp106-107.

perceived the crackdown of protesters as delegitimizing for the regime and had al-Wefaq maintained its position or rejoined government after leaving, it likely would have led to irreparable damage between the society and its constituents. As such, the society rejected regime overtures and subsequently was banned by the regime in July 2016. The location of the protests, the Lulu Roundabout was destroyed by the regime and a complicated system of checkpoints, barbed wire, and new traffic patterns limit the ability of people to gather en masse to this day.

CONCLUSION

Al-Wefaq operated in a unique position as a relatively moderate Shi'i political organization in a minority ruled Sunni kingdom. Throughout its existence it faced significant challenges to obtaining power and affecting societal change. Arguably, its gradual approach to change was perceived as ineffective by younger Shi'i activists who took to the streets in February 2011 as it changed neither the 2002 Constitution nor the gerrymandered electoral districts. Conversely, the activist approach as advocated by its breakoff faction, al-Haqq, and younger constituents appealed to few of al-Wefaq's older supporters. Regardless of the perceptions of its gradualistic approach, the society was able to achieve some gains on issues such as poverty, housing, and education through its success at the ballot box and participation in the Bahraini parliament.

The power obtained from this process made it a significant opposition actor and a primary target for regime repression. As such, al-Wefaq attempted to insulate itself through various means to maintain power and organizational survival. Firstly, it imposed self-constraints on its own ambitions for power. For instance, the society never contested a majority of seats in the legislature despite high levels of success for the seats in which it

competed. Secondly, it formed a number of cross-ideological and cross-sectarian alliances with other Bahraini political societies to prevent itself from being singled out for state repression. The society also faced the issue that its participation in regime political institutions legitimized the regime and its institutions. Conversely, non-participation would severely limit the organization from obtaining its goals. This issue is most apparent in the instances in which al-Wefaq withheld its participation. Notably, in 2002, the society boycotted parliamentary elections due to the undemocratic nature of the Constitution. In 2011 the society left government in protest of regime tactics as al-Wefaq's presence helped insulate the regime from the Arab Spring. The withdrawal from government, however, led to attempts by the regime to co-opt al-Wefaq in order to retain a level of insulation from protesters and increase state legitimacy. Yet, the society never appeared to consider the state concessions seriously and remained out of government until being banned in 2016. Of course, after the arrival of Saudi and Emirati soldiers to quell the uprising, the regime no longer viewed toleration of al-Wefaq as commensurate with the amount of legitimacy it provided the regime. Brute force and continued deployment of military forces throughout Bahrain became sufficient for maintaining regime stability, at least in the short-term.

Chapter 3: The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest contemporary Islamist organization, founded in Ismailia, Egypt by Hassan al-Banna in 1928. It is also the only Islamist organization in this study to have achieved the highest office of state, with Muhammad Morsi elected to the post in 2012. Most contemporary Sunni Islamist political organizations can trace their foundation or original thoughts to the foundation set by the Brotherhood, including the Justice and Development Party in Morocco.⁴⁵ As such, a general study on trends in Islamist movements should utilize the Brotherhood due to its eminent role amongst Islamist political organizations. The Brotherhood underwent significant periods of strength and weakness throughout its history, mostly in response to alternating trends of government repression and political openness. Its popularity was relatively limited in its early history, until the defeat of the combined Arab armies in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, after which Gamal Abdul Nasser, the President of Egypt, offered what was to become a rejected resignation. The Brotherhood then began its promotion of its popular slogan “Islam is the solution,” which would be echoed repeatedly by its affiliates and other Islamist organizations that took inspiration from the organization. Yet, throughout this era, the Brotherhood underwent significant government repression, as will be detailed later.

Under the Mubarak regime the primary goal of the Brotherhood centered around the concept of Islamicization of Egyptian society and the behavior of the state. Islamicization, however, failed to operate as a unifying platform as the Brotherhood struggled to effectively define its goals. The vague Islamic terminology used to signal a non-threatening nature to the regime lacked descriptive value. Differing ideologues argued over how to make Egypt more Islamic and these differences resulted in significant splits.

⁴⁵ Hamzawy, Amr & Ottaway, Marina. “Islamists in Politics: The Dynamics of Participation.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 2008. p 1.

The Qutbists, or hardliners, were sidelined within the organization after the assassination of Sadat. The General Guide of the Brotherhood, Hasan al-Hudaybi, is credited with authoring a refutation of radicalism akin to that advocated by Qutb, in a book titled *Preachers not Judges*.⁴⁶ Subsequent General Guides maintained the anti-radical tendencies, resulting in the ascendancy of a reformist trend. The reformist control over the organization led to the Brotherhood's adoption of a gradual approach based on the belief that bloodless and penetrating changes to society are not accomplished in short time periods.⁴⁷ As such, the Brotherhood pursued a strategy of societal penetration and limited power accumulation during the Mubarak era. It imposed self-constraints on its accumulation of power, participated in opposition coalitions, and penetrated society to insulate itself from repression. This strategy of obtaining power outside regime-controlled institutions allowed the Brotherhood to increase its strength while presenting a minimal threat to the regime.

After the Mubarak era, the Brotherhood drastically altered its strategy to one of power maximization. However, it still failed to define Islamicization. Rather, it sent forth its members to propagate a model of "Islam walking on earth" that does not interact with society but rather infects it akin to a "good virus."⁴⁸ The "Principles and Plans of the Party" section from the 2011 Freedom and Justice Party's platform asserts:

Therefore, the first aspect of our party depends on the purification of souls, cleansing of hearts, upgrading of feelings, and refining of character by calling for the commitment to worship, dignified morals, better cohabitation, treatment of others, and remembrance of God until the Last

⁴⁶ Zollner, Barbara. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology*. London: Routledge, 2009. p65.

⁴⁷ Blaydes, Lisa. *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. p148.

⁴⁸ Kandil, Hazem. *Inside the Brotherhood*. Oxford: Polity Press, 2014. pp108-109.

Day. This awakens the consciences of the people and establishes a system of self-monitoring which highlights the good values in the souls of the people and repels the evil ones, in addition to forming a positive moral environment which promotes integrity and reform, and which penetrates the school, home, mosque, church, and media through its positive example.⁴⁹

As the first sentence of the second paragraph of the program, the emphasis on purity as defined by Islamic morality is portrayed as an organizational pillar. Furthermore, the preceding line is the Quranic verse 11 of Surah al-Ra'd, which states, "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."⁵⁰ In the context of the entire Surah al-Ra'd, the verse carries a foreboding message – if one does not change from evil to goodness, or rejects the truth as posited by the Brotherhood, damnation awaits. The placing of such a verse along with the importance of purification, shows that Islamicization of society maintained a significant role in the Brotherhood's program after the fall of Mubarak despite the ambiguous nature of the Brotherhood's definition of Islam. Additionally, likely due to the perceived disappearance of repressive regime institutions and its own accumulation of power, the Brotherhood attempted to adopt a populist model based on identity politics in which the majority affected change in a top-down dispersal of its Islamic morals. This change from a bottom-up to a top-down approach resulted in the creation of a relatively consolidated opposition to the Brotherhood and its eventual demise as a political organization in Egypt.

⁴⁹ "Program of the Freedom and Justice Party: 2011." p 4.

⁵⁰ "Al-Qur'an Al-Kareem - القرآن الكريم." *Surah Ar-Ra'd* [13:11], quran.com/13/11.

Akin to the chapter on al-Wefaq, this section is divided into four sections: political context, power-survival dichotomy under Mubarak, power-survival dichotomy post-Mubarak, and a conclusion.

POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD: FROM MUBARAK TO MORSI

Egypt is an autocratic state, ruled by a handful of men since the 1952 Free Officers Coup led by Gamal Abdul Nasser until the protests of the Arab Spring overthrew Hosni Mubarak in 2011. It received Freedom House ratings of “Partly Free” throughout the early years of his tenure, 1981-1993, but received scores of “Not Free” from 1993-2012. In 2013, the year of current President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi’s coup against the Brotherhood’s elected President Mohamed Morsi, Egypt curiously received a rating of “Partly Free.”⁵¹ From 1980-2013, the Egyptian legislature was bicameral, consisting of a larger People’s Assembly and smaller Shura Council. The Shura Council technically operated as the upper house in legislature as the ratifying power, however, most power remained in the larger People’s Assembly.⁵² As such, this study focuses on the efforts of the Brotherhood in the People’s Assembly.

After the assassination of Anwar Sadat by members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Mubarak rose to the Presidency, a position he would maintain for thirty years. The Mubarak regime imposed a system of patronage during its era that allowed for relatively competitive elections with possible authoritarian backlashes if too much power was

⁵¹ Freedom House. “Freedom in the World: Country and Territory Ratings and Statuses, 1973-2019” (Excel). 2020.
https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Country_and_Territory_Ratings_and_Statuses_FIW1973-2019.xls

⁵² Muller, Thomas C., William R. Overstreet, Judith F. Isacoff, and Tom Lansford, eds. *Political Handbook of the World 2011*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2011. pp 417-418.

acquired.⁵³ Despite being an illegal political organization throughout the Mubarak era, the regime tolerated the Brotherhood's existence. From 1981-1992 Brotherhood-affiliated Members of Parliament operated within state apparatuses of power as independents with relatively low levels of state interference, except during elections.⁵⁴ In 1992 the state began its attacks on the Brotherhood and its affiliates for becoming too powerful too quickly in too many arenas, especially after the Brotherhood provided more effective relief services for victims of the 1992 Cairo earthquake than the government.⁵⁵ The government repression of the Brotherhood culminated in 1995 with a significant crackdown on Brotherhood leaders unparalleled since the Nasser era.⁵⁶ The state gradually liberalized its position on the Brotherhood in the late 1990s until the Arab Spring of 2011, in which the Brotherhood participated under the Freedom and Justice Party.⁵⁷

The Brotherhood believed that to present itself as a competitor for power would likely result in a significant crackdown akin to the events of 1995 and 1950-1960s, whereas obtaining limited power that did not threaten regime survival would result in likely survival and the ability to gradually Islamicize Egyptian society.⁵⁸ As the Brotherhood was acutely aware of this dynamic, it chose to limit its participation in systems of power throughout the Mubarak era. However, the downfall of the regime in 2011 changed the context in which the organization operated. Firstly, it became a legal political actor. Secondly, no longer were rules set and arbitrarily altered from above, rather the new organizations that rose in its wake obtained the ability to write new rules on participation. As such, the Brotherhood

⁵³ Drevon, Jerome. "The Constrained Institutionalization of Diverging Islamist Strategies: The Jihadis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Salafis between Two Aborted Egyptian Revolutions." p 7.

⁵⁴ El-Ghobashy, Mona. "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 2005. Pp 378-381.

⁵⁵ Hamid, Shadi. *Temptations of Power*. p 88.

⁵⁶ El-Ghobashy, Mona. "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers." p 384.

⁵⁷ Hamid, Shadi. *Temptations of Power*. p 88.

⁵⁸ Blaydes, Lisa. *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. p 149.

removed many of its self-constraints and operated more openly, although it still maintained awareness of surviving government institutions that maintained a repressive capability. Eminent among the surviving institutions was the military.

POWER-SURVIVAL DICHOTOMY DURING MUBARAK

The Brotherhood's experiences of alternating state repression and political openness and its use of strategies to limit power accumulation to stave repression effectively elucidates the power-survival dichotomy. As an apparent unwritten rule, state repression followed Brotherhood success at the polls.⁵⁹ The Brotherhood managed the power-survival dichotomy through the application of self-imposed constraints on depth of electoral participation, penetration of society to broaden its base and increase organizational resilience to repression, and participation in electoral alliances. Depending on the specific rules imposed by the regime during differing eras of Mubarak's tenure and the short-lived Morsi era, the Brotherhood applied these strategies to various degrees. When state repression increased, the Brotherhood limited its claims to power and increased its organizational resilience. Conversely, when state repression decreased, the Brotherhood opted to increase, but never maximize, its power. In other words, the ebb and flow of power accumulation was directly correlated to the level of state repression.

Throughout the tenure of Hosni Mubarak, the Brotherhood often limited itself at the polls, frequently contesting a fraction of the seats in the People's Assembly. Out of 448 possible seats in 1984 it contested a mere 22 seats, winning eight.⁶⁰ In 1987, it received 36

⁵⁹ Harnisch, Chris & Mechem, Quinn. "Democratic Ideology in Islamist Opposition? The Muslim Brotherhood's 'Civil State.'" *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45:2. 2009. p 193.

⁶⁰ Campagna, Joel. "Accommodation to Confrontation: The Muslim Brotherhood in the Mubarak Years." *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 50, No. 1. 1996. Note 7, p 282.

seats out of the 56 won by the so-called Islamist alliance of the Brotherhood, Labor, and Liberal parties.⁶¹ While it is unclear how many seats the Brotherhood contested in 1987, its unexpected success with a mere 15.7% of the popular vote implies it did not contest the regime to its fullest capability. The Brotherhood and much of the opposition boycotted the 1990 parliamentary elections over electoral constraints imposed by the Mubarak regime.⁶² Just before the 1995 elections, the regime arrested 81 former Brotherhood parliamentarians, leading civil activists, and parliamentary candidates. Unsurprisingly it failed to win a single seat despite contesting around 150 of the slightly lowered 444 possible seats.⁶³ The electoral failure of the Brotherhood in the 1990s reflected the increased levels of state repression and electoral interference against the Brotherhood and other opposition groups in addition to the Brotherhood's constraints on maximizing power. The 2000s experienced a repeat of the events of the 1980s in which the regime gradually loosened constraints on political participation of the Brotherhood. The 2000 elections witnessed 20 Brotherhood candidates arrested before the elections, but the Brotherhood managed to field 75 candidates, winning 17 seats.⁶⁴ While regime repression continued in the 2005 elections with somewhere between 500-1400 Brotherhood supporters arrested before the third round of voting, the Brotherhood-led coalition had already won 76 of its total 96 seats, despite contesting only 225 seats. Of the 96 coalition seats, 88 were allocated to the Brotherhood.⁶⁵ The 2010 elections saw the Brotherhood field 135 candidates for an increased 508 available seats, but those candidates withdrew after the Brotherhood failed

⁶¹ El-Ghobashy, Mona. "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers." p 379.

⁶² Campagna, Joel. "Accommodation to Confrontation." p 285.

⁶³ Ibid, p 279.

⁶⁴ El-Ghobashy, Mona. "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers." p 387.

⁶⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union. "Elections in 2005." IPU PARLINE database: EGYPT (Majlis Al-Chaab). Inter-Parliamentary Union, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2097_05.htm.

to win a single seat in the first two rounds, likely due to regime-commanded vote rigging.⁶⁶ While figures are not known for the number of candidates fielded by the Brotherhood in the 1987 parliamentary elections, it never contested more than 225 seats in any election during the Mubarak era. Furthermore, the total number of candidates in these elections ranged from 3,700 in 1987 to 5,000 in 2005. In other words, Brotherhood supported candidates never exceeded 5% of the total number of candidates, peaking at 4.5% in 2005 as evidenced in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Muslim Brotherhood Selective Participation in Elections

	1984	1987	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
<i>MB Candidates</i>	22	??	boycott	150	75	225*	135
<i>Total Candidates</i>	4000	3700	2700	4000	4200	5000	5181
<i>Percent of Candidates</i>	0.55%	??	boycott	3.75%	1.79%	4.5%	2.61%
<i>MB Seats Won</i>	8	36	0	0	17	88	0

*candidates from MB-led coalition, not solely MB

By contesting a limited number of seats throughout the Mubarak era, the Brotherhood essentially guaranteed the regime-controlled National Democratic Party (NDP) a majority in the People’s Assembly, especially since votes to political parties that failed to meet the electoral threshold were awarded to the NDP. For instance, in 2005, the year of greatest Brotherhood contestation, the NDP won more than 170% the number of seats the Brotherhood-led coalition contested. From another perspective, the Brotherhood-led coalition contested barely over half (50.68%) of the 444 available seats. With the inclusion of the ten additional seats that are appointed by the President and not elected, the coalition contested of less than half the seats (49.56%) of the People’s Assembly. As it

⁶⁶ Inter-Parliamentary Union. “Elections in 2010.” IPU PARLINE database: EGYPT (Majlis Al-Chaab). Inter-Parliamentary Union, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2097_10.htm.

could not obtain a majority even if all its candidates won, the Brotherhood minimized its threat to the regime in electoral politics. This self-constraint signaled the Brotherhood's awareness of the precarious nature of its existence and its preference for survival over power accumulation during the Mubarak era.

In addition to its self-imposed constraints on contestation, the Brotherhood entered political coalitions with other opposition organizations primarily to surpass a high electoral threshold of eight percent. However, the side effects of participation in coalitions included the extension of its outreach, increased organizational resilience, and ability of the Brotherhood to participate in electoral politics despite its status as a banned organization. Perhaps the most important in terms of efficacy, was the increased organizational resilience. Opposition coalitions in authoritarian regimes increase resilience by limiting the ability of the state to utilize divide and conquer tactics and increase the perceived costs of repression and manipulation of elections by regime loyalists.⁶⁷ Obviously, divide and conquer tactics are less successful when division is difficult. Secondly, regime loyalists may fear retribution for illegal or inhumane action if the opposition is perceived as capable of legitimately threatening regime survival. Conversely, this may also make regime loyalists more ruthless in the commission of illegal actions as defeat could lead to death or imprisonment. Regardless, the Brotherhood's impetus for joining political coalitions revolved around the importance of participation in the People's Assembly as well as increasing the Brotherhood's resistance to repression.

Coalition participation mirrored power accumulation and state repression. When relatively open politically, the Brotherhood participated in coalitions. When repressed, few opposition parties dared to ally themselves with the Brotherhood. In 1984, the Brotherhood

⁶⁷ Howard, MM, and PG Roessler. "Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes." *American Journal of Political Science*. 50.2 (2006). p 371.

participated in an alliance with al-Wafd as a minor partner. In 1987, it participated as the dominant party in an alliance with the Labor and Liberal parties.⁶⁸ Its role as the dominant party would continue in future alliances, due to the Brotherhood's ability to lift minor parties over the election threshold, much as al-Wafd had done for the Brotherhood in 1984.⁶⁹ While this appeared to be effective in the 1980s, the increased visibility and representation of the Brotherhood in parliament alerted the regime to the persistent threat the Brotherhood represented, especially due to its role as the dominant party in the dominant opposition coalition. Furthermore, the minor members of the coalition suffered from relative weakness and an ideological distance from the Brotherhood that granted the regime a wedge to divide the coalition.⁷⁰ As such, the regime succeeded in dividing the coalition after a protracted propaganda campaign that conflated rejectionist Islamists such as Egyptian Islamic Jihad and The Islamic Group with the Brotherhood, starting after its electoral victory in 1987.⁷¹ No political organization dared ally itself with the Brotherhood until the formation of the National Front for Change in the 2005 election. While the participation in coalitions did not prevent the state from repressing the Brotherhood, it likely limited the ability of the state to attack the Brotherhood to the desired degree.

The Brotherhood's greatest source of power and resilience came from its penetration of civil institutions to provide public goods the regime neglected. Economic reforms of the Sadat era and Mubarak's Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment (ERSAP) program limited the efficacy the Egyptian social safety net. The degradation of

⁶⁸ Harnisch, Chris & Mecham, Quinn. "The Muslim Brotherhood's 'Civil State.'" p 191.

⁶⁹ Johnson, Amy Jo. "Can Religious Groups Contribute to Political Pluralism? An Analysis of the Role of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egyptian Parliamentary Elections, 1984, 1987, and 1990," 1992. p 112.

⁷⁰ Goodson, Larry & Radwan, Soha. "Democratization in Egypt in the 1990s: Stagnant or Merely Stalled?" *Arab Studies Quarterly*. Vol 19, No 3. 1997. p 11.

⁷¹ Ranko, Annette. "Selective Moderation of the Muslim Brotherhood under Mubarak – The Role of the Egyptian Regime's Discourse and of Islamist Political Inclusion" *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, Vol. 55, No. 3. 2014. p 503.

the state-provided safety net resulted in the increased provision of such public goods as health and education by the Brotherhood.⁷² In addition to its electoral policies, the Brotherhood penetrated society to broaden its base and strengthen its organizational resilience. By 1992, the Brotherhood successfully penetrated and controlled most of the major civil societies, professional associations, and unions, including the Bar Association, a previous bastion of government support, education facilities, student and labor unions, and medical facilities.⁷³ The Brotherhood's successful penetration of society culminated in efficient provision of health services to Cairenes after the 1992 earthquake. The government, conversely, failed to act until 36 hours after the earthquake had struck.⁷⁴ Penetration of this sort greatly increased public support for the Brotherhood and signaled its ability to provide services that rivaled, and occasionally outperformed state services. Power, in this context, revolved around effective governance. The Brotherhood proved that it could effectively govern in minor settings, such as the unions and associations, and during catastrophic events, but still lacked experience in governance on a grander scale during non-exceptional circumstances. Additionally, the effective provision of aid proved the Brotherhood's capabilities, but was insufficient for the achievement of their desired goal, the Islamicization of Egyptian society and state behavior. Changing state behavior was unlikely. Altering society from within unions and associations, regardless of their importance, was nearly an impossibility. However, it also proved to be the greatest threat to the regime's legitimacy, and, thus, the Brotherhood's key to survival.

⁷² Hamid, Shadi, & Will McCants. *Rethinking Political Islam*. p 19.

⁷³ Campagna, Joel. "Accommodation to Confrontation." p 284.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp 292-293.

POWER-SURVIVAL DICHOTOMY POST MUBARAK

After the fall of Mubarak, many of the state institutions that had repressed the Brotherhood experienced diminished power. As these institutions lost power the Brotherhood saw an opportunity to increase its own power without threatening its organizational survival. However, the Brotherhood initially acted timidly in the new political context, elucidating the lessons learned after years of operation in an authoritarian regime. Initially, the Brotherhood feared acting too quickly may provoke opposition at home and abroad.⁷⁵ In March 2011, the Brotherhood promised to contest less than a third of the available seats in parliament and refrain from running a presidential candidate. However, by the elections in November 2011, the Brotherhood contested more than half the seats in parliament and fielded a presidential candidate.⁷⁶ Its coalition won 235 out of 508 seats in the election, with the Brotherhood receiving 213 seats.⁷⁷ The Brotherhood then reneged on a promise to create a broad coalition by allying with other Islamist organizations, notably the Salafist al-Nour party.⁷⁸ Al-Nour controlled 123 seats, bringing the total of seats under the influence of the Brotherhood to over 70% of the People's Assembly. The Brotherhood's accumulation of power in conjunction with the limitations of old regime institutions resulted in the Brotherhood's persistent belief of a popular mandate for its policies.⁷⁹

Contrary to the assumption of the power-survival dichotomy in authoritarian regimes, the Brotherhood attempted to maximize its power to ensure its survival after the

⁷⁵ Hamid, Shadi. *Temptations of Power*. p 143.

⁷⁶ Al-Anani, Khalil. "Upended Path: The Rise and Fall of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood." *The Middle East Journal*. Vol 69 No 4. 2015. p 532.

⁷⁷ Inter-Parliamentary Union. "Elections in 2011." IPU PARLINE database: EGYPT (Majlis Al-Chaab). Inter-Parliamentary Union, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2097_11.htm.

⁷⁸ Hellyer, H. A. *A Revolution Undone: Egypt's Road Beyond Revolt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. p 69.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p 103.

fall of Mubarak.⁸⁰ In addition to its electoral policies, the power maximization is primarily evidenced by the November 2012 decree by President Mohamed Morsi that granted him immunity from legal challenges until the creation of a new constitution.⁸¹ The decree had a number of major implications for the Brotherhood. First, the decree represented the end of the Brotherhood's attempts to create a broad ideological consensus. Second, it rushed the constitutional process as Morsi's powers would remain until the creation of the constitution. Third, thousands of people responded by taking to the streets across Egypt in protest, effectively rejecting the Brotherhood's perception of its popular mandate.⁸² Fourth, the decree consolidated the opposition against the Brotherhood and its Islamist allies and converted the political conflict into an ideological conflict between secularists and Islamists.⁸³ The Brotherhood, in contrast to its modus operandi during the Mubarak era, ignored all signs that its accumulation of power may lead to its demise. Furthermore, whereas the Brotherhood had believed in a gradual approach to Islamicize Egyptian society, it adopted a more aggressive and immediate political strategy in lieu of a credible threat of repression.

The Brotherhood's decision to maximize power represented the organization's most significant strategic blunder. Rather than insulate the Brotherhood from repression and ensure its survival, the power-maximization strategy created a situation in which the old state apparatuses reappeared and enforced themselves with a significant popular mandate.⁸⁴ Its decision to maximize power resulted in the ideologization of a previously political conflict. Unsurprisingly, the rhetoric of Brotherhood and opposition supports

⁸⁰ Hamid, Shadi. *Temptations of Power*. p 183.

⁸¹ Hellyer, H.A. *A Revolution Undone*. p 32.

⁸² *Ibid*, p 111.

⁸³ *Ibid*, pp 111-112.

⁸⁴ Edel, Mirjam, & Josua, Maria. "How Authoritarian Rulers Seek to Legitimize Repression: Framing Mass Killings in Egypt and Uzbekistan." *Democratization*. Vol 25 No 5. 2018. p 890.

devolved into a tirade of incitement. Brotherhood leaders began accusing protesters of being Christian while Brotherhood supporters chanted that their dead were in heaven and the opposition's in hell.⁸⁵ Conversely, opposition figures referred to Morsi as the 'new pharaoh,' a double entendre to his autocratic policies and to the pre-Islamic age of ignorance often invoked by Islamists.⁸⁶ At this point it should have been clear to the Brotherhood that its strategy of power maximization outside overt state repression had backfired significantly. However, it was not; in June 2013 the army deposed Mohamed Morsi and subsequently banned the Brotherhood and liquidated its assets.

During the Brotherhood's year in power, it achieved little despite acquiring the highest office in Egyptian politics. In the context of foreign policy, the largest conflict between Israelis and Palestinians since the 2008-2009 Gazan War occurred in October-November 2012. The Brotherhood, despite its historical ideological ties to Hamas, merely acted as an intermediary between Israel and Hamas, a role previously occupied by the army. The foreign minister at the time, himself not a member or supporter of the Brotherhood, led efforts to condemn Israeli aggression in the Arab League and the United Nations, but took limited interest in actively freezing the conflict.⁸⁷ In terms of domestic legal success, all changes made by the Brotherhood were promptly reversed after the coup against Morsi in 2013. In order to prevent fragmentation, the Brotherhood lacked a clearly defined charter that explained religious interpretations in any detail. Keeping the organization from fragmenting resulted in increasingly constrained policy options, which limited its ability to pass laws that could endure the political life of the organization. Finally, the Brotherhood simply overestimated its public mandate. Its past successes in providing short-term services

⁸⁵ Hellyer, H.A. *A Revolution Undone*. p 117.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p 111.

⁸⁷ Al-Khateeb, Mustafa. "Foreign Minister: Egypt Will Work with International Parties to Stop Israeli Aggression in Gaza." *Freedom and Justice Party*, November 16, 2012.

led to overconfidence and the attempt to maximize power accumulation under populist rhetoric. The rhetoric, however, failed to take hold and the Brotherhood's victories, lacking any basis of public or institutional support outside the Brotherhood itself, crumbled.

CONCLUSION

The Brotherhood's experiences under Mubarak and after Mubarak elucidate the importance of a credible threat of repression. Under Mubarak the Brotherhood implemented significant self-constraints on power accumulation within the electoral system and repeatedly signaled its desire to minimize its overt threat to regime stability. Despite its signaling of restraint, the Mubarak regime repressed the organization whenever its power threatened regime stability and legitimacy. Repression occurred due to electoral success and the successful implementation of extra-electoral public policy. This resulted in a cyclical nature of limited power accumulation followed by repression leading to greater self-imposed restraints on its power and ensuing political openness. After the Arab Spring, however, the Brotherhood promised to maintain some constraints but rapidly reneged on the promise and attempted to maximize power in order to Islamicize Egyptian society as quickly as possible and to establish an Islamically moral government. The lack of a credible threat of repression resulted in the Brotherhood's abandonment of self-constraint and preference for strategies of power maximization. Of course, a credible threat of repression did exist and eventually made itself apparent. However, the Brotherhood appeared to have perceived a greater public mandate for its policies and downplayed the credibility of the old regime to repress the organization.

By the end of 2013, the Brotherhood was banned and its assets liquidated. Its overestimation of its own power and underestimation of the power of old regime

institutions was the most significant variable in the Brotherhood's demise. Self-constraints on power accumulation can thus only be expected in cases in which a credible threat of repression exists. The experience of the Brotherhood post-2011 would later inform Islamists in other states, such as Ennahda in Tunisia, that old regime institutions maintained significant power and represented a credible threat of repression even if they were hesitant to exercise it post revolution. Ennahda was careful not to repeat the mistakes of the Brotherhood.

Chapter 4: The Moroccan Justice and Development Party (PJD) and Regime Co-optation

The Justice and Development Party in Morocco is a Sunni Islamist organization that has been heavily inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP). It is the only extant Islamist organization in this study, occupying the post of Prime Minister since 29 November 2011. The PJD is a unique case due to its maintenance of the executive branch for nearly a decade by two different PJD members, Abdelilah Benkirane and Saad Ed-Dine El-Othmani. As the majority party of government, the PJD is obviously an accommodationist organization, having accepted regime-instituted conditions and rules of participation. The level of PJD acceptance of such rules and consistent support for regime policies that contravene conventional Islamist political doctrines indicate that the group has been co-opted to some degree by the regime. Co-optation, a regime strategy, counters the more common regime strategy used against Islamists, repression, and attempts to constrain policy options of opposition groups, notably the removal of the ability of the actor from credibly threatening to remove oneself from the political sphere. In other words, co-optation implies that organizational survival becomes tied to institutional participation and the rejection of questioning regime legitimacy.

This section will be divided into a small section defining co-optation, the political context of the PJD, regime strategies of co-optation vis-à-vis the PJD, and a rebuttal to arguments that the PJD does not represent a case of regime co-optation.

CO-OPTATION DEFINITION

Definitions of co-optation vary significantly from complete subsumption of opposition organizations to simple participation in regime institutions. This study builds

on the definition provided by Gandhi and Przeworski which argues that co-optation is the encapsulation of opposition movements to neutralize potential threats to regime survival.⁸⁸ Co-optation, in other words, is the imposition of constraints on the actions of opposition groups that effectively prevent them from exiting the political sphere or opposing ideological or political pillars of the regime. It should be noted that this does not mean consistent support for all regime policies or control of group policies by the regime. Co-opted groups maintain agency, albeit at a limited level in comparison to non co-opted groups.

POLITICAL CONTEXT:

Morocco is a hybrid regime led by a monarch, King Mohammed VI, who is somewhat limited in his actions by the Moroccan Constitution and shares some power with legislature and an independent judiciary, albeit maintaining the ability to overrule decisions when desired. It has a bicameral legislature with the lower house, the House of Representatives, elected by popular vote and the upper house, the House of Councillors, indirectly elected by the heads of regional and local professional associations. The lower house enjoys the ability to dissolve government in a vote of no confidence, but both houses lack the ability to implement policy effectively. As such, Moroccan legislature mainly occupies a position of oversight for foreign relations and budgetary matters.⁸⁹ Additionally, Morocco consistently receives Partly Free ratings from Freedom House with little annual deviation. The fluctuations vary between scores of 4.5-5.0, while a score of 5.5 would

⁸⁸ Gandhi, Jennifer & Przeworski, Adam. "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats." *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol 40 No 11. 2007. p 1281.

⁸⁹ Union, Inter-Parliamentary. IPU PARLINE database: MOROCCO (Majliss-annouwab), Full text. <http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2221.htm>.

qualify the country as Not Free.⁹⁰ The static nature of Moroccan Freedom House scores indicates that reforms in the late 1990s and after the Arab Spring have not furthered Moroccan democracy, but represent an example of authoritarian reform designed to increase regime stability in contrast to its framing as democratization.⁹¹

The PJD was founded under the name Democratic and Constitutional Popular Movement (MPDC) in 1997 as the party of the associated Unity and Reform Movement (MUR). Like most Islamist parties in the Arab world, the PJD's existence came about as part of the separation between the party and the movement common to Islamist organizations. Like nearly all Islamists, its primary goal is the Islamization of Moroccan society through the implementation of laws in agreement with the PJD's definition of Islamic morals.⁹² It has accommodated regime structures consistently since its incorporation and has never boycotted an election. The PJD has experienced a linear progression of electoral success with little direct repression, although regime interference and manipulation of elections is considered widespread. Its position in government relies heavily on its acceptance of the regime's position and continuous signaling of its intent to limit its accumulation of power and minimize direct opposition to the regime.

The PJD's "Electoral Program of 2016" provides ample evidence of the organizational aspirations, issues, and concerns. The first section of the document, titled Islamic References, reiterates the PJD's lack of monopoly on Islam and reaffirms that it is

⁹⁰ Freedom House. "Freedom in the World: Country and Territory Ratings and Statuses, 1973-2019" (Excel). 2020.
https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Country_and_Territory_Ratings_and_Statuses_FIW1973-2019.xls

⁹¹ King, Stephen J. "Sustaining Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa." p 457.

⁹² Maghraoui, Driss & Zerhouni, Saloua. "Searching for Political Normalization: The Party of Justice and Development in Morocco." In *Islamist Parties and Political Normalization in the Muslim World*, edited by Quinn Mecham & Julie Chernov-Hwang. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. p 121

a political party guided by Islamic reference, but not a religious party.⁹³ The reference to Islam, however, is limited to this section. For the majority of the document, excepting occasional references to religion when elucidating organizational preferences on topics such as family law and corruption, religion occupies a tertiary position. The PJD electoral program's goals include:

1. Consolidating the transition to new sources of economic growth and reinforcing competition in the national economy;
2. Valuing human well-being and protecting the dignity of the citizen in response to developmental challenges;
3. Reinforcing social and communal justice;
4. Establishing good governance through rapid reform and increased performance capabilities; and
5. Reinforcing the transmission of international ideas to Morocco.⁹⁴

These goals lack any religious reference and are more attuned to a secular liberal party than an Islamist party. The first point of the introduction proudly states “this program represents the first electoral program created by the party from a position of experience in government, which means the party has full awareness of government management, an accurate estimate of potential capabilities, a compulsion to implement reform, and command of realistic proposals.”⁹⁵ Considering the presumed lessons learned from experience, the omission of Islam throughout the program is glaring.

⁹³ PJD Electoral Program of 2016. p 8.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p 37.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p 6.

REGIME CO-OPTATION

Autocratic regimes have three pillars of stability: legitimation, repression, and co-optation.⁹⁶ As referenced in the section of al-Wefaq, the role of legitimacy is paramount for regime survival. Repression, as evidenced by the experience of the Brotherhood, attempts to constrain oppositional action and set expectations and rules for participation. Co-optation is characterized as the strategic inclusion of potential opposition elites to increase regime legitimacy. It can take two forms, to compensate regime vulnerabilities and to simulate pluralism.⁹⁷ Vulnerabilities in this context refers to politicized groups with staying power, capable of challenging regime survival. Co-optation of these groups is usually achieved through the distribution of goods and the gradual transformation of these groups to a rent-seeking population.⁹⁸ The co-optation of the PJD exemplifies co-optation for the sake of simulating pluralism. The regime-imposed rules of participation constrained the PJD's policy options and led to its gradual transformation into a rule-abiding and, from the regime's perspective, non-threatening political party. Additionally, co-optation of the PJD increased the regime's legitimacy as the inclusion of Islamists into the political arena meant some form of nearly all political ideologies was present in the Moroccan political system.

Divide and Rule

In addition to simulating pluralism, regime co-optation of the PJD also weakened the oppositional nature of the group and culled members that opposed participation with the regime. The regime-instituted rules for participation required acceptance of the so-

⁹⁶ Gerschewski, Johannes. "The Three Pillars of Stability: Legitimation, Repression, and Co-Optation in Autocratic Regimes." *Democratization*. Vol 20, No 1. 2013. pp 13–38.

⁹⁷ Maerz, Seraphine F. "The Many Faces of Authoritarian Persistence: A Set-Theory Perspective on the Survival Strategies of Authoritarian Regimes." *Government and Opposition*. Vol 55, No 1. 2018. p 67.

⁹⁸ King, Stephen J. "Sustaining Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa." p 446.

called fundamental principles of Moroccan politics: the supremacy of the monarchy in governance and religion, the role of Islam in society, and support for Moroccan policies in Western Sahara.⁹⁹ The role of the monarchy in society is particularly problematic for Islamist organizations as the king is the Commander of the Faithful, a term infused with historical connections to the Ottoman, Abbasid, Fatimid, and Umayyad Caliphates and a significant source of regime sovereignty and public legitimacy. Participation given the PJD's acceptance of the fundamental principles divided and weakened the PJD as it increased the schism between party elites and supporters. In 2000, a party vote on whether to join the government or adopt a position of constructive opposition resulted in the party choosing opposition due to an eleven-vote difference out of 280 votes.¹⁰⁰ However, its position as a constructive opposition party was derived more from opposition to secular parties in government than opposition to the regime. One party leader remarked that after the Casablanca terror attacks of 2003, the interests of the party and the interests of the activists began to diverge.¹⁰¹ Party elites favored organizational survival and maintaining good relations with the regime, whereas activists desired continued action to implement change. In 2007, activists, a former backbone of the PJD, began to leave the organization in droves as the party (PJD) became disengaged from the movement (MUR) over issues of regime support.¹⁰² Unsurprisingly, the lack of activists negatively impacted electoral performance and implied that the party was likely perceived by the voting population as too cooperative with the regime.¹⁰³ With the departure of the MUR activists, co-optation became a more viable regime strategy due to the removal of a significant constraint on

⁹⁹ Maghraoui, Driss & Zerhouni, Saloua. "Searching for Political Normalization." In *Islamist Parties and Political Normalization in the Muslim World*, edited by Quinn Meham & Julie Chernov-Hwang. p 121.

¹⁰⁰ Wegner, Eva. *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*. p 100.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p 44.

¹⁰² Ibid, p 69.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p 121.

leader decisionmaking.¹⁰⁴ Thereafter, the PJD supported government directives, which resulted in decreased legitimacy among conservatives due to the perception of the party as a regime pawn and the failure of the party to enact meaningful laws with Islamic tenets and prevent the passing of laws viewed contrary to Islamic morals.¹⁰⁵

PJD's Perspective

The results of the regime strategy of co-optation of the PJD elucidate its effectiveness in the Moroccan setting. The PJD began its activity in parliament with the intention of showing it was a rule-abiding party that should be trusted as a normal political actor.¹⁰⁶ In doing so, the PJD lost sight of its objective to Islamicize Moroccan society and began to prioritize its survival over its ideological ethos.¹⁰⁷ It focused on and measured its success through results of the ballot box and the level of activity in parliament, regardless of the effectiveness of such activity in terms of policy creation. Initially, from its inception until the Casablanca terrorist attacks of 2003, the PJD focused on small ticket items such as banning or severely limiting the availability of alcohol and other items perceived as immoral by Islamic standards,¹⁰⁸ while still voting for the majority of regime-supported laws.¹⁰⁹ Although it left government in 2000 and began operating as the “constructive opposition,” it still supported that vast majority of regime-supported laws. After the 2003 Casablanca bombings, the party began to self-censor and attempt to disassociate itself from other Islamist groups. During this time the PJD maintained its support for the regime and

¹⁰⁴ Buckles, Grant. “Internal Opposition Dynamics and Restraints on Authoritarian Control.” *British Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 49, No 3. 2017. p 884.

¹⁰⁵ Shadi & McCants Islamism after Arab Spring p10

¹⁰⁶ Maghraoui, Driss & Zerhouni, Saloua. “Searching for Political Normalization.” In *Islamist Parties and Political Normalization in the Muslim World*, edited by Quinn Mecham & Julie Chernov-Hwang, p 122.

¹⁰⁷ Hamid, Shadi. *Temptations of Power*. p 26.

¹⁰⁸ Maghraoui, Abdeslam. “Morocco: The King's Islamists.” *Wilson Center*, August 27, 2015. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/morocco-the-kings-islamists>.

¹⁰⁹ Wegner, Eva. *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*. p 97.

its laws, even hesitatingly voting for a change to the Personal Status Law that granted women greater rights in marriage, divorce, and child custody that Islamists viewed as incompatible with Islam in addition to an anti-terror law that granted extensive powers to the monarchy.¹¹⁰ Initially the PJD did not approve of the Personal Status Law and even organized protests against it, however after the king publicly supported the law the PJD adopted his position.¹¹¹ The PJD later explained its flippant position on the Personal Status Law by pointing out it proposed 53 amendments to the law, of which 26 were accepted. However, the amendments proposed were mostly related to the rhetorical aspects of the law, not its content.¹¹² From 2004 until 2011, the PJD maintained its emphasis on activity and the appearance of fomenting change, but passed no bills of its own and had limited impact on government policy.¹¹³

The focus on appearance of activity and fomentation of change is furthered by the notion of the good PJD Member of Parliament. The PJD cultivated an image of its parliamentarians as incorruptible advocates of the Moroccan people focused on fighting clientelism and corruption.¹¹⁴ It maintained a close proximity to society and attempted to solve personal issues of its constituents in a transparent manner. The PJD also showcased its activity in Parliament by posing the most written questions and a significant number of oral questions during televised parliamentary sessions.¹¹⁵ However, the transparency and increased activity did not result in meaningful Islamicization of Moroccan society. Rather, such actions simply increased the PJD's appeal to the people as a party that took their concerns seriously and attempted to find solutions. Furthermore, its activities boosted

¹¹⁰ Wegner, Eva. *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*. p 87.

¹¹¹ Maghraoui, Driss & Zerhouni, Saloua. "Searching for Political Normalization." p 124.

¹¹² Ibid, p 125.

¹¹³ Maghraoui, Abdesalam. "Morocco: The King's Islamists"

¹¹⁴ Wegner, Eva. *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*. p 102.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p 103.

regime legitimacy by enhancing the appearance of an effective Parliament, despite the lack of progress in achieving policy goals.

After the Arab Spring, the PJD won a plurality in the 2011 parliamentary elections and acquired the office of Prime Minister in Morocco. Yet, despite its position of power within the system, the regime maintains the ability to effectively prevent the PJD from passing bills that could threaten regime stability. The PJD's focus on its survival has resulted in the party's continual maneuvering to maintain its position, but a lack of focus on implementing policies on key issues such as corruption or challenging the regime's authority.¹¹⁶ This perhaps best represents the co-optation of the PJD. Even when in power, it is reluctant or incapable of challenging the regime and fomenting change. Although Morocco has witnessed a level of Islamicization of society akin to other regional countries, the change has not been achieved through the parliamentary process. In states without active or electorally successful accommodationist Islamist organizations, the change has been comparable to that within Morocco. Islamists, Moroccan included, appear to be a result of regional Islamicization of society, rather than the agent of Islamicization in the region. In other words, the organization gained power and developed a foothold in Moroccan parliamentary politics, but it has not achieved any of its primary goals and its primary successes have been limited to the ballot box.

Regime Perspective

While no publicly available documentation exists that shows the primary goals of the regime in the opening of parliamentary elections, it likely was to minimize the power and public support for possible sources of opposition while portraying pluralism. The 1990s witnessed an uptick in Islamist violence throughout North Africa. The regime

¹¹⁶ Maghraoui, Abdesalam. "Morocco: The King's Islamists"

responded by banning radicals and legalizing moderates.¹¹⁷ This provided a twofold benefit to the regime in clearly demarcating and punishing unacceptable behavior while also providing an avenue to access resources and sources of power for acceptable actors. However, a significant fear of the regime was that opposition forces that were included in the parliamentary process would withhold participation and tarnish the regime's reputation domestically and internationally.¹¹⁸ Co-optation was thus geared to prevent the ability of an organization to withhold participation and maintain organizational coherency. When a PJD leader, Ahmed Raissouni, suggested that the Commander of the Faithful title could be held by someone other than the king, he was forced to resign and the PJD ran a significantly limited parliamentary election campaign, contesting less than one-fifth available seats likely due to regime interference.¹¹⁹ At a later point, another leader of the PJD, Abdelilah Benkirane stated that "he 'is ready' to reconsider some of his long-held religious opinions, if they go against those of king Mohammed VI."¹²⁰ This pandering of an Islamist leader to the religious credentials of the king indicates the level to which the PJD is co-opted on its most basic tenets. Even when the PJD was in opposition to the government, it refrained from challenging the restrictive rules of participation imposed by the regime.¹²¹ Threats to

¹¹⁷ King, Stephen J. "Sustaining Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa." p 457.

¹¹⁸ Wegner, Eva. *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*. p 72.

¹¹⁹ Kalpakian, J. V. "A Tug-Of-War over Islam: Religious Faith, Politics, and the Moroccan Response to Islamist Violence." *Journal of Church and State*. Vol 50, No 1. 2008 119–33.p 126

¹²⁰ "Despite Ups and Downs, I Have a Good Relationship with the King: Benkirane." Morocco World News, March 20, 2015. <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/03/154463/despite-ups-and-downs-i-have-a-good-relationship-with-the-king-benkirane/>.

¹²¹ Sherif, Ashraf Nabih El. "Institutional and Ideological Re-Construction of the Justice and Development Party (PJD): The Question of Democratic Islamism in Morocco." *The Middle East Journal*. Vol 66, No 4. 2012. p 661.

leave government and channel public outrage were rare and incredible, as leaving government would have likely meant organizational death.¹²²

The most convincing evidence of co-optation resides in the response of the PJD to the Arab Spring and subsequent ineffective rule of the PJD since its ascension to a plurality in Parliament and the office of Prime Minister. In lieu of calling for the fall of the regime as happened in many other states, the PJD and other legalized parties instead called for the empowerment of parliament vis-à-vis the regime but refused to challenge foundational sources of regime power, including the King's role as Commander of the Faithful.¹²³ Considering the monarchy's ability to significantly affect voting results, the longevity of the PJD's parliamentary plurality implies a degree of regime comfort with the organization. Additionally, the successive PJD-led governments of 2012-2013, 2013-2016, and 2017-present have been incapable of fomenting significant change. The so-called deep state of Morocco maintains control of key ministries and actively prevents PJD initiatives, effectively encapsulating the PJD despite its parliamentary plurality.¹²⁴ Additionally, the PJD initiatives that succeeded were largely symbolic and had little to no impact on major structural issues they ostensibly addressed.¹²⁵ Even with the PJD's victory in parliamentary elections with a quarter of the vote in 2016, the government prevented the PJD leader who had previously stated his deference to the religious credentials of the king, Abdelilah Benkirane, from forming a government until he was replaced with a less confrontational

¹²² Storm, Lise. "The PJD: The Vanguard of Democracy in Morocco in the Age of Populism and Authoritarian Entrenchment?." *Issue Brief*. 2018. James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy of Rice University. p 4.

¹²³ Sakhtivel, Vish. "Al-Adl wal-Ihsan: Inside Morocco's Islamist Challenge." *Washington Near East Policy*. Washington DC. 2014. p 3.

¹²⁴ Maghraoui, Driss. "Working Under Constraints: The PJD in the Aftermath of the 2016 Elections." *Issue Brief*. 2018. James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy of Rice University. p 4.

¹²⁵ Drhimeur, Amina. "The Party of Justice and Development's Pragmatic Politics." *Issue Brief*. 2018. James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy of Rice University. p 3.

PJD parliamentarian, Saad Ed-Dine El-Othmani. The regime succeeded in encapsulating the PJD and preventing it from fomenting change, despite ostensibly holding a source of significant power in the Moroccan government.

DEBATES ON PJD CO-OPTATION

Some scholars, however, reject the assertion that the PJD was co-opted by the regime. Buehler, for instance, argues that PJD threats to un-moderate during the Arab Spring represent political gamesmanship and the maintenance of autonomy.¹²⁶ This argument is based on the assertion that the threat to leave government and participate in the Arab Spring represented the use of leverage to gain concessions from the regime. Buehler argues that the PJD credibly threatened to un-moderate by preventing members from participation in protest but not developing serious obstacles to such participation.¹²⁷ Additionally, some members resigned from the PJD to participate in the protests in what he describes as an orchestrated move. However, such assertions rely on the assumption that the PJD operated as a unitary rational actor, despite significant evidence that it did not. Some factions consistently supported cooperation with the government, while others preferred to oppose government.

Additionally, the aforementioned concessions Buehler touts as proof of non co-optation include the release of an Islamist prisoner, the downfall of a rival party leader, constitutional reforms, and the maintenance of the Islamic nature of the Moroccan state by the continued role of the king as Commander of the Faithful.¹²⁸ The released prisoner was

¹²⁶ Buehler, Matt. "The Threat to 'Un-Moderate': Moroccan Islamists and the Arab Spring." *Middle East Law and Governance*. Vol. 5, No 3. 2013.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p 248.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p 248.

a PJD MP who had been jailed on charges of corruption, tarnishing the party's image as incorruptible.¹²⁹ The downfall of Fouad Ali El-Himma, leader of the pro-regime Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), is presented as a regime concession to the PJD, despite the targeting of pro-regime parliamentarians by protesters.¹³⁰ While the regime appeared to have played a role in El-Himma's decision to step down from his position in PAM, it is a cognitive leap to portray concessions to the demands of the protest movement as concessions to the PJD considering the party's decision to abstain from participation in the protests. In response to the protest movements the king established a constitutional reform commission with no PJD members. The ensuing draft referred to Morocco as a "modern state with the Islamic religion," in addition to granting Moroccans the freedom of religion. The PJD opposed these reforms and advocated for a return to the status quo in which the Islamic nature of Morocco was upheld. The secular proposals to the constitution were rejected. However, the draft also referred to the king as a citizen-monarch, stripping him of his role as Commander of the Faithful. While this should be considered a positive amendment to the PJD, Buehler bizarrely argues that the maintenance of the title Commander of the Faithful represented a concession from the regime to the PJD.¹³¹ Of course, the defeat of secular proposed amendments to the constitution represent a victory for the PJD, but in reality they merely maintained the status quo.

Overall, the concessions as touted by Buehler consisted of the successful release of one member of parliament from prison, the downfall of a political rival that can hardly be attributed solely to the PJD, and the rejection of constitutional reforms that would have altered the status quo. With the exception of the first two, it is difficult to accept that these

¹²⁹ Ibid, p 249.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p 250.

¹³¹ Ibid, pp 252-254.

represent concessions due to political gamesmanship. Furthermore, the actual concessions were astonishingly minor considering the exceptional circumstances of the Arab Spring. Buehler overstates the concessions and adopts an ex post rationale that attributed pro-PJD changes to PJD gamesmanship, when other confounding variables such as the exceptional circumstances and popular movement may better explain the concessions granted by the regime. Finally, the king's maintenance of the title Commander of the Faithful should not be considered a regime concession, but rather a regime victory at the expense of the PJD.

Buehler's assertion that the PJD's decision to abstain from the protests in order to obtain concessions from the regime is also based on the faulty premise that co-optation involves the complete subsumption of opposition groups. However, co-optation can be internalized by opposition movements without their knowledge as it simply refers to the encapsulation of the opposition, not control over it. Upon further analysis, Buehler's argument provides substantial evidence that the PJD was co-opted by the regime.

CONCLUSION

The co-optation of the PJD by the Moroccan regime was designed to simulate pluralism and weaken potential opposition to the monarchy. The PJD, despite opposing some pro-regime policies, consistently supported legislation that the king publicly backed including laws that Islamists in other countries mobilized to oppose. The decision of the PJD to remain in government and forego activism in the streets during the Arab Spring effectively illustrates the encapsulation of the organization. The ability to maintain organizational coherence and leave government was nonexistent. The PJD's existence required its participation in state institutions. Furthermore, its experience as the largest party in Parliament with control over the position of Prime Minister post-2011 further

elucidates its co-optation as no significant reforms were achieved by the PJD. Additionally, the PJD refrained from questioning foundational aspects of the Moroccan state that many other Moroccan Islamists rejected, especially the king's title of Commander of the Faithful due to the expectation of at least repression and the likelihood of organizational death for challenging a significant source of sovereignty and legitimacy of the regime. As evidenced by its electoral goals in 2016, the PJD's platform omitted nearly all references to Islam and focused on bread-and-butter issues that did not challenge regime survival.

Although some scholars argue that the PJD was not co-opted by the regime, the evidence behind such an argument supports the assertion that the PJD was co-opted by 2011 at the latest. Furthermore, such arguments assume that co-opted oppositional movements lack agency when they simply face constrained strategic options. The PJD was able to voice opposition to some regime policies and stymie reforms that would diminish the role of Islam in Morocco but was incapable of credibly threatening to remove itself from Parliament. The PJD's incapability to credibly threaten un-moderation best exemplifies the encapsulation of the PJD due to regime co-optation.

Chapter 5: Implications for United States Foreign Policy

Islamist political actors have been a serious concern of US foreign policy since the end of the Cold War and especially after the September 11 attacks. Much of the Western and American discourses on Islamists have approached these groups from a position of fear, incompatibility with Western ideals, and incomprehensibility for Western audiences. Samuel Huntington published his famous *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* in 1996, which posited a return to the colonial era's clash of cultures with specific emphasis on Chinese and Islamic ascendancy at the cost of the West. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the new bogeyman became Islamists, with political elites in the US adopting Cold War terminology in reference to such groups.¹³² Half a decade later, in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, President George W. Bush famously posited the question many Americans themselves were asking, "Why do they hate us?" His answer touched on the three aforementioned Western perspectives of Islamists:

They hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.

They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. They want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa.

These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. With every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends. They stand against us because we stand in their way.

We're not deceived by their pretenses to piety.

¹³² Moussalli, Ahmad. *US Foreign Policy and Islamist Politics*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008. p 22.

We have seen their kind before. They're the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way to where it ends in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies.¹³³

Bush explicitly refers to the differences between Islamism and the West through three common reflections of Islam. First, fear - the terrorists kill for more than the sake of killing, and they will not stop unless we submit and pander to their desires. Second, incompatibility - their way of life differs to such a degree from our own that they hate us because we are such an anathema to them. Third, incomprehensibility – the actions of these groups mirror the worst actors of the 20th century: fascists and communists, but with a pious twist. A rational individual cannot understand these movements, their actions, and their lust for blood.

Considering the level of fearmongering among the American political elite, it is of no surprise that the US has tended to turn a blind eye to gross violations against Islamist organizations, even those that eschewed violence. Islamists often reference the “American veto” of unfavorable democratic results in reference to the US greenlighting of the Algerian regime’s brutal crackdown against the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) after its victory in the 1991 elections. The ensuing conflict cost the lives of between 100,000 and 200,000 Algerians. Likewise, the experience of the Brotherhood in 2013 represents another example of the “American veto.” Although not greenlighted by the US, the Egyptian regime massacred around 1,000 mostly peaceful protesters at the Rabaa and An-Nahdha Squares weeks after the regime’s coup d'etat against Mohamed Morsi’s government. President Barack Obama avoided referring to the sudden, violent, and illegal overthrow of the elected government as a coup. Furthermore, while he withheld a minor parcel of military aid to the

¹³³ The Washington Post. WP Company, n.d. https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html.

Egyptian regime and canceled some joint exercises, the vast majority and all counterterrorism aid arrived in Egypt without significant delay.¹³⁴ Likewise, an attempted coup in 2016 against the Islamist AKP lead by Recep Erdogan was perceived by many Turks to have been blessed by American and European leaders due to lack of prompt message in support of the elected government during or after the coup attempt.¹³⁵ US support for regional allies against Islamist organizations continues to be widespread with little consideration over methods used to repress Islamists or the plurality of Islamists.¹³⁶

The historical relationship between US foreign policy and Islamist organizations is largely based on an American preference for the separation of church and state and the fear of the creation of another revolutionary Islamist state akin to Iran. The US suffers from the Islamist dilemma, in which the juxtaposition of democracy promotion and American security interests are challenged by the ascendancy of Islamist organizations.¹³⁷ The US views an Islamist democracy as a likely challenge to its foreign policy in the Middle East, specifically its support of Israel and, ironically, fears a domino effect of Islamist democracies. Thus, the US has a historical preference for secular democracies and dictatorships over Islamists.¹³⁸ As previously mentioned, the FIS and Muslim Brotherhood each won elections and were extralegally deposed with little to no condemnation from the US. In addition to the preference for secular governments regardless of regime type, there is a significant fear of a one-man one-vote scenario for Islamist organizations. However, this fear appears blown out of proportion as Hamas, Iran, and Sudan represent the sole

¹³⁴ Edel, Mirjam, & Josua, Maria. "How Authoritarian Rulers Seek to Legitimize Repression." p 887.

¹³⁵ Lesser, Ian. "Turkey and the West After the Failed Coup: Beyond Suspicion?" *Insight Turkey*. Vol 18, no. 3. 2016. p 46.

¹³⁶ Moussalli, Ahmad. *US Foreign Policy and Islamist Politics*. p 75.

¹³⁷ Hamid, Shadi. *Temptations of Power*. p 23.

¹³⁸ Roy, Olivier. "Islamic Revival and Democracy: The Case in Tunisia and Egypt." In *Arab Society in Revolt: the West's Mediterranean Challenge*, edited by Cesare Merlini and Olivier Roy. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2012. p 47.

Islamist organizations for which such an approach is applicable, whereas countless secular autocrats have obtained power through elections. Furthermore, in all three territories for which one-man one-vote Islamist examples exist, Islamists simply replaced another authoritarian leader.

Many of these fears result from the assumption of Islamist unity, despite the plural nature of Islamists globally and within each state. For instance, al-Wefaq was challenged by Islamist organizations such as al-Haqq, al-Menbar, and al-Asalah. The Brotherhood campaigned in parliamentary and presidential elections against the so-called Islamist bloc before forming a coalition with the Salafist al-Nour. The PJD faces opposition from the Sufi Justice and Spirituality association. Yet, academics like Rachel Ehrenfeld argue that all Islamists seek to establish the same global Caliphate, emphasizing the writings of Sayyid Qutb despite the Muslim Brotherhood's rejection of many of his ideas following the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981.¹³⁹ In her rush to combine all Islamist organizations, she critiques a New York Times article for not blaming the Brotherhood for Sadat's assassination, arguing that the Brotherhood claimed the act when Egyptian Islamic Jihad, an al-Qaeda precursor, was the responsible party and no Brotherhood member claimed responsibility.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, in contrast to her assertion that the final goal is a return to a Caliphal system, accommodationist Islamists are forward-thinking and do not desire a return to an historical existence.¹⁴¹ Conversely, New York Times journalist Judith Miller adopts an overtly racist approach to Islamism and elections in Muslim countries. Despite referring to only Arab countries, she asserts that she lacks faith in the ability of

¹³⁹ Ehrenfeld, Rachel. "The Muslim Brotherhood Evolution: An Overview." *American Foreign Policy Interests*. Vol. 33, No 2. 2011. p 71.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p 73.

¹⁴¹ Haddad, Yvonne. "Islamist perceptions of US Policy in the Middle East" in *The Middle East and the United States: a Historical and Political Reassessment* edited by Lesch, David. New York, NY: Perseus Books Group, 2007. p 469.

Muslims to make rational choices at the ballot box.¹⁴² Undoubtedly, Westerners have her confidence despite a history of dubious electoral victories of personalities highlighted by Adolf Hitler. Additionally, Indonesia, the state with the largest Muslim population globally, has five extant Islamist parties that share less than one-third the total vote, meaning secular parties carry the vote. Arabs are not immune from such a simplified perspective on Islamists. The National, an Emirati paper, published a staff-written paper lamenting the US indecision on designating the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization.¹⁴³ Akin to Ehrenfeld's assertion that the Brotherhood and al-Qaeda are ideological peers, the article posits that the Brotherhood is no different from the Islamic State. These views, pervasive as they might be, are significantly flawed as they fail to grasp the pluralism of Islam and Islamists. They perceive Islamists as the vanguard of Islam, which itself is a timeless and monolithic threat to Western existence.¹⁴⁴ Yet, the pluralism of Islamists is akin to that of labor parties which may hold a vague notion of labor advocacy but differ wildly in policies and preferences. Comparing the Brotherhood to the Islamic State is akin to comparing the Tea Party to the neo-Nazi Atomwaffen Division.

HOW THE DICHOTOMIES AND REGIME STRATEGIES SIMPLIFY AND IMPROVE POLICYMAKING

While treating Islamists as monolithic is obviously flawed, recognizing the contextual differences between each organization and adopting contextually specialized policies across the Islamist spectrum is likely too demanding for policymakers with a

¹⁴² Moussalli, Ahmad. *US Foreign Policy and Islamist Politics*. p 19.

¹⁴³ Editorial, National. "The Muslim Brotherhood and ISIL Share the Same Swamp." The National. The National, March 29, 2017. <https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/the-muslim-brotherhood-and-isil-share-the-same-swamp-1.82649>.

¹⁴⁴ Moussalli, Ahmad. *US Foreign Policy and Islamist Politics*. p 19.

plethora of competing interests to consider. Rather, the behavioral constraints faced by Islamist organizations in authoritarian settings can help inform effective policy. The participation-legitimacy dichotomy can inform policy on repression, regime stability, and opposition capabilities. The power-survival dichotomy elucidates self-constraints of Islamist organizations in addition to serving as a possible signifier of societal distaste for Islamists during periods of repression. Finally, the co-optation strategy can operate as an alert to halted democratic transitions for policymakers and provide an avenue for interaction between co-opted Islamist organizations and American policymakers. Regimes tend to have less objections to foreign interactions between co-opted groups, such as the PJD, than non co-opted groups, such as al-Wefaq.

The participation-legitimacy dichotomy can help inform American policymakers on the structural aspects of the regime in which Islamists operate. In cases where participation is consistent and rarely withheld policymakers should infer either co-optation or a relatively fair system. Conversely, when participation is withheld and Islamists boycott elections, the tendency to view Islamists as sore losers is overstated. Occasionally Islamists may protest elections ex post due to poor results, but boycotts of elections imply a deeper systemic issue with regime institutions. The decision to boycott elections is damaging to regime reputation internationally and domestically, thus, Islamist organizations that choose to boycott regimes may incur the wrath of the regime to a degree that imperils organizational survival. In Bahrain, no Shi'i Islamist organization exists in government due to the regime's response to al-Wefaq's withholding of participation in the regime's distributive institutions. All Shi'i political societies exist outside of government. However, withholding participation may also result in an opening of regime institutions in response to domestic and international condemnation of the unfair and undemocratic policies that Islamists ostensibly target when boycotting participation. The wide variance in possible

outcomes of withholding participation elucidates the risk of such a strategy. As such, policymakers must take Islamist boycotts seriously as an indication of greater systemic issues.

The power-survival dichotomy elucidates two contrasting effects. First, Islamists constrain themselves in their accumulation of power to stave regime repression. The imposition of self-constraints has two major implications for US policymakers when dealing with Islamist organizations. On one hand, self-constraints are likely to be discarded by Islamists when the fear of repression diminishes, meaning limiting strategies such as those that guarantee electoral defeat are likely to be eschewed in favor of strategies that attempt to acquire increased power. On the other hand, within stable systems self-constraints make Islamists more approachable. Secondly, regime repression of Islamists can indicate a level of public distrust and distaste of Islamists. While Islamists are often scapegoats for crackdowns which have ulterior motives, such as recomposing clientelism,¹⁴⁵ repression can also be viewed as justified and increase public support for the regime.¹⁴⁶ This was the case of regime repression and closing of the political sphere after the coup against the Brotherhood in 2013.

The existence of the co-opted Islamist parties indicates the intention of a regime to minimize change and maintain the status quo. This implies a halted democratization process that results in a relatively stable regime. Yet, while governments can repress or co-opt Islamist groups, such strategies do not ameliorate public grievances that led to the formation of these groups.¹⁴⁷ As such, successful co-optation of Islamists is a short-term solution. Once co-opted these groups lose public support and can no longer effectively

¹⁴⁵ King, Stephen J. "Sustaining Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa." p 446.

¹⁴⁶ Edel, Mirjam, & Josua, Maria. "How Authoritarian Rulers Seek to Legitimize Repression." p 882.

¹⁴⁷ Moussalli, Ahmad. *US Foreign Policy and Islamist Politics*. p 165.

differentiate themselves from other co-opted political parties. Policymakers should recognize that co-optation results in a window of empowerment, due to successful participation in governance, that dwindles then declines with time. Akin to a J-curve population growth model, co-opted Islamists can overshoot their natural popularity after proving to be incapable of fomenting change, leading to a declining natural popularity that is nearly impossible to reclaim. As such, successful regime co-optation of Islamists should be understood by policymakers as a signal of Islamist decline. Another Islamist or other opposition organization will eventually replace the co-opted group to address the underlying grievances that the co-opted Islamists initially addressed.

CONSTRAINTS ON ISLAMISTS BASED ON REGIME TYPE

The constraints created by the participation-legitimacy and power survival dichotomies in addition to the regime tactic of co-optation should inform policymakers on the most effective methods of interaction with Islamists. However, the magnitude and direction of these constraints varies with regime type. Notably, in authoritarian regimes, as evidenced by this study, the participation-legitimacy dichotomy defines the most drastic action available to Islamists, boycotting elections. The power-survival dichotomy results in limitations of on power accumulation in the interest of organizational survival. Co-optation occurs to enhance regime stability and organizational survival at the cost of the organization distancing itself from the people. Regimes transitioning from autocracy to democracy witness significantly less constraints on Islamists than their authoritarian counterpart. Finally, democratic regimes witness the dissolution of the constraints as the dichotomies no longer apply and no regime exists to co-opt Islamists.

Authoritarian Regimes

Within authoritarian settings, Islamists cannot be effective actors without regime support. As evidenced by the participation-legitimacy and power-survival dichotomies, Islamists face a seriously constrained array of policy options. At one extreme, Islamists can boycott elections to diminish regime legitimacy. No other option exists as the regime defines the rules of participation and the structure of institutions. Displeasure with the system cannot be effectively expressed within government unless a widespread coalition exists. Obviously, authoritarian regimes strive to prevent situations in which a broad coalition can exist and, thus, these types of coalitions only exist in exceptional circumstances when regime survival is at stake. At the other end of the spectrum, Islamists must limit their accumulation of power to stave regime repression.

Thus, Islamists have little ability to foment change within government. Furthermore, any change that Islamists achieve is likely to be peripheral and of little long-term consequence. Changes to regime structure only occur in exceptional circumstances or when the regime itself recomposes its base of support. Finally, co-optation in authoritarian settings may provide pathways to electoral success but is unlikely to result in the Islamicization of society through legislative processes. Due to the nature of co-optation, co-opted groups present a limited challenge to regime stability and represent an avenue of approach for US policymakers. The control over most aspects of participation in governance by authoritarian regimes renders accommodationist Islamists ineffective. In authoritarian settings Islamists can succeed at the ballot box, but, barring regime support, are unlikely to succeed in legislature.

Transitioning Regimes

However, in transitioning regimes Islamists present a radically different threat to regime stability. The opening of the electoral process and governance in general renders the effectiveness of boycotting elections mute. Additionally, transitioning regimes witness a withering of the repressive capabilities of the state. The fact that Islamist parties must constrain themselves in accumulating power in authoritarian settings to avoid regime repression implies a significant source of support, often the associated movement, that other political actors lack. With the diminished repressive capability during transition, Islamists often assume the role of the primary challenger to remnants of the old regime in obtaining victory through the ballot box. Additionally, transitioning regimes often experience a tyranny of the majority under the guise of nationalism.¹⁴⁸ Islamism should be considered a form of nationalism, especially in Middle Eastern states with significant Muslim majorities in which Islamists operate as populists. Victory at the ballot box permits Islamists the ability to play a prominent role in the rewriting of the rules of participation when drafting a new constitution. Throughout the Arab Spring, Islamist parties assumed an outsized role compared to other ideological parties, especially in states that experienced a form of democratic transition. Ennahda achieved victory in Tunisia and was a major player in drafting a new constitution. As previously mentioned, the Brotherhood experienced similar success. Even in states that did not experience significant democratization Islamists were vital players when given a chance in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. In Morocco and Bahrain the PJD and al-Wefaq respectively assumed leading roles. The PJD became the largest party in Moroccan politics. Al-Wefaq took on a significant role in the protest movement even though it eventually cost the society its

¹⁴⁸ Mansfield, Edward D., and Jack Snyder. "Democratization and War." *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 74, No 3. 1995. p 87.

existence. As such, Islamists are likely to experience early success in transitional periods and, as evidenced by the cases of Iran, Sudan, and Hamas, are unlikely to part from power if they are able to achieve control over state institutions with repressive capabilities. Conversely, when control over such state institutions eludes Islamists, strategies of power maximization differ significantly. Ennahdha, for instance, may have learned from the Brotherhood's experience in government and maintained constraints on its accumulation of power.¹⁴⁹

Democratic Regimes

In democratic regimes the participation-legitimacy and power-survival dichotomies in addition to the co-optation strategy are non-existent, meaning Islamists face no constraints in their operation aside from those agreed to in the state's constitution. While this might appear to provide Islamists a distinct advantage in Muslim-majority states, empirical evidence shows that Islamists tend to achieve worse results when elections are more routine.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, a negative correlation exists between Islamist success and increasing freedom in elections.¹⁵¹ A key difference between transitioning and democratic regimes that may explain the surprising correlation is that in transitioning regimes Islamists may have greater name recognition amongst the public and a more developed party structure than other political actors. Additionally, as a form of the old regime often attempts to run for power as well and Islamists are more frequently in opposition than part of government, for many people the choice in transition may be between the old system and Islamists. Conversely, in democratic regimes with routine and free elections these aspects

¹⁴⁹ Hamid, Shadi. *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle over Islam Is Reshaping the World*. New York, NY: St. Martins Press, 2016. p 156.

¹⁵⁰ Kurzman, Charles, and Ijlal Naqvi. "Do Muslims Vote Islamic?" *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 21, No 2. 2010. p 54.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p 55.

are unlikely to be as significant. With greater name recognition of other parties and no previous regime party, Islamists are forced to rely on Muslims to vote for Islam, but religiosity and support for accommodationist Islamists does not appear to be strongly correlated.¹⁵²

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the lessons of the participation-legitimacy and power-survival dichotomies in addition to the regime strategy of co-optation in authoritarian settings, it is clear that Islamists are rather ineffective at achieving their stated goals. When in power in authoritarian settings Islamists struggle to achieve even minor victories. In transitioning states, the desire to implement societal change top-down may lead to gambles that endanger organizational survival. Conversely, the experience of the Brotherhood and its attempt to maximize power informed other Islamists, such as the Tunisian Ennahda, of the inherent dangers of power maximization while some regime institutions are extant. No Islamist organization has won elections in a state with a Freedom House rating of “Free.” Despite their policy failures, Islamists are often successful at the ballot box largely due to their own emphasis on electoral competition and their position as an alternative party and ideology to the regimes of the Middle East. Their popularity is largely due to the maintenance of grassroots movements that provide aid and services that the government foregoes to local populations. No other type of political actor, except the government itself, has the ability to penetrate society in the manner of Islamists.

The strength of Islamists in addition to the ambiguity of their stated goals leads to the politicization of analysis in the United States based on previously conceived notions on

¹⁵² Hellyer, H.A. *A Revolution Undone*. pp 75-76.

Islam and Islamists. Likely due to a combination of the unknown qualities of Islamist movements in conjunction with a preference for stability, American foreign policy tends to defer to regional state actors when dealing with Islamists. This preference results in short-lived stability, but as evidenced by the rapid downfall of regimes that were widely considered stable across North Africa, the payoff between perceived and real anti-Islamist bias and stability needs to be taken into account. When regimes fall, as they inevitably do, Islamists are the most likely benefactor throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Therefore, existing alliances with authoritarian regimes should not be abrogated, but a balanced approach between the regime and opposition movements, including Islamists, should be considered. In some instances, such as with Saudi Arabia, there is no real opposition with which to communicate. Elsewhere, however, such as in authoritarian regimes with some form of distributive politics, connections with Islamists and other opposition movements should be formed. In cases in which a regime, such as Egypt's el-Sisi, threaten to cut official ties, it may often be worthwhile to consider calling the regime on its bluff. Cutting ties to the US, regardless of perceived relations between the target state and the US, is not a formula for increased and sustained regime support. Allowing regimes to swagger effectively reinforces such actions and constrains American policy options, if not setting a path-dependent policy.

As such, the US should be aware of general strengths and weaknesses of Islamist organizations and pay close attention to the following.

1. Changes to regime type. As shown above, Islamists fare poorly in full democracies, at a mediocre level in authoritarian settings, and above expectations in transitioning regimes. It is imperative for American policymakers to note the regime type in which an Islamist actor participates, as regime type appears to be the most

- significant factor in Islamist success at the polls. It must be noted that Islamist success in transitioning regimes grants the ability to reshape societies when drafting new constitutions.
2. Recognize plurality of Islamists and Islam. Assuming Islam and Islamists are monolithic entities will only result in poor policy options that prevent the US from pursuing sound policies that benefit locals and US national interests. The current debate on whether to list the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization is a prime example of the faultiness of such policy debates. Clearly, the contemporary organization can not be considered a terrorist organization by any means. Removing access to political representation of a significant portion of the population is likely to have adverse effects, possibly to the extent of increased recruitment of more extreme Islamists that pose a real threat to local, regional, and global security.
 3. Note the role of Islamist learning. Islamists learn from their own experiences and those of Islamist actors in other states. Islamists became wary of maximizing power due to the experience of the FIS in Algeria after its 1991 electoral landslide. Likewise, the PJD, Ennahda, al-Wefaq, and a plethora of other Islamist organizations learned from the experience of the Brotherhood in 2013 and minimized overt religious references. Ennahda minimized the exceptional nature of Islam in its political program relative to secular parties. The PJD nearly completely omitted the word “Islam” from its 2016 electoral program. Al-Wefaq focused primarily on issues of dignity and equality that mirrored the terminology of working-class parties.
 4. Note the role of regime learning. Akin to Islamists, regimes learn from their past actions and those of the states around them. After el-Sisi committed the 2013 coup

d'état against the Brotherhood, he brashly warned President Obama that use of the word "coup" would result in Egypt realigning with China and Russia. This likely was a mute threat as Egypt receives the vast majority of its military equipment from the US, but el-Sisi and others in the regime undoubtedly learned that repression of Islamists, even to the point of massacres, could be assuaged by accusations of terrorism and brash action against those who condemned the repression. Authoritarian regimes, in other words, have learned that Islamists do not receive international protections to the same degree as other political blocs.

5. Eschew ideologically based policies and public statements. The double standard the US presents towards Islamists in comparison to Israel cannot be obfuscated by clever words or inconsistent action. Rather, it results in the Islamist perception of the US as a malevolent actor. The US should not tout the benefits of certain political systems if it would accept the removal of such a system in the event of an Islamist victory. Furthermore, to suggest that the US adopt policies that place consistent emphasis on human rights and democracy promotion is unrealistic. The US has always preferred its own security over the political systems of foreign states. Since 1953, in the rare instances in which a Middle Eastern leader has been elected democratically the US has acted on its own or assisted others to replace leaders viewed as a threat to US security interests.
6. Engage Islamists with the respect secular parties receive. Engagement akin to how the US does with other political organizations is paramount. Accommodationist Islamists are perfectly suitable actors for US policymakers to engage with. Furthermore, their emphasis on morality and conservative morals would make Islamists a natural ally of Christian conservative political organizations in the US. Of course, the anti-Islam rhetoric of the past three decades would make it difficult

to convince most Christians to change their opinions and beliefs of Islamists, but policymakers could set the stage for a new era of US-Islamist cooperation.

ⁱ *Note on Classifications of Islamist Political organizations:*

Classifying Islamist political organizations is a contentious issue. Most studies on Islamism classify Islamist political organizations along some sort of dichotomy of radical or moderate, fundamentalist or not, or violent and non-violent. These classifications, however, have limited utility. Radical and moderate are relative terms and require an “other” to be compared against. While classifying Islamists along the lines of radical and moderate provides utility along the fringes, the relative nature of such a classification hinders simple classification for political organizations that operate in the center. For instance, for political organizations such as the Brotherhood, radical versus moderate classifications are often based on political perceptions of the organizations instead of actions of the organization itself. Fundamentalism likewise lacks utility as a classifier. When applied to Islamist political organizations the applicant often lacks the requisite knowledge of Islam to identify the level of fundamentalism. A common method of classification of fundamentalism is how organizations view legitimacy based on *sharia* as defined by the Quran and the Sunnah. However, arguing that a political organization is fundamentalist because it views *sharia* as the primary legitimizing factor for a state lacks utility. Islamist political organizations that do not view the application of *sharia* as a primary legitimizing factor are outliers. Furthermore, the plurality of Islams makes a single definition of *sharia* for comparison impossible – Muslims from the same family, house, and background often disagree on definitions of *sharia*. Other definitions of fundamentalism view *huddud* punishments as a primary indicator of fundamentalism. This, however, is a shallow understanding of Islam and can only be applied to few groups. Thus, fundamentalism lacks utility when comparing Islamist political organizations. Finally, the decision to eschew or utilize violence provides a useful dichotomy for classifying Islamist political organizations. It is not relational, it rejects arbitrary definitions as it is quite clear when violence is used, and it differentiates organizations based on their actions. However, it is based on the notion that the use of violence is a valid measure of intent and beliefs on state legitimacy. Some Islamist organizations, especially those within the *salafyya* movement, may reject both the state and violence. Therefore, it utilizes violence as a measure for acceptance of legitimacy when the two are not necessarily connected. This obfuscation may be due to significant research on what is termed “quietest Salafists” who eschew modern politics in general and are often discounted in research due to their apolitical tendencies.

In acknowledgement of the pitfalls of the aforementioned dichotomies, this study will classify Islamist political organizations along the lines of rejectionist and accommodationist. A rejectionist political organization rejects the legitimacy of the state itself and seeks a revolutionary outcome outside of state power. Conversely, an accommodationist political organization works within the existing mechanisms of governance. An accommodationist organization may also view the regime as illegitimate, but its strategy to implement change involves accommodating state institutions and working within mechanisms of state power to change the state and society. In deference to Olivier Roy, most but not all accommodationist Islamist organizations are conservative movements, rather than revolutionary movements. This provides a more useful classification as it relies on organizational statements and actions in lieu of an arbitrary definition of what is radical or moderate, fundamentalist or not. It also provides a more solid grounding for *salafyya* movements that reject violence and the state, as they are classified as rejectionists instead of as a non-violent actor. Finally, the accommodationist versus rejectionist dichotomy classifies political organizations based on their participation in state mechanisms of governance, which is the desired measure for this study.

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