

The Lessons for Democracy in Egypt

Moderation beyond Reason

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エジプトにおける民主主義の学習

理性を越えた穏健化

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本稿では、2011～13年のエジプトにおけるイスラーム主義者たちによる民主主義の学習プロセスについて、特にムスリム同胞団メンバーを中心に分析する。同胞団メンバーは政治について学習するプロセスへ加わったが、それは過激主義から穏健化するという

う連続的なプロセスの中で起こったのではなかった。筆者は、「自由公正党」あるいは「強きエジプト党」など他政党の政治活動に参加したイスラーム主義者に対するインタビューを実施した。彼らは、集合的運動に参加することで規範や価値などの政治的知見を得た。また、彼らのそれまでの政治的活動の経験も、新たな価値観や行動様式へ影響を与えた。本稿では、エジプト政治におけるイスラーム主義者らの公共への奉仕・協力を律する規範の影響について分析する。

民衆による変革を求める改革主義者たちの諸活動の射程や性質は、文化的レパトリーによって規定される。1980年代の選挙参加に始まり2000年代の「社会との協働段階」の主張に至るまで、昨今の同胞団は非暴力性を強調しつつ様々な政治活動を行ってきた。また、2011年に新たに創設された自由公正党は異なるイデオロギーを標榜する組織・運動と協力した。公共への奉仕という精神は、彼らが政治的参加と政治活動を優先する際に決定的な動機として作用した。筆者がインタビューした人々の間には政治は宗教の一部であるという共通認識がある一方、同胞団と政治活動の関係性をめぐっては複数の異なる見解があった。こうした同胞団の政治活動に関する見解の不一致は、主に (a) ダアワ（教宣）と政治の間の制度的相違、(b) メンバーが自らの意思で政党に加入する権利、(c) 選挙の持つ競争性が政治的分極化という望まざる帰結を招くか否かをめぐる見解、をめぐって生じているのである。

I. Introduction

Egyptian politics in the past decade has provided many lessons for democracy. The path towards moderation is supposed to signal a shift from radicalism to the acceptance of the status quo. However, contemporary Egypt has often been ruled by authoritarian regimes of different ideological colours from socialist to neo-liberal. In this milieu, the anti-systemic agenda of political and social actor need not be construed as ‘radical’ in the sense of a rejection of democratic values, activity and institutions. Islamists can and do embark on a process of political learning in the acquisition of norms such as moderation and cooperation without travelling on a linear sequence from radical to moderate. I argue in this article that Egyptian Islamists display commitments to political activism based on a local cultural repertoire.

My discussion of the norms of moderation and cooperation among Islamists, past and current members of the Muslim Brotherhood [MB], is divided into three sections. Section one outlines the inclusion-moderation hypothesis and its overemphasis on the

rational actor who weighs the costs and benefits for ideological and tactical moderation. The second section proposes to decentre the rational actor and offers an alternative for interpreting politics in meaningful cultural repertoires and situating agency in a context. The final section applies the insights of the previous section to the example of activism of former and current MB members in Egypt between 2011 and 2013 with reference to the past context of Islamist political activity. Diverse informal and formal modes of politics pursued by Islamists in this period were accompanied by a proliferation of political parties based on an ethos of public service, conflicting opinions on the relationship between the MB and political parties, and cooperation with other actors.

II. Outlines of the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis

When previously excluded political actors begin to participate in electoral competitions, incentives, the conventional argument goes, are engendered for further changes. External events or processes to the internal structure of a political party appear to supply a new context for socialisation. In the Arab world, the preoccupation with the reputedly anti-systemic agenda of Islamists has culminated in scholarship interested in the various modes of political learning, ideological, tactical, individual and group, described as ‘moderation’ in a variety of different countries [Schwedler 2011]. Islamists are often treated as rational actors who weigh or calculate the benefits and costs of participating in elections, under authoritarian constraints, and moderating ideology to appeal to a wider voting constituency. The political and the religious are contrasted and Islamists are judged according to their adaptation to the former and irreverence to the latter.

Political learning is supposed to occur in a linear fashion from radicalism to moderation following a sequence of events that combines external factors and internal responses. Three stages, of course innumerable other intervening stages can be added, are generally adduced from the basic premises of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis: first, the political field is opened through access to elections and institutions of representation; second, radicals or extremists convey the willingness and intent to participate in response; and third, participation in the opening political field either further moderates existing relative moderate actors or produces a change in the behaviour and beliefs of radicals. Politics is thus the realm of a structure of

opportunities in which Islamists adapt to the exigencies of political reality and moderate their threatening postures to authoritarian regimes, secular opponents and societies. Ideological commitments to Islam are diluted in a causal sequence with increasing inclusion in the process of contesting elections followed by greater moderation.

1. Rational Actor: Benefits and Costs

Why does the inclusion-moderation hypothesis award a privileged status to the opportunity structures of electoral participation and the ability of actors to appropriately react? Although the answers offered here are debatable, one can trace the terms of discussion on the strength of inclusion to moderate assumed extremists in the literature on rational choice. Joseph Schlesinger and Anthony Downs are two of the most exemplary social scientists who have made substantial contributions to analysing the motives, values and goals of political actors in the quest for electoral victory. Joseph Schlesinger divides the members of political parties into two camps: office-seekers and benefit-seekers. While political ambition for “the inherent value of *office*” drives the former, the outcome, nonoffice goals, of policies are important in the latter’s case [Schlesinger 1975: 843-4, emphasis in original].

Such a binary flattens the considerable complexity within political parties and their relationships with electoral constituencies. Politics is reduced to ambitious politicians on the one hand and those who see it as a means to more beneficial ends, private or collective, on the other hand. Downsian rational agents in political parties in a democracy choose actions to gain “the income, prestige, and power” of office through “a minimal use of scarce resources” and “for which marginal return exceeds marginal cost” [Downs 1957: 137-8]. A set of contending motives, however, can shape the behaviour of individuals and groups. Ideological projects, the desire for the trappings of public office and effecting policy changes simultaneously dominate reasoning, rather than calculations, of political party members.

Nonetheless, the emphasis on political parties as collective rational actors dominates most discussions on how radical activists can or do moderate their behaviour when the prospect of electoral competition and success arises. Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca illustrates a series of conjunctions to explain the moderation of parties at the expense of opposing factions of activists or individual members. A political party moderates after it calculates the benefits and costs of such a course of action, understanding that it produces a winning position, and decides to reach out to the median voter: a

combination of a lower degree of ideological rigidity [due to either organisational reform or leadership renovation], a small ideological distance exists between the party's ideal point and the median voter while the distance to the incumbent is greater [Sánchez-Cuena 2004: 327, 333-6]. Simultaneous factors are at play in a scenario which proposes the utility function of a rational actor, possessing perfect information e.g. knowledge of the benefits and costs of the 'political market.' A political party inclines towards a preference to contest elections after calculating which circumstances would be to its advantage.

No prior ideological change is required according Vali Nasr in a context of religious parties taking part in regular competitive elections in their pursuit of the median voter [2005: 19-20]. The merely tactical decision to adopt moderate behaviour is limited yet aided by the logic of electoral success. In a similar fashion, Jason Brownlee accentuates the division between reform-minded moderates and revolutionary radicals [2010: 470]. Ideological flexibility is also considered to be indicative of moderation based on the assumption "the constraints flowing from participation in formal political processes are supposed to promote bargaining, compromise, and the pursuit of small policy gains, all of which require that the content of the ideology is negotiable" [Wegner and Pellicer 2009: 158]. Structural factors are ostensibly decisive for the moderation of ideology that would subsequently lead to a moderation of behaviour.

2. Division of Labour: Party and Movement

A presupposition of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis revolves around the division of labour between a social movement and a political party. In the case of Islamists, the division of labour lays with the further yet necessary distinction between the religious and the political to the advancement of the latter. Faithfulness to a pristine ideology poses an intractable obstacle to the adaptation needed to enter electoral politics. The pragmatic credentials of Islamists ought to be brandished in front of opponents and observers alike in a series of signals that serves as reassuring indicators that they no longer espouse revolutionary or theocratic goals. Thus, the formation of political parties provides a criterion by which to assess the degree Islamists can become rational actors with benefit and cost calculations similar to either incumbents or their opponents.

Another additional facet is the distancing of a political party from the founding social movement that frames this relation in terms of imposition of a religious agenda

versus political autonomy. Electoral participation can increase the differentiation between an Islamist political party and an Islamist social movement where the party's priorities are determined by institutional politics and loyalty to its organisation rather than the movement at large [Wegner and Pellicer 2009: 158-9]. Sumita Pahwa identifies two general facets in the process of the moderating of actors, namely *dimensions* [adaptation] and *mechanisms* or *pathways* [political learning]: first, a political cadre increasingly holds the reins of decision-making in light of electoral incentives complemented by a movement-wide moderating of its political ideology and; second, electoral incentives inform the calculations of the benefits of participation, instances of compromise and strategic gains and ideological moderation while a division of labour between party and movement ensues [2017: 1067-8]. These two facets appear to refer to seemingly indistinguishable factors that create the conditions for the rise of activists with political ambitions who adhere to the rules of the game.

Stathis Kalyvas alerts us to the existence of an overarching authoritative institution, the Roman Catholic Church, that waded into the political realm and defined the orthodox position on politics enabling religious moderates to purge the radicals from among their ranks in nineteenth century Belgium. The Roman Catholic Church's signalling of support for these moderates who accepted parliamentary life and the constitution was motivated by the conservative desire for less and definite benefits, cooperation with party elites to maximise their political influence and aversion towards rival lay radical Catholics [Kalyvas 2000: 390-1]. Furthermore, the notion of an orthodox tradition continued to be a widely accepted and central facet of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century [Congar 2004]. What is telling in Kalyvas's account is the recognition of not only the role of religion in democratising but the public profile of a religious institution without any semblance of a democratic structure governing its own decision-making. Brownlee finds that despite moderate Islamists in Egypt fulfilling Kalyvas's three criteria of an ideological shift towards moderation, effective organisational discipline and a gradual pursuit of an electoral mandate, the structural variables, the low willingness of incumbents to cede power and western support, played a much greater role in explaining the failure of a pacted democratic transition [Brownlee 2010: 476, 481-5]. Authoritarian leaders routinely ignore the signals Islamists convey through words and deeds about their willingness to play by the rules of game even before democracy begins in earnest.

3. Limited Impact of Inclusion on Moderation

Although the orderly sequence from inclusion to moderation has been questioned in some quarters, the underlying premise of causality predominates among scholars exploring the relevance of the hypothesis. For Jillian Schwedler, the causal link between inclusion and radicalism appears to be indirect and “produces an overall political effect of more moderation in a given political field” [2013: 1350006-8]. More importantly, the moderating of actors presupposes the majority of consistencies are of a centrist disposition. Selective tactical moderation in the case of Jordanian Islamists points to coordination, rather than cooperation, with other parties in the opposition bloc on issues not related to the Shari‘a thanks in part to the mutual knowledge between them that helps to stave off a crisis in their midst [Clark 2006: 542, 550-5]. Elsewhere, Schwedler has offered an alternative vocabulary to the binary of radical-moderate with the insight that those described as radicals may be democratisers with a sensitive focus on the different stances taken on individual issues: “legalists” versus “contextualists” in interpretation; “accommodation” versus “non-accommodation” on participation [2011: 351-2]. The correlation between moderation and democratisation has also been interrogated by Nancy Bermeo with the role of bottom-up factors duly acknowledged. Bermeo suggests radical popular mobilisation, nationalisation, violence and labour strikes, can accompany regime transitions to democracy when “pivotal elites” reasonably predict, based on obtained information, the tolerable costs of such outcomes [1997].

Brazen displays of extremism are not sufficient enough to undermine political transformation. The decisions and behaviour of pivotal elites, not that of moderate opposition actors, are more influential in the rise of electoral democracies. And despite the eventual exclusion of radical forces from the electoral game, unruly forms of mobilising, including violence, may very well raise the cost of staying in power for authoritarian regimes. From the above, the description of radical actors and movements is still conflated with instability and anti-systemic tendencies even in authoritarian contexts. Ergun Özbudun illustrates a complicated picture about the role of the supposed moderate middle class in ushering in democracy. While he accepts the conventional wisdom about the necessity of an autonomous middle class in a free market economy, Özbudun points to the existence of a “symbiotic and cooperative relationship” between the bourgeoisie and the state in the Middle East against the historic backdrop of a strong “state tradition” [2005: 102-4]. Economic factors are significant leading to the

conclusion that little or no incentives spur the middle class to agitate for democracy in an attempt to upset the authoritarian appletart from which it already reaps rewards.

In the last decade, the mixed record of the Arab uprisings has rolled back the claims of causation from inclusion to moderation on the one hand and correlation between moderation and democratisation on the other hand. Tunisia's recent progression towards democracy accompanied by a primary role of Ennahda. Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone have cast doubt on the causal link at the core of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis and they propose in its stead the hypothesis that exclusion, to wit state repression and societal rejection, compelled the Tunisian Islamist movement to moderate its ideology in line with the mainstream [2013: 864-70, 859]. Nonetheless, the authors associate the values of moderation with modernity while pitting a fundamentalist radical periphery against a moderate centre. Norms such as the practice of democratic habits and cooperation are not exclusively cultivated in an electoral context. The political learning of the type that I intend to interpret in this article does not proceed in an orderly fashion in the accounts illustrated in the preceding discussion. Islamist actors make sense of their political worlds through a local repertoire shaped by the values and ideals of *Wasatiyya* in Egypt and the wider Arab world.

III. An Alternative: Decentring the Rational Subject

In this section, I will offer an alternative framework of interpretation based on the premise that political learning is a complex process involving not so much rational actors than actors employing a cultural repertoire. Political learning has also been associated with the notion of political socialisation. Society is treated as the family writ large. From the family to politics, the learning of values acquired during childhood, latent socialisation to be more exact, determines the type of government, whether democratic or authoritarian, in society [Bender 1967: 398-404; Sigel 1965]. A conservative vision of politics is thrust forward that takes its cues from a theory of latent socialisation. Lucian Pye is perhaps one of the most forceful exponents of the approach sketched in the previous sentences in which the childhood environment is preponderant in setting and fixing the mould for norms, rituals and relationships in adult life [1999: 770-776].

Another approach to the question of how and when political actors acquire

values, beliefs and practices of a political nature emphasises their ‘manifest socialisation.’ Although members of a society do not have carte blanche in determining what is their politics, they very often exercise agency in modifying and claiming the range of ideas and practices, present in a cultural repertoire, for both intended and incidental reasons. Reciprocity between a supposed structure and individual agency characterises the constraints and opportunities for political learning. Nancy Bermeo has argued that,

The cognitive changes involved in political learning can thus involve means or ends or both. Political learning can affect basic, ideological beliefs about political structures, or it can affect simply the means one prefers for achieving constant ends. Political learning can take ideological or tactical forms. [1992: 274]

The observation that political learning can consist of changing one’s mind or simply leads to a change in behaviour illuminates the role of agency in instances of political change. However, the “cognitive changes” mentioned by Bermeo can only be readily ascertained through written, spoken or behavioural clues. Even political actors can make utterances only to be misunderstood, either wilfully or unintentionally, by their immediate audience, a general public or fellow politicians. The spectre of political learning is thus discerned not by adopting a psychologism of the self, fathoming the innermost thoughts of individuals. Explanations about a shared repertoire of meanings and actions between politicians and general publics can benefit from interpreting the linguistic [spoken and written] dimension of their relationships.

Common relationships in the process of democratisation, successful or not, cannot be plausibly explained with reference to the rational actor in isolation of their contexts. For Laurence Whitehead, the heuristic metaphor of politics as drama is centred upon stage actors’ public performance for the sake of others that is made possible as a result of a support staff in a bid to avoid, citing Ernest Gellner, making gaffes [2002: 38-47]. Whitehead’s “bad actress” who, without character depth and a sense of dramatic tempo, is unable to convincingly appeal to her audience [2002: 46] finds a parallel in Amartya Sen’s “rational fool” in economic theory. Behaviour and preferences define each other in a circular reasoning restricted to “one preference ordering” for the rational fool makes no distinctions between their interests, welfare, values, actual choices and behaviour [Sen 1977: 323-326, 335-336]. A version of “weak rationality” can emerge

accommodating sympathy akin to Adam Smith's "self-love" or commitment oblivious to one's welfare after the delinking of actual choice or behaviour and preferences [Sen 1977: 326-335, 341-344; Sen 2009: 188-189].

Moreover, neoliberal rationality's posting of homo economicus denudes human beings from webs of mutual and collective agency [Lemke 2002: 59] and a cultural community [Shani 2014: 125-126]. Shared repertoires of meaning and identity are rendered invisible. Human beings are disembodied rational actors for whom decisions are the result of abstracted reasoning without any reference to a wider social context. George Kateb's Walt Whitman-inspired conception of a composite self [made up by the soul, body, self and personality] that is ambiguous and ambivalent is a robust example of the decentring of the rational subject and singular rationality [1990: 550-554]. Attributing a coherent and well-rounded rationality to agents has also been cast in dubious terms by Robert Axelrod's formulation of an "evolutionary approach" to the acquisition of norms. In a computer simulation, "what works well for a player is more likely to be used again while what turns out poorly is more likely to be discarded" culminates in the abstraction of human beings from a specific context and their parachuting into an artifice of a sequence [Axelrod 1986: 1097-1098].

The rational subject, however, can be more adequately replaced by incorporating Cornel West's insistence on human agency and intertextuality on the one hand and that social practices are contingent, power-laden and structured on the other hand [1989: 269-270]. What people do as well say provide the criteria for assessing a particular political activity that find their antecedents in John Dewey's elevation of the primacy of first-hand experience and ordinary human exchange in a changing context [1903a: 200; 1903b: 410-412]. The interpretivist framework that is adopted in this article to study moderation in democratic learning has parallels in the 'pragmatist' scholarship of Cornel West, Sheldon Wolin and Benjamin Barber in the interest in contextual factors. For Raymond William Baker, a Deweyan approach offers the crucial opportunity to understand Muslims on the basis of a self-consciously selective account grounded in the latter's experiences and descriptions [2015: 224-232].

Local democratic knowledge production enables the entry into and the interpretation of political learning by Arab citizens. Moreover, according to Larbi Sadiki, the Arabic *makhzun* [repertoire] and *mikhyal* [imaginary] characterising the specificity of local knowledge is part of "the quest for self-conception" that emphasises the "democratic" content that evades any binary logic [2015: 703-706]. Cultural

repertoires play a formative role in how political actors struggle to acquire and cultivate democratic norms, values, practices and institutions can be made intelligible in a specific context. Competing traditions, by no means mutually exclusive, have provided political actors with the wherewithal to pursue ventures of political change. Democratic learning is one such instance showcasing the ability of actors to re-orient the many repertoires of their societies towards the practice of norms and values considered to be commensurate with good government. While moderation and cooperation are interdependent values, their contents ought not to be taken for granted in light of the variety of different contexts. I do not locate moderation in a spectrum on which hitherto or currently radical groups or individuals ought to cover the ideological distance to a moderate position. The norm of moderation in an Egyptian context has long been associated with the ideals of *Wasatiyya* espoused by a group of intellectuals and religious scholars, the “New Islamists” [Baker 2003]. The burgeoning capacity to learn certain types of political behaviour is thus implicated in a wider socio-cultural milieu and developing tradition. Self-reinvention is necessarily limited by the observation that human agents dwell in contexts largely not of their own making and which impose the imperative of conformity, at least on the cultural plane, despite the stated or undeclared intentions of these agents.

However, this article is interested in the ability of political actors from Islamist backgrounds to acquire the norms of moderation and cooperation without subscribing to a single path of political change. Democratic learning provides the theoretical framework through which to interpret the process enacted by political actors in their pursuit of commonly shared ideas. Moreover, the existence of a repertoire of values, ideals, practices and institutions in a society may foster and strengthen behaviour commensurate with democratic norms. Democratic learning escapes the fixation of the centre and flees to the margins of authoritarian regimes in which political actors continue to invent new political forms of activism. Although ingenuity in the political must necessarily be shaped by the limits of dominant and subversive scripts of thinking and doing, they can be breached in displays of new readings of the politically desirable. No dividing line between modernity and tradition can be gauged in a crowded context. Arab citizens make sense of their societies through the local repertoires which they make their own in each generation. Previous ideological battle-lines are redrawn, although not erased, to accommodate changes and may lead to syntheses in new political forms. All these instances of democratic learning occur in a collective setting.

Indeed, as Larbi Sadiki has alerted us, public squares during the Arab uprisings fulfilled the didactic purpose of “lyceums” to unlearn authoritarianism in open rebellion and to learn civic participation [2015: 714-5].

The norm of moderation implied neither acceptance nor acquiescence under authoritarian rule in Egypt in period before and after the popular demonstrations in 2011 that helped to bring Hosni Mubarak down. What is instructive to note in the demonstrations that unfolded during the Arab uprisings was the initial association of rebellious behaviour, overthrow of regimes, with peaceful forms of civil disobedience. Revolution presupposed, at least in Egypt, moderation among citizens who converged onto streets and squares in acts of solidarity. What can be described to be moderation is an outcome and part of a process which emerges from very specific conditions with peculiar traits to a society. I do not presume to be able to discover the true intent of rational [or irrational] political actors in my interpretations of norms and practices associated with moderation and cooperation that follow below. To the contrary, I am unable to directly ascertain the motives and objectives of a transparent object. By the same token, these actors do not comprehend an external reality as it is. They constitute a meaningful world through their acts, including speech and behaviour. Notions of positive and negative courses of action are cultural in provenance and constitution.

IV. Public Service and Cooperation in Egypt

In this section, I will now examine the complex process of moderation among Islamists, former and current MB members, between 2011 and 2013 in Egypt. The period presents key lessons on how democracy can emerge in a situation ostensibly described to be post-authoritarian. I seek to interpret the interviews I conducted with political activists, who were or still are affiliated to the MB, while I contextualise the collected data. Democracy has had a faltering career in post-colonial Egypt. Indeed, political parties and movements were founded in conditions far from democratic ranging from the colonial to the neo-liberal. These political parties could serve authoritarian or democratic ends. This mixed picture continued following Mubarak’s ousting in 2011, the installing of military-led transitional rule and a succession of electoral contests. Initial reactions to the new context included the announcement of the MB *Maktab al-Irshad’s* [Guidance Bureau] intention to form a political party in consultation with

the movement's *Shura* Council [EI. 2011]. Controversy embroiled the New Wafd Party involving accusations by some its membership of the autocratic behaviour of the party leader [Darwish 2015].

The Strong Egypt Party and Egyptian Current Party had encouraged rank-and-file participation in deciding official party lines on controversial decisions affecting Egypt's path towards democracy [AO. 2012]. Party hierarchies could prove to be responsive to their members. More importantly, the choice of formal [elections] and informal [protests] politics in new political parties such as Strong Egypt and Egyptian Current was informed by the attempt to reconcile internal democracy with a peaceful yet revolutionary agenda. Formal political activity, namely electioneering, was afforded primacy at the expense of protests in the strategy of the Freedom and Justice Party [FJP] during the transitional period. While moderation can be more or less considered to consist of a rejection of violence, any alleged correlation with reform is debatable. Egypt's recent experience with an interrupted experiment in democratisation appears to attest to the unruly character of democratic activism. Popular campaigns of civil disobedience involving social media, mass demonstrations, labour strikes and press conferences demonstrate a close relationship in Egypt between instability, crippling protests leading to the downfall of an authoritarian president and formal democratic change.

1. Ethos of Public Service

Political participation among Islamists in Egypt has been motivated by an ethos of public service. A religious language of the duties and responsibilities of a citizen appears to characterise the process of acquiring specific norms and activities. Islamist habits of behaviour take the form of virtuous acts that also convey a critique of issues both related to certain policies and of a general nature. Critique as protest has not necessarily entailed absolute rejection of the status quo but is "accommodative" premised upon the acceptance of the foundations of a political and social system [Eickelman and Piscatori 2004: 109]. Egyptian Islamists have articulated a discourse of moderation that eschews the violent overthrow of the government and state in a bid to reform society according to an ideal. For Jumah Amin Abd al-Aziz, a past member of the Guidance Bureau, the role of activists is to be preachers teaching "true Islam" and not judges, invoking the MB's second *Murshid al-'Amm* [general guide] Hasan al-Hudaibi, who proscribes people's behaviour and beliefs [1999: 12-4, 45-7].

Islamisation through the creation and maintenance of alternative “subsystems” occurs “within existing arrangements” in a supposed Gramscian “war of position” [Bayat 2007: 18-22, 42-3]. A similar reading is offered by Olivier Roy of Islamist movements as a “countersociety,” exemplified as a *jama‘a*, in which individual members are transformed and society is Islamised [1996: 46, 70]. The MB’s self-conscious identity as a *jama‘a* is intertwined with the practice of gradual and slow *tarbiyya* [moral education] in direct contrast to revolutionary violence [Abd al-Aziz 1999: 28-9]. Members receive theological guidance, instruction in *tarbiyya* and practice living in the *usra* [group] which is formative to their activism [interview 2019]. Reformist practices by members are directed at cultivating and strengthening inner convictions while encouraging an ethos of public service. Despite Asef Bayat observing an apparent change of agenda among Islamists from the state to morality, what he describes “cheap Islamization” [2007: 145-6], their preoccupation, especially of the MB, with political activism in the past two decades ranged from parliamentary representation to organising mass protests about Palestine. External forms of activity in politics were driven by moral concerns. Indeed, Abd al-Aziz rules out revolutionary action to realise the *ummah* and instead proposes the gradual method of *tarbiyya* “in a civil society, where people chose the form of their ruling system, where there is a multi-factional system, freedom and exchange of power is the prevailing position” [2009: 38-9].

In the decade before the Arab uprisings, Muhammad Mahdi Akef, the then general guide, announced *marhala amal ma‘a al-mujtama‘* [the stage of working with society] seeking to present the movement in a spirit of moderation to the general public [interview 2019]. MB members participated in informal and formal channels of political activity from pro-Palestine protests to running in parliamentary elections. Increased participation without employing violence indicated more than simply the acceptance of the previously mentioned “foundations” of the Egyptian state. The willingness to take part in commonly accepted practices and rules served to illustrate the nature and scope of the MB’s commitment to public service. The movement is perceived to prepare activists for government in effect providing schooling for public service [interview 2018]. The practice of *tarbiyya* served to inculcate values and principles to give rather than to take for the sake of “working for Allah” [interview 2018] and for the purpose of reforming a society to which one possesses a sense of belonging [interview 2019]. Furthermore, the notion of *ikhdam* [serving] motivates the individual to do the best for

his country [interview 2019].

Many spheres of political and social life witnessed members reaching out to fellow citizens even youth in sports clubs as part of *infatih ma'a al-mujtama'* [openness with society] demonstrating their simultaneous commitment to recreation and piety [interview 2019]. Charitable activities in the area of medical clinics and services to the needy were based upon the principle of serving the community at large [interview 2019]. Social activism by the MB appears to be derived from the norm of public service to one's society cultivated among members through their advancement in the movement. From the professional syndicates to medical provisions to educational institutions, the MB acted, if not as a "shadow government" [Bayat 2007: 143], in the position of a complex network of social welfare amid authoritarian repression. There is a recognition on the part of a senior member that the MB's position of being the "largest civil society organisation in Egypt" led it to do the work of society rather than working with it thus limiting the movement's influence while others were spectators or watching [interview 2018]

2. Movement and Party

Greater involvement in electoral contests, running either with official parties or as independents, during the Mubarak era did not temper the ideological purity of the MB's old guard on the question of the intertwined relationship between Islam and politics [Abed-Kotob 1995: 331-2]. No sharp distinction between the political and the religious was recognised at least in the realm of fundamental principles. However, for the MB, ideological moderation of the variety anticipated in alliances with licensed political parties and a parliamentary presence appears to have occurred in a context of alternate openings and closures of the formal political space [El-Ghobashy 2005: 378-90]. Unofficial cooperation, the MB was legally proscribed during Mubarak's reign, threw up new scenarios for the movement's leaders and activists to envisage reformist political change. When in the corridors of institutional power, namely parliament, MB lawmakers combined demands for a Shari'a order with administrative accountability. The Egyptian experience of "incomplete parliamentarization" had undermined the ability of Islamists to exert influence despite electoral successes [Langohr 2004: 188-90]. Nonetheless, Islamist actors did not hesitate, despite the best efforts at closing or limiting such opportunities, to enter the electoral fray.

During 2011, after the ousting of Mubarak, the MB was finally able to establish

a legal political party. A relative change may have occurred among moderate Islamists becoming more moderate or visible [Schwedler 2011: 366-7]. This breakthrough act reflected the movement's longstanding desire for its own formal political organisation evidenced in the past by such examples as its 88 parliamentary deputies elected in 2005 [interview 2019]. A "religious majoritarianism" was espoused by the Freedom and Party which possessed nominal independence from the MB while the movement channelled its resources to it [Pahwa 2017: 1072-6]. Egyptian society was recognised to be a "religious society" [interview 2018]. Thus, the MB's activism intends to serve the interests of the people. Preaching Islam without coercion and able to do so in freedom may lead to the majority in a society to live by Islam's rules and values and over time, however, if these values prove not to be useful, they have the right to choose others and abandon their previous choice [interview 2019].

Political awareness about the poor, those living under injustice, suffering in prisons and other Arab countries, including Palestine, was created due to participating in the movement's activities [interview 2018]. Religious norms and practices informing political activism are acquired through membership of the movement. Major issues of religious concern were broadly defined to include not simply orienting inner convictions towards an ideal of virtue but the struggle for social justice. The FJP was an extension of the latter seeking to form a "civil" or "civilian" party based on the objective of realising the aspirations, namely bread, social justice and human dignity [*'ish, hurriyya, 'adala ijtimiiyya* and *karama insaniyya*], of the people after the 2011 "revolution" [interview 2018]. Calling for justice addressing the economy and finance was a key component of the party objectives aimed at all people [interview 2018]. Further, it was merely the fulfilment of the perceived need that all ideologies need a political party to enter elections and a "mechanism" to work in political action and activities [interview 2019]. Importantly, the MB's past repository of experiences, skills and know-how in organising proved to be essential for the initial act of founding the party and contesting elections. For the choice of pursuing elections, according to one senior member, was mandatory, not a question of the divinely revealed moderation amid a range of possible acceptable choices, due to right and wrong being very clear considering the unacceptable alternative is force [interview 2019].

Institutional differentiation between party and movement in the case of the Moroccan Justice and Development Party [Wegner and Pellicer 2009: 160-7] did not occur for the FJP with MB members still exerting considerable influence on party

activists. To the contrary, a liaison office within the Guidance Bureau, the movement's executive body, was responsible for affiliated students in Egyptian universities overseeing strategy, electoral candidates, activities and *dawa* [preaching] [interview 2019]. The movement's higher echelons continued to be the chief decision-making nucleus for matters encompassing political party, university campuses and welfare activities. Preaching, welfare and politics fell under the same scope of activities. A former activist questioned the notion of the movement as a *jama'a shamila* [comprehensive group], making a distinction between *dawa* and politics, and it should not have formed a party and instead allowed members to do so in their individual capacity [interview 2018]. There was a clear acknowledgement by a senior figure that while politics is an intrinsic part of the movement because it is an intrinsic part of Islam, a "major contradiction" had arisen in its political wing between lobbying for issues and competing with other parties during elections wherein opponents are discredited and one raises their own position [interview 2018]. Political party participation in competitive elections was most certainly the pretext for political polarisation in a climate characterised by a fear of an MB-take-over of state institutions. Opposing political parties can become alienated by the political party undertaking an ordinary election campaign chiefly preoccupied with winning political office often at their expense.

3. Change and Cooperation

Political parties, however, pursue a broad range of activities based on a diversity of motives not solely to defeat rival candidates in hotly contested elections. Islamist political actors have demonstrated both the ability to challenge their competitors and the willingness to cooperate with others from across the ideological divide. What has been described as the "most successful experiment at reaching Egypt's political spectrum" in an instance of close Islamist-secular cooperation was the formation of *Kefaya* [Enough] driven by the calls for Mubarak to step down and opposition to Gamal Mubarak's heir apparentcy [Hirschkind 2011: 63]. A large space existed during the Mubarak era for the MB to work in society with all different factions, build social ties, learn from each other, know each other, however, this never happened or was not successful [interview 2019]. Previous decades, of MB activism, however, illustrated a variety of emphases on different aspects of organisational activities by the membership. Proscribed participation in parliamentary elections since the 1980s compelled Islamists to occasionally run on the same platform with the official opposition. Additionally, the common goal of calling

for democracy, evidenced in the formation of *Kefaya*, sustained popular mobilisation among different social and political actors at the grassroots level.

Akef's general guideship between 2004 and 2010 coincided with dramatic changes across the Arab world and in Egypt. State-building efforts in the region under the guise of 'the war on terror' and 'democracy promotion' on the one hand and the looming question of succession after Mubarak on the other hand contributed to a climate of uncertainty. Increasing demands for democracy by Islamists also witnessed a concerted attempt to mobilise individuals and groups despite ideological and political differences. Islamists had successfully entered civil society life through elections in the strategy of *al-infatih 'alā al-mujtama'* [openness to society] before 2011 [Soudan 2019]. Informal activism in the grassroots and formal electoral campaigning by Islamists later divided, following the fall of Mubarak, into various formal political parties from Ibrahim al-Zafarani's Nahda Party to Abdel Moneim Abul Fotouh's Strong Egypt Party.

An interviewee, a youth activist, noted their own experience for three months from January 2011 of cooperation with liberals, leftists and independents motivated by the aim of working with all possible factions and components in society [interview 2019]. A precarious post-authoritarian milieu had created many opportunities for Islamist activists to draw upon their past experiences of protest, mobilisation and campaigning. The November 2011 protests at Mohamed Mahmoud Street in Cairo were an occasion for university students affiliated to the MB to exert their autonomy from the central leadership and embark in direct dialogue with 6 April and revolutionary socialist members [interview 2019]. Unruly forms of nonviolent activity among student activists challenged the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces' claims to be the legitimate transitional government. Popular demands for an end to military rule and the installing of democracy in the period between 2011 and 2012 were expressed in informal and formal types of cooperation. New political parties were founded to compete in a burgeoning electoral environment. Islamists had, as previously noted, acquired the experience of being candidates in elections and winning parliamentary seats.

Parliamentary elections between November 2011 and January 2012 followed by a tightly contested poll presidential resulted in the FJP becoming the dominant party. In government, the party was principally concerned with the drafting of a new constitution and its *Nahdet Misr* [Egypt's Renaissance] platform for the economy. However, political rivalries had brought tensions to the surface and contributed to a polarised atmosphere.

Accusations were levelled at the government for failing to be inclusive enough while counteraccusations at the opposition revolved around its inability to cooperate with those who had won a democratic mandate. The MB adopted a technocratic agenda demonstrated by only five ministers hailing from the movement out of 36 cabinet posts made up of mostly technocrats [El-Hennawy 2012]. Moreover, an interviewee noted Morsi approached many opposition figures to be in his presidential team and invited them to discuss problems and find solutions in a spirit of dialogue for the sake of common ground [interview 2019].

Members of the MB who had decided to campaign for presidential candidates other than Muhammad Morsi and establish or join political parties also utilised their acquired knowledge of organisation in a novel fashion. Political norms focusing on cooperation had a substantial impact on building up the capacity of mobilising prospective allies and recruits. According to a former MB member, an Egyptian Current Party activist, the trait of moderation lay in the “ability to listen to the others and try to put yourself in their shoes without disrespecting your point of view” possessed by actors from different ideological backgrounds [interview 2018]. A diverse political scene with actors willing to accept differences of opinion was recognised to be of a positive value. Further, moderation could not be associated with only one trend but equally to socialists, liberals and Islamists.

In July 2012, the Strong Egypt Party was founded in a process of negotiation and cooperation. Different movements agreed to launch the party with Abul Fotouh playing the role of symbolic figurehead reflected in the creation of a seven-member committee composed of three Egyptian Current members, three Strong Egypt members and one external member [interview 2018]. Such a merger between two political parties with a broadly similar political agenda can be understood to be part of a larger trend towards creating a political party able to bridge the increasing polarisation of Egyptian politics. It had sought to work with the National Salvation Front and the Salafi Nour Party to find a compromise to the political stalemate involving President Morsi and the opposition about forming a new government [Ezzat 2013]. These activities, however unsuccessful, demarcated and expanded the spaces of possible collaboration among actors espousing different ideological beliefs and platforms. Apparent limits to compromise can be seen in the Strong Egypt Party’s refusal to take part in the 2014 referendum for a new constitution. A repressive environment was singled out for making democratic activism untenable and even posing a risk to democracy [AO. 2014]. The absence of a sense of

trust after the overthrow of Morsi in succeeding governments has not dissuaded the leadership of the party from continuing with peaceful grassroots activism.

V. Conclusion

Previous experiences of Islamist political activism seem to indicate a trend towards greater electoral participation in a context of the alternate opening and closing of political spaces. Despite the authoritarian policies targeting the opposition in the recent past, the activities of the MB served to cultivate an ethos of public service in the areas of *dawa*, welfare and political life. Norms and values with unequivocal political implications were acquired through members' *tarbiyya* in the movement. The events of the Arab uprisings across the Arab world reinforced the trend of Islamists in Egypt to form political parties and to successfully win fairly competitive elections. Interviewees had either directly expressed or alluded to a sense of national feeling or "belonging" to their national community. An ethos of public service appears to have been a decisive motive in [a] taking part in politics and [b] pursuing certain political practices and activities rather than others. Although there was a shared recognition among most interviewees that politics was an integral part of religion, contrasting opinions were present on the relationship between the MB and political party life.

The formation of the MB's Freedom and Justice Party after 2011 did not signify a break with past political practices and activities. However, disagreements soon emerged about the close affinity between movement and party centred around [a] the institutional differentiation between *dawa* and politics, [b] the right of movement members to join a political party of their choosing and [c] the prospect that competitive nature of electioneering would lead to the undesirable outcome of polarisation. New opportunities for increased political activism between 2011 and 2013 also led to cooperation among some actors of different ideological groups and movements. Islamists in political parties, not affiliated to the MB movement, such Egyptian Current and Strong Egypt worked alongside Salafis, socialists and liberals in grassroots mobilisation for protests and official elections. Loud demands for democratic change were accompanied by unruly yet peaceful activities in which Islamists drew upon their past record of cooperation on shared issues of concern. Former and current MB members displayed a preponderance for reformist activity, principally establishing

political parties, that may alternate to revolutionary tactics in cases of a mass movement of intersectional mobilisation and cooperation.

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ABSTRACT

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The Lessons for Democracy in Egypt: Moderation beyond Reason

I seek to illustrate in this article the process of democratic learning among Islamists, specifically past and current members of the Muslim Brotherhood [MB], in Egypt between 2011 and 2013. These activists participated in a process of political learning that did not occur along a linear sequence from radical or moderate. I interviewed Islamists who were involved in various political activity through either the Freedom and Justice Party [FJP] or other parties such as Egyptian Current and Strong Egypt. They had acquired political knowledge, namely norms and values, in the context of a collective movement. Previous experiences of political activism also fostered and reinforced certain types of values and behaviour. This article analyses the impact of the norms of public service and cooperation among Islamist activists on the Egyptian political scene. A meaningful cultural repertoire shaped the scope and nature of reformist projects of popular change. In the recent past, the MB was involved in a variety of activities, from contesting elections in the 1980s to *marhala amal ma'a al-mujtama'* during 2000s, in a demonstrable eschewal of the use of violence. Newly legalised political parties founded by Islamists after 2011 cooperated with different ideological groups and movements.

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