



The International Organisation and Diplomatic Efforts of the Muslim Brotherhood

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The Muslim Brotherhood's history dates back to 1928, making it older than most nation states in the Middle East, and the oldest, most significant and influential movement of our time. The discussion of the political survival of the Muslim Brotherhood can be approached from many different angles including its structure, adaptability, and relationship with its respective regimes. However, it is the Brotherhood's strategy in adapting to Western modernisation and its subsequent balance between modernity and Islam which makes it truly unique. This paper considers the Brotherhood's maturity over time, its application of structural development to become an international movement, and the various diplomatic strategies it has practised in order to flourish. Using an historical methodology, this paper divides the development of the Brotherhood's structure into three stages in order to analyse how the Brotherhood adapted to current world politics, emerging from the shroud of victimhood within their own nation states as a legitimate tool of diplomacy and mediation. Through its international organisation and mediation efforts, the Brotherhood came to play a role in many political crises that occurred between 1980 and 2001 in the Arab world. This paper analyses the possibility of the Brotherhood's relevance and need as a diplomatic force in future crises.

Keywords: *International Muslim Brotherhood, Diplomacy, Political Islam, Institutionalisation, Middle East*



Introduction

The impact of the Muslim Brotherhood on the foundations and progress of modern political Islam is undeniable. When considering the map of modern Islamists today, we see a commonality between all Islamists, activists, parties, and associations: they are either a Muslim Brotherhood member, an ex-Brotherhood member, they recognise the Brotherhood's teachings in their own ideology, or, are in some way an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood.

As stated by Dr Abdullah Abu Ezzah, all current political islamists are guided by the Muslim Brotherhood in some way, raising the question of whether this is merely a coincidence, a result of training and ideology instilled in notable figures, or the realisation of an organisational system designed to reach a bigger stage. This paper sets out to clarify the latter two suggestions, explaining how the movement became a regional and international actor (Abu Ezzah 1989, 179).

This paper's main question is "to what extent is the Muslim Brotherhood an international organisation employing diplomatic tools to influence the region?" and will answer this using an historical and analytical approach to follow the main events in which the Muslim Brotherhood had direct involvement in the resolution of an international relations crisis, and the impact each event had on the movement's structural framework and objectives. In doing so, it will be demonstrated that the Brotherhood has repeatedly been used as a diplomatic tool by governments and regimes in the past, regardless of the status of their relationship at that time, giving credence to the reasoning that they could be used as such again in the future.

To first present a baseline for the Brotherhood's original structure, and build upon this event by event, a number of sources will be investigated, starting with key interviews conducted by the researcher with prominent intellectual leaders of the Brotherhood such as the Head of the Executive Council, Murad Al-Adaileh, who is Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front, and the ex-Brotherhood member, Bassam Al-Amoush, Minister of Admin Development and Parliamentary Affairs, who pursued diplomacy and later became ambassador of Jordan to Iran



(Hazimeh 2022). Autobiographies for Brotherhood supervisors such as Mohammed Abd Al-Kader Abu Fares, and Abdul Latif Arabiyat, Speaker for House of Representatives, will also be employed to better understand the events as they develop. Further, a vital interview with Deputy of International Relations, Yusuf Nada, by the news agency Al Jazeera, in 2002 will also be of great importance to this study as he is the only publicly known Muslim Brotherhood Deputy for International Relations, and also represented the Brotherhood publicly, discussing the movement's actual involvement in crises.

To understand how the Muslim Brotherhood grew out of Egypt and across the globe, this paper begins by considering the institutionalisation of the Brotherhood between 1930 and 1947 in Stage One, moving on to discussing Stage Two when the Brotherhood began to franchise, having a regional existence, and then clashed with the pan-Arabism ideology between 1948 and 1967. Finally, in Stage Three the Brotherhood applied newly learned pragmatism, changed its stance on dealing with the West, and grew into an international organisation.

The paper looks at how the Brotherhood changed from a passive organisation into taking an active role in Middle Eastern crises and international matters, taking gradual recognition from the main powers in the Middle East to prove itself as a diplomatic force.

Stage One: The Institutionalisation of the Muslim Brotherhood, 1930-1947

The Muslim Brotherhood did not stumble into its Islamist notability in a series of reactions to regional events, but was rather designed at its inception as an equally religious and political movement in response to colonialism and the lack of a leading Islamic presence. However, despite clear objectives for autonomy and religious expression, the movement's progression into institutionalisation is less clearcut.

The movement was initially formed within the context of the collapsed Ottoman Empire to meet the needs of a disunified Egyptian Muslim population. As colonisation began to grip Egypt, the



question of how to deal with the occupation took priority, deeply influencing school teacher and imam, Hassan al-Banna, who sought to fill a religious void caused by colonialism through the institutionalisation of Islamic work within an Islamic ruling entity, which would work towards unity and resistance. Al-Banna founded the Brotherhood in 1928 upon aspirations of Islamic unity, a nationalistic determination for resistance against colonisation (Santing 2020).

Since the end of Rashidun Caliphate in 661, Islam was institutionalised with ruling families controlling the state, beginning with the Umayyads (661-750), based in Damascus, the Abbasids (750-1258) in Baghdad, followed by the Fatimids and Mamluks, up until the Ottoman Empire. When the last Islamic empire was collapsing and giving way to colonialism, there was a vacuum in ideology and power across the Middle East. Islamic scholars Jamal Addin Afghani, Mohammed Abduh, and Rashid Rada came forward with ideas that would heavily influence Arab understandings of unity for years to come. They were trying to create an Islamic rival in the form of what would be considered today a federation, a confederation, and a league, between Muslim states which had been divided by colonisation (Esposito 2010) (Esposito 1983, (Razek 2012.

These reformists advocated Islam as the tool with which to fight colonisation and unite the Ummah [Islamic Nation], however they did not present a military struggle, and did not engage in active conflict with the British authority. Instead, the reformist movement offered a theoretical framework with which to restore Islam after the caliphate had begun to disintegrate, asserting Islam's adaptability to modernity, and its importance in uniting the Arab world against the British colonialists (Esposito 1983) (Esposito 2010).

The fall of the Ottoman Empire was a shock for Muslims globally. For the first time there was no monarchical authority ruling in the name of Islam, such as the caliphates previously mentioned, which had ruled since the formation of Islam. In the absence of a ruling Islamic institution, there came the need and the opportunity for an Islamic movement to call for rebuilding Islam and the Islamic state as a federation or confederation, upon the ideas that Afghani, Abduh, and Rashid brought in their literature.



Despite efforts over the years, none were as successful as the Muslim Brotherhood at the hands of Hassan Al-Banna. It may be argued that Al-Banna was successful because he presented entirely different methods to forming a movement, borrowing structural pillars of successful, well organised western institutions acting in Egypt at that time. With a brief glance at western organisations operating in Egypt during the 1900s when al Banna was active, primarily the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), similarities with the early stages of the Brotherhood can be quickly identified (Jansen 1992, 254-258) (Krämer 2009, 1-17).

For example, a gathering in 1927 was formalised as the Jam'iyat al-Shubbān al-Muslimīn [Assembly of Muslim Youth], by Muḥibb al-Dīn Khaṭīb, who soon after invited al-Banna to join. This gathering mirrored the YMCA, and a year later al-Banna was equipped to found the Jamā'at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn [The Muslim Brotherhood Association] in Ismaīliya, which began as a school teaching the Qur'an (Shākir and Jamāl 2003, 773-774) (Lia 1998) (al-Naqīb and Ḥassan 2008, 8-12).

Al Banna followed the methodological steps of preachers and scouts to structure his own movement, using organisations such as the YMCA as a model for his new association - the Muslim Brotherhood. The model was maintained throughout the early stages of the Brotherhood, up until 1948 when the Egyptian movement joined the war in Palestine. At that turning point, al Banna made his first major addition to the Western YMCA system, creating a unique form of recruitment in which troops functioning as a traditional army were gathered to support the Arab forces in that war. He recruited volunteers from across the region and even high level soldiers such as lieutenants to train the Brotherhood troops, such as Jamal Abdul Nasser, who would later become second president of Egypt (Islamic Memo 2012).

Within this period of institutionalising the Brotherhood's core goals the Brotherhood had a localised impact and were not seeking to influence world politics other than to react to global powers' actions against the Islamic world. Any organised effort they made was an attempt to



defend the region from colonisation and direct interaction with foreign forces rather than make a name for themselves in international political issues.

The Brotherhood blamed the disunity of Islamic countries on decisions made during World War I, such as the Sykes-Picot agreement, which literally divided up the region. The Brotherhood's stances towards international law and international organisations such as the UN were, at best, those of distrust, but at worst they fiercely rejected all of the international governing bodies and their decisions, such as the 1947 partition of Palestine. The Brotherhood considered the West the enemy of all Muslims, and that international organisations and their resolutions, such as the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, were tools of colonialism, initiating public protests such as that of the Cairo protest against the British protectorate on December 4, 1947 (United Nations 1947) (Jāmi^c 2004, 63-64).

With its opposition towards colonialism, the movement became symbolic of anti-Western thought, highlighting the colonialists and their organisations as foreign 'others'. Their main objective within this period was the liberation of Muslims, and the movement's only real interaction with world politics was limited to issues that had an Islamic face or confronted Muslims directly such as Palestine, and later issues with Kashmir.

Stage Two: The War and Clash with Pan Arabism, from 1948-1967

During these early stages, the Brotherhood did not have a framework for dealing with international politics, but rather responded to the actions of others when it was relevant to them. However, by asserting itself as a representative for the unity of Muslims, and spilling blood for Islamic issues such as Palestine, this period was notable for the development of relationships, the sharing of ideas between volunteers who were inspired by the movement and came to fight for Palestine, the *Ummah* and the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood built on that atmosphere to create further influence and preach their vision of unity within the momentum of these developing events that the Brotherhood was involved with. Local and foreign volunteers studying in Egypt met not only with



founder Hassan al-Banna, but also Mustafa al-Sbai, who later became the supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood branch in Syria, and Mohammed al-Sawaf, who established and led the Muslim Brotherhood branch in Iraq. Therefore, in the period after the 1948 war, the Muslim Brotherhood started to have official branches in bordering countries such as Jordan, Syria, and Iraq, which followed the structure that they had already established in Stage One, turning the Muslim Brotherhood into a well-organised regional institution (Teitelbaum 2011).

The Brotherhood's newly developing ideology in the post 1948 war period was challenged by the entrance of Jamal Abdul Nasser. He inspired revolutions and military interventions based on his pan-Arab ideology, later known as Nasserism, making pan-Arabism and Nasserism an alternative path against the growing Islamic trends, and ultimately splitting Arabs into two camps: firstly, the traditional monarch states which ruled Arab politics with Islam, asserting legitimacy by declaring their lineage to the Prophet Mohammed, as seen with Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Jordan (Islamic Memo 2012).

In the second camp were the political orders inspired and endorsed by Nasser, which would come to rule in the name of revolution and colonial resistance. Republics replaced monarchies in countries such as Egypt, Syria, Libya, and Iraq. However, neither ruling system favoured the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood was soon seen as a rival for both political camps, however, as it met the needs of the people that both camps neglected - adherence to Islam *and* a pan-Arab, anti-colonial agenda. On the one hand, its very existence undermined the religious legitimacy of the monarch regimes who used Islam to legitimise their power, and on the other, the Brotherhood's religious unity and mobilisation against colonisation undermined the Nasserists and pan Arab ideology. Therefore, by the early 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood had been completely banned in most Arab republic states and severely limited in the monarchy states with few exceptions, notably Jordan.



When the Arabs lost the 1967 war, a huge disappointment was experienced between all Arabs, but mainly the Muslim Brotherhood due to Nasser's strong crackdown on the movement out of fear that the Brotherhood would be emboldened following Nasserism's failure. The inability for the Brotherhood to affect change in the face of Nasserism led many desperate young Brotherhood members to leave Egypt.

Stage Three: Recognising the West & Becoming an International Organisation, 1968-1979

While in the Brotherhood's youth it understood the West as a one dimensional homogeneous enemy of Islam, between 1970 and 1979 there was significant movement of Egyptian students to the West, which was soon followed by a shift in understanding of how Western politics and international relations work, drawing sharp comparison with the developments in political order taking place at that time in the Arab region.

Universities in the west were opening their doors to talented students in previously colonised countries such as Egypt, and many Brotherhood members and sympathisers found themselves experiencing political freedoms in the West that they had never experienced. For example, while they were banned from speaking out against the West in their home countries, they were empowered to do so from within those countries. They were able to speak freely not only on general political issues, but also political Islam, without fear, and were given a space to pose their arguments in front of an attentive audience (Vidino 2021).

Those students, eager for political participation, formed groups and organised marches supporting Palestine and Kashmir, resisting Western hegemony in their lands. However, the most important insight derived from this period of emancipation was that the students came to understand democracy and the concept of political pragmatism. They learned that the West behaves according to interests rather than fostering an agenda against Muslims, and that the governments and policies are shaped through public lobbying. They also began to understand that the West is not just one



indistinguishable mass, but rather varied and separate governments, political parties, and even people who do not necessarily share their government's opinions (Vidino 2021).

This body of political Egyptian students gained recognition from other Arabs in the West, eventually becoming the core of an Islamic association based abroad such as the 'Muslim Studenten Vereinigung in Deutschland' (The Muslim Student Association in Germany) (Herrmann 2021), and the Muslim Brotherhood of Austria (Vidino 2021). Later, Europe had become a refuge for expelled Egyptian political figures, such as Said Ramadan, son in law of Rached Ghannouchi, as well as entrepreneurial Arab businessmen, who were settling in the West for economic reasons, and in short periods of hard work were able to create real wealth such as Yousef Nada (al Dakhkhni 2020) (Castaño Riaño 2013).

These expatriated Brotherhood members united with the students and formed an association, to expose their regimes and motivate Western public opinion against issues developing in Palestine and other muslim countries such as Afghanistan.

When the students completed their studies, they returned home to continue their activism, breathing new life into the Muslim Brotherhood. They arrived empowered with Western education and an understanding of pragmatism and insider knowledge on how the West's systems and culture. They implemented their new skills and knowledge within the Brotherhood's structure, educating the movement internally. Rather than passively observing the West and international players, they began to consider how they could form relations with the West and present the movement as having commonalities with it regarding certain issues in an early inclination towards diplomatic strategy.

That unique group came home preaching change, with new ideas on how to improve the structure of the movement and its understanding of democracy, political participation, human rights, freedom and political parties, so as to appeal better to the West and shift the movement's regional role.



Iran as a Gateway to Ad Hoc Diplomacy/International Relations

The main achievement of the Brotherhood members and sympathisers who lived in the West was their encouragement for the Brotherhood expanding regionally and asserting more influence. During this period they began building political communication and playing an active role in international relations starting in Iran.

The Brotherhood did not formally record their involvement with Iran, however in his autobiography, “Pages from my Life”, Abdul Latif Arabiyat, one of the most prominent leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Head of the Jordanian Parliament, wrote about his visits to Iran before the revolution describing his first interaction in 1976. There, he witnessed the fallout between the Islamists and the Shah in Iran, the general disappointment of the Iranians with his ruling, and the developing trend for challenging him. He also recorded facilitating a lunch meeting at the Royal Palace in Amman between King Hussein and Iranian Islamic opposition Sheikh Ali Ghafouri and Haddad Adel (Arabiyat 2021).

According to the researcher’s interview with Bassam Al Amoush, when the revolution occurred in Iran, the Brotherhood celebrated in Al Hussein Mosque in Amman, thinking that the new Iran would support Islamists everywhere. Al-Adaileh says that the Brotherhood in Jordan, followed by other visits for other branches of the Brotherhood, went to congratulate the new Islamic regime in Iran, especially after the declaration that the revolution was for all Muslims. Arabiyat recalls the event in which the Muslim Brotherhood had joined a high committee of prominent Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic personalities, including himself and Kamel al Sharif from Jordan, and Sadiq al Mahdi, former Prime Minister of Sudan twice over, and another representative from Morocco, all of whom travelled to Iran to congratulate Supreme Leader of Iran, Ruhollah al-Khomei. Although it is unknown how many visits were made to al-Khomei, the relationship with the Iranian Islamists began before the revolution, and the pre- and post-revolution meetings created feelings of alliance between the Brotherhood and the Islamic regime in Iran (Hazimeh 2022).



The positive feelings continued right up until the first confrontation between the Brotherhood and Hafez al Assad in Syria, when the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ali Akbar, denounced the Muslim Brotherhood with word play naming them the ‘criminal Brotherhood’, and their relations began to change. Later, Iran also wrote a new constitution, limiting the religious authority to Shia’ism, excluding the Sunnis, which upset the Muslim Brotherhood internationally. However, the Brotherhood did not cut ties with Iran, but instead considered the Syrian situation as an isolated issue, and adopted caution, limiting their expectations of support from the country.

This, in addition to writing a new constitution in which the “Ithna ‘Asharis” or “Twelver” limited the religious authority to Shia’ism and excluding Sunnis upset the Muslim Brotherhood as a whole, however Brotherhood leadership considered the Syrian event limited to the Brotherhood in Syria rather than an attack on the whole movement, and took the new constitution as a warning to be cautious of Iran, limiting their expectations of support from Iran, thus focussing their attention on Islamic communalities rather than sectarian differences.

The Brotherhood’s recognition of Iran and the meeting of the two entities was a big step for the Brotherhood both regionally and internationally. The relationship they formed with Iran held heavy significance in the Arab region. It was a declaration of a significant change in its foreign relations, and at this point they were able to initiate many joint international Brotherhood efforts. Secondly, it expressed direct support to regimes foreign to those of their own countries, and indeed, foreign to the Brotherhood themselves. In this sense, it was a declaration of a truly transnational forward motion for the movement.

As Yusuf Nada, later International Relations Commissioner of the Muslim Brotherhood, stated in his 2002 interview with Aljazeera, (“Aljazeera,” 2002) it was the first time that the Brotherhood took a non-passive role, and was the first international initiative of the Brotherhood to create a political relationship. He goes on to say that the Brotherhood’s celebrations for Iran, which took place across the Arab world, fed their increasing popularity.



Nada also expressed that the Brotherhood was invested in these relations by pressuring Iran to deal with various crises between its new government and the Sunnis and Kurds, and reconcile relations between all three. However, these actions were all conducted at an individual level by Nada himself, on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood as a communication point between the movement and the West, as well as supporting the students' activism in the West. Therefore, by the end of the 1970s the movement had established a spot in the region on an international relations level, with the rapid opening of new branches and strong ties with the new Islamic power of Iran (Aljazeera 2002) (Al-Watan 2013).

Afghanistan and the Soviets, 1980s: The Enemy of my Enemy is my Friend

In the 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood demonstrated a noticeable development in their understanding of international relations and its complexities. During this period, the Brotherhood engaged directly in the Soviet's occupation of Afghanistan, and developed new policies to deal with the West, namely the US. The Brotherhood had a clear stance against the Soviets and that the occupation of the Islamic land in Afghanistan should be resisted. Therefore, they issued the fatwa that jihad is *fardayn* (an obligation upon all Muslims) and with unofficial governmental support from various Arab states, they began to collect donations to support jihadists and were even allowed to publish news about the Arab fighters in Afghanistan in their media outlets (Azzām 1980). However, the Muslim Brotherhood found themselves at a crossroads in their relationship with the West and the US. While they had considered the US a part of Western hegemony and a tool of colonisation, the US's greatest enemy was the Soviets, and by aligning themselves with the US, they could defend Islamic land by supporting the US in countering Soviet expansion in Afghanistan (Bell 2005).

This was unprecedented, and the Brotherhood had to return to justify this tactic to their people. In doing so, they presented their new relationship with the West within a wider context of an ongoing religious clash between secular and nonsecular ideologies. They proclaimed the US were religious, and the Soviets atheist, and reasoned that it was better to be aligned with a religious force rather



than an atheist one. This position created the possibility for coexistence between the West and the East out of a shared common enemy - the Soviet Union. In practice, the political pragmatism they learned in Stage Two when they were studying in the West was applied here, demonstrating that the Brotherhood had matured, and that even they were able to choose Western alliance when it came to protecting its interests (Anas 2002) (International Crisis Group 2005).

For the West, these developments in the Afghani case showed them that political Islam was not necessarily violent towards them, or that it was at least less-violent than the communists, and that political Islam even shared some western liberal trends (Kurzman 2019) (International Crisis Group 2005).

However, despite these limited commonalities, ultimately, the Brotherhood's core objectives as mentioned in Stage Two, such as their support for Palestine and their rejection of Arab dictator regimes supported by the West, were contradicted by allying with the West. In fact, it challenged the overarching conspiracy theory of that period, that the West was actively stopping the Brotherhood, and any other Islamic organisation, from reaching power and intended to destroy societal values abroad that were not shared at home. However, in the 1980s these convictions began to fade and a new era of coexistence with the West was formed against the Soviets, in which the Brotherhood proved its capabilities and size at the popular level by collecting money, distributing informational brochures, and recruiting volunteers for the war, all with the blessing of the American and Arab regimes.

Paving the way for Iraq's Acceptance

The Muslim Brotherhood grew in confidence during this period due to the ties they had built with the new Iranian regime, in addition to their favourable position towards Afghanistan with the US which had afforded the Brotherhood the basis for a more regional role. They began practising this role when they formed a diplomatic initiative to end the war between Iran and Iraq on the territorial dispute which lasted between 1980-1988 by facilitating channels of communication between the



highly hostile countries. To meet this end, Yusuf Nada hand-delivered letters between Saudi Arabia's King Fahed, and individuals close to Iraq's Saddam Hussein. The shared letters conveyed the implication that both parties wished to end the war. While the Brotherhood was not responsible for ending the war, they actively practised politics and diplomacy, facilitating the prenegotiations stage, playing the role of an acceptable party to the Iranians and to the Iraqis. (Mansour 2020) (Thompson and Nada 2012, ch.4-5).

While the war was still ensuing in 1987, seventeen undocumented foreign fishermen were caught working off the coast of Iran and immediately imprisoned after revealing that they were Egyptian, as Egypt was supporting Iraq in the war. The fishermen received a three year sentence with no hope for their government to support them. Due to the absence of communications between the two countries, the fishermen's lack of passports and there being no airline between Iran and Egypt, they were in a political grey area and needed a neutral third party to intervene. The Muslim Brotherhood stepped into the role of negotiating party again, with Nada communicating with Iran's Higher Council of Defence and applying pressure to both the Iranians and Egyptians to free the prisoners, which occurred under the gaze of the Iraqis (Mansour 2020) (RICE 1987).

By the end of the 1980s, the Brotherhood had become relatively acceptable to the main powers in the Middle East including Saudi Arabia and Iraq, who accepted them as messengers in the Iraq-Iran War; Iran, as an envoy; with new bridges to work with Egypt outside Egypt, such as with the Egyptian fishermen. Yusuf Nada had become a prominent personality representing the Brotherhood regionally, and Arab regimes were becoming more inclined to work with them.

From ad hoc Diplomacy to Mediation: 1990s

The diplomatic endeavours that the Brotherhood undertook to free the Egyptian fishermen shifted them from theorising international relations, to actively practising it. This was continued into the 1990s when the Brotherhood began strategy building to deal with developing regional issues and the West. It was not just the Brotherhood that experienced a significant transition during this



period, but also the entire world with the fall of the Soviet Union and a new global order taking place.

Further, there were developing issues facing global politics other than Palestine, Kashmir, and Iran, the invasion of Kuwait, the Muslim crisis in the Balkans, and the rapid migration from North African countries such as Algeria and Tunisia to Europe.

When the Gulf War started in August 1990, and before Western intervention of January 1991, the Brotherhood had begun to create strategies to engage in the regional matter before it became a global issue. They formed a group of Brotherhood members from different Arab countries, including their most charismatic leadership, with the objective of keeping the crisis between Arabs and resolving it before foreign intervention could take place (Piscatori 1991, 17-39).

In a 2002 interview with the researcher, Murad Al-Adaileh said that this group was led by Mohammed Abdulrahman Khalifeh, the General Supervisor for the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, with the participation of an Arab Brotherhood leadership, and Brotherhood members from other Islamic countries such as Pakistan and India. Members included Ahmed al-Banna, the son of Hassan al-Banna, and Hassan Al-Turabi of Sudan, who would later become Foreign Minister of Sudan. Bassam al-Noush further clarifies that Rached Ghannouchi and Hassan Al-Turabi visited him in Jordan, at which point they all met with King Hussein before they began their mission to convince Saddam Hussein to withdraw before invasion. Therefore, the group travelled to Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, meeting with each of their leaders: Saddam Hussein, King Fahed of Saudi Arabia, and Khamitmi. The Brotherhood tried to find meeting points between these leaders to avoid foreign intervention, but according to Al-Adaileh, the most important job was in building bridges between Saudi Arabia and Iraq to diffuse the conflict (Hazimeh 2022).

The efforts undertaken by the Brotherhood leadership during this period demonstrate the level the Brotherhood had reached, and that they had taken an acceptable religious and political role in the region, meeting with kings and presidents at the prenegotiation stage of a serious conflict.



Following this trip, Khalifeh held a cornerstone press conference in Amman making public the efforts that they had already taken, and to declare their direction for resolving the conflict to international media and the general public. Firstly, they stated their rejection of military occupation and their desire to resolve the conflict peacefully. They continued to express a desire to keep the issue within the Arab and Islamic realms through replacing foreign armies with local ones, and ultimately the importance of Iraq withdrawing from Kuwait and the Kuwaitis right to self determination (AbūFāris 2000, 272-274) (Amūsh 2008, 141).

In his biography, Arabiyat said that following the entrance of the international coalition into Kuwait, further attempts at mediation took place through smaller group of Brotherhood leadership between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, which resulted in a new initiative to replace foreign armies with Islamic ones consisting of soldiers from Malaysia, Sudan, Iran, and Indonesia. Despite the failure of all of these initiatives and diplomatic interventions, their press conferences received great attention and further established the Brotherhood as an international player dealing with the issue with direct involvement in the resolution efforts.

Within this atmosphere, the Brotherhood developed new skills and learned how to deal with international actors with wider impact. They escalated their efforts by releasing statements and liaising with the media, as well as issuing well-balanced press releases that diplomatically stood with Iraq against Western interventions, but also asserted Kuwait's right to self-determination. As the Brotherhood executed these diplomatic strategies, they were also meeting with the relevant countries at the highest levels, presenting themselves as a positive actor with legitimate solutions which would be more in line with popular opinion and the general Arab population. At the same time, while campaigning to keep Arab issues Arab, they were careful not to confront nor invalidate the West, which significantly empowered the Brotherhood's international image and weight, regardless of whether or not their strategies were successful. Ultimately, the Brotherhood became recognised as an acceptable mediator between all major regional players (AbūFāris 2000, 272-274) (Amūsh 2008, 142-143).



Expanding on the attention garnered during this period, the Brotherhood began to plant roots all over Europe. The student Islamic associations which had been developed in the Second Stage became centres such as The Islamic Center of Munich, which alone documented thirteen Brotherhood branches run by Mohammed Mahdi Akif, and Western Europe reportedly came to have at least one Brotherhood centre in every capital. It then extended from Europe globally into China and Africa. At the same time, the Brotherhood was also spreading from the Arab world to every Islamic country, establishing a noticeable presence in countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia (Obaid 2020, 121-138). At this point, the question of whether or not the Brotherhood was an international group had a real basis, as they had become a religious organisation that existed from and beyond the Arab world, and acting as a political mediator from within the Arab world.

Winning Over the Saudis

After Iraq and Iran's acceptance of the Muslim Brotherhood as an actor within the region, the only country that had been resistant to the movement, despite brief diplomatic gestures in the formerly mentioned occasions, was Saudi Arabia. Therefore, gaining Saudi Arabia's recognition would complete the Brotherhood's growing acceptance as an active player in the region. However, in contrast to the other relevant countries, Saudi Arabia identifies itself as a religious Sunni state and by recognising another Sunni actor, their legitimacy could be disturbed. Therefore, they would not easily provide such recognition, making the Brotherhood's mission difficult.

During the 1980-1990 period the concessions made to the Brotherhood in Iran and Saudi Arabia became increasingly clear, and via the Deputy of International Relations the movement was able to diffuse sizable conflicts such as playing as an envoy between Iran and Iraq and a mediator in the fisherman crisis thanks to this new dynamic.

One of the most important examples of the development of their position between Iran and Saudi Arabia happened while a climate was growing for the invasion of the Gulf, the Pilgrimage Crisis of 1987 occurred, lasting until 1993, when the Shia'a Iranians performed a protest during the



annual pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia against the Saudi regime. It is forbidden to use the pilgrimage as a platform to express political opinions, and the protest sent an undiplomatic message to the Saudis who responded quickly and decidedly, leading to the death of 402 individuals, 275 of which were Iranian. The impact of this event grew, with Saudi Arabia limiting the Iranian quota for positions in the pilgrimage and subsequently Iran boycotting the pilgrimage and cutting diplomatic relations between the two countries (Wright 1989, 166) (Martin Seth 2011, 176).

Nada was able to intervene, and convened representatives from both countries in Switzerland, where he had communicated with the government to allow their planes to land in Lozan. There, King Fahed and President Rafsanjani negotiated an increase in the Iranian pilgrimage quota, and were successful in convincing both parties to settle. Upon that meeting, the pilgrimage continued as normal without problems until 2015 (Mansour 2020).

Further in pursuing this relation and recognition of the Muslim Brotherhood's role by Saudi Arabia, through Nada, the movement became involved in the conflict over the Hanish Islands between Yemen and Eritrea during 1995-98, which is considered to be an important territory part of the Red Sea for Saudi Arabia, therefore the International Brotherhood Deputy was asked by the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood who were also taking part in the Yemeni government at the time, to support their claim to the islands. The Brotherhood used their connections to locate Ottoman tax documents in Turkey which proved that prior to European colonisation, the islands had been part of the Ottoman Empire (Mansour 2020).

Nada also contacted the Italian government, which had colonised the area after the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire, to locate further key documents that the Yemeni government did not have access to. These documents were then used in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Netherlands when Yemen was granted sovereignty over the islands (Rubin 1998) (Permanent Court of Arbitration 1996).



The Brotherhood's involvement in Yemen demonstrated the possibility for the Muslim Brotherhood to play a role in favour of Saudi Arabia, who used it directly in the Pilgrimage Crisis, and indirectly as seen with Yemen, in order to pursue Saudi Arabia's interests on its behalf. The Yemen issue specifically took the International Muslim Brotherhood to new strengths, empowering the branches in every state with the reality that the Brotherhood is now in a position where countries could publicly ask them to intervene in their country's respective crises (Mansour 2020).

Conclusion

As explored in this paper, the Muslim Brotherhood experienced different stages of development, implementing ideas of reform to institutionalise a movement following a western model, and learning from other religious movement's experiences in the west, to shape the Brotherhood ideology and enact change that they intended to. Then, through interaction and with new, inspired generations, the movement was able to create a pragmatic understanding of the west which enabled them to engage in world politics, turning them from a passive actor focused on colonisation and the Palestinian issue into a legitimate actor in some of the most stressful crises that affected the region between the 1980s to the end of the 1990s. This shift in their strategy and development of their resources and tools turned them from a blindly oppositionary movement into an expert of international law as explained in the Yemeni case. Through the examples provided, the movement made themselves relevant to all the relevant countries in the region such as Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, creating a need for the Brotherhood. Their gateway was Iran, where despite the different sects and opinions on how to rule, they were able to negotiate and make a friend of Iran when most other regional countries were cutting ties.

This new relationship created a basis for the Brotherhood to negotiate with Saudi Arabia and Iraq on different occasions, eventually forcing them to accept the Brotherhood as a mediator. Even Egypt, which had banned the Brotherhood at home and forced them underground, accepted the movement's role as a regional actor when it came to the Iran problem. The Brotherhood played on



their popularity so that they would be accepted as an ad hoc diplomatic tool in order to solve crises and mediate regionally between these important players.

Since then, there have been attempts at mediation in small-scale matters such as the Sudan crisis of 1988, and internally between the Palestinians, however these issues did not grab attention for two main reasons. The first of which being that the Brotherhood was an integral part of those crises, and secondly when 9/11 happened the movement was marginalised and internal crackdowns were then preceded by a crackdown on their diplomatic role regionally limiting all of their activities. They were set back in their development to stages One and Two, were forced to refocus their structure and defend themselves from accusations of terror and radicalism. This ended the era of the thriving, Islamic, non-state actor which had taken a role in some of the largest diplomatic crises of the region.

While the Brotherhood is currently criminalised in some countries, and others are campaigning for their destruction, history has shown us that the movement survived over ninety years and that their ideology has lived through every problem that the modern Middle Eastern states have experienced, from colonisation, to the establishment of Israel, the Gulf Wars, and oil. The Brotherhood has been a part of every problem that the modern Middle Eastern state has experienced.

As detailed in this paper, the Brotherhood functioned either to diffuse crises or as an alternative path for the Middle East, as seen with Kuwait, or was part of the problem solving efforts, as seen with Yemen and Eritrea. Therefore, despite this campaign against the movement, it has been acceptable at various points in time when needs arose, and the Brotherhood has always found its opportunity to make itself a necessity to resolving the region's diplomatic problems. When most analysts forecast future conflicts to be between two Islamic, oil-based countries - Saudi Arabia and Iran - despite their stances and histories with the Brotherhood, the necessity of the movement to take to their former role may rise again. This is firstly because Saudi Arabia would, in this situation, seek any kind of support from Sunni muslim movements and actors, for which the Muslim Brotherhood is prominent, and also because most countries and actors would find themselves



having to choose between Saudi Arabia or Iraq. There are no neutral parties. This would make the Brotherhood again the perfect candidate to be befriended by both countries in mediation efforts when aggression is at its peak.

The difficulty in predicting the region's future means that with their reputation and extensive resume, there is always room for the Brotherhood to manoeuvre, and the survival of the Muslim Brotherhood over nearly one hundred years is based on their ability to make themselves a necessity in the resolution of certain regional level diplomatic crises.

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