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ВЗЛЕТ И ПАДЕНИЕ АССОЦИАЦИИ «БРАТЬЯ-МУСУЛЬМАНЕ»: ЕЕ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ПУТЬ И СВЯЗЬ С ЕГИПЕТСКИМ ОБЩЕСТВОМ

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Ассоциация «Братья-мусульмане», или «Братья» (далее – БМ), зародившаяся в Египте в 1928 г. как сообщество религиозного просвещения, противостоявшее вестернизации, экономической нестабильности и увеличивающемуся разрыву между политической элитой и обществом, сегодня завершила полный жизненный цикл. БМ боролись с монархией во время правления короля Фарука в 1940-х гг., затем были объявлены вне закона и репрессированы при Г. А. Насере в 1950-х и 1960-х гг. Будучи реабилитированными при А. Садате в 1970-х гг., БМ смогли выйти на официальную политическую арену Египта, завоевать влияние в профсоюзах и впоследствии принять участие в парламентских выборах. В 1990-х и 2000-х гг. при Х. Мубараке они постепенно превратились в полноценную политическую организацию и стали ведущей оппозиционной группой в Египте. Наконец, на вершине своей политической траектории организация одержала убедительную, хотя и недолговременную победу на президентских и парламентских выборах после «арабской весны» в 2012 г., потеряв власть уже через год, в 2013 г. Однако потеря власти не стала самой трагичной вехой в истории организации. Последовав примеру Г. А. Насера, новый президент Египта А. Ф. ас-Сиси воспользовался поддержкой военного руководства и фактически поставил под вопрос само существование ассоциации, лидеры которой были либо приговорены к смертной казни, либо заключены в тюрьму, либо вынуждены эмигрировать. В данной статье рассматривается процесс постепенного политического восхождения БМ и их стремительного падения после прихода к власти. Автор утверждает, что наиболее заметной причиной политического успеха организации было умение поддерживать постоянную связь с египетским обществом, которая была разорвана после завоевания власти. При этом исследование показывает, что сегодня БМ сталкиваются с такими новыми вызовами, как утрата идентификации и неопределенность идеологии. Эти проблемы делают нынешний кризис еще более драматичным по последствиям, чем кризис, возникший в годы правления Г. А. Насера.

Ключевые слова: политический ислам; ассоциация «Братья-мусульмане»; Абдель Фаттах ас-Сиси; «арабская весна»; современная политика Египта.

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УЗЛЁТ І ПАДЗЕННЕ АСАЦЫЯЦЫІ «БРАТЫ-МУСУЛЬМАНЕ»: ЯЕ ПАЛІТЫЧНЫ ШЛЯХ І СУВЯЗЬ З ЕГІПЕЦКІМ ГРАМАДСТВАМ

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Асацыяцыя «Браты-мусульмане», ці «Браты» (далей – БМ), якая зарадзілася ў Егіпце ў 1928 г. як супольнасць рэлігійнай асветы і супрацьстаяла вестэрнізацыі, эканамічнай нестабільнасці і разрыву паміж палітычнай элітай і грамадствам, сёння завяршыла поўны жыццёвы цыкл. БМ змагаліся з манархіяй падчас праўлення караля Фарука ў 1940-я гг., затым былі абвешчаны па-за законам і рэпрэсаваны пры Г. А. Насеры ў 1950-я і 1960-я гг. Будучы рэабілітаванымі пры А. Садаце ў 1970-я гг., БМ змаглі выйсці на афіцыйную палітычную арэну Егіпта, заваяваць уплыў у прафсаюзах і ў далейшым прыняць удзел у парламенцкіх выбарах. У 1990-я і 2000-я гг. пры Х. Мубараку яны паступова ператварыліся ў паўнаважную палітычную арганізацыю і сталі вядучай апазіцыйнай групай у Егіпце. Нарэшце, на вяршыні сваёй палітычнай траекторыі арганізацыя атрымала пераканаўчую, хоць і недоўгачасовую перамогу на прэзідэнцкіх і парламенцкіх выбарах пасля «арабскай вясны» ў 2012 г., страціўшы ўладу ўжо праз год, у 2013 г. Аднак страта ўлады не стала самай трагічнай вяхой у гісторыі арганізацыі. Узяўшы прыклад з Г. А. Насера, новы прэзідэнт Егіпта А. Ф. ас-Сісі скарыстаўся падтрымкай ваеннага кіраўніцтва і фактычна паставіў пад пытанне само існаванне асацыяцыі, лідары якой былі або прысуджаны да смяротнага пакарання, або зняволены ў турме, або вымушаны эмігрыраваць. У дадзеным артыкуле разглядаецца працэс паступовага палітычнага ўзыходжання БМ і іх імклівага падзення пасля прыходу да ўлады. Аўтар сцвярджае, што найбольш прыметнай прычынай палітычнага поспеху арганізацыі было ўменне падтрымліваць пастаянную сувязь з егіпецкім грамадствам, якая была разарвана пасля заваявання ўлады. Пры гэтым даследаванне паказвае, што сёння БМ сутыкаюцца з такімі новымі выклікамі, як страта ідэнтыфікацыі і нявызначанасць ідэалогіі. Гэтыя праблемы робяць цяперашні крызіс яшчэ больш драматычным па сваіх наступствах, чым крызіс, што ўзнік у гады кіравання Г. А. Насера.

Ключавыя словы: палітычны іслам; асацыяцыя «Браты-мусульмане»; Абдэль Фатах ас-Сісі; «арабская вясна»; сучасная палітыка Егіпта.

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RISE AND FALL OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD ASSOCIATION: POLITICAL PASS OF THE MOVEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH EGYPTIAN SOCIETY

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Born in Egypt in 1928 and labeled as a community of religious enlightenment confronting westernisation, economic instability and the widening gap between the political elite and the society, the Muslim Brotherhood Association or the Brothers, Brotherhood (hereinafter – MB) has now completed a full life cycle. The MB struggled with the monarchy during king's Farouk rule in the 1940s, then it was outlawed and repressed by G. A. Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s. Again, the MB raised from the ashes under A. Sadat in the 1970s, managed to enter the official political arena of Egypt and to gain the upper hand over professional syndicates before participating in parliamentary elections. It gradually expanded into a full-fledged political stakeholder in the 1990s and 2000s under H. Mubarak, and became the leading opposition group in Egypt. Finally, at the apex of its political trajectory, the MB enjoyed a landslide albeit short-lived victory in the aftermath of the Arab spring in 2012, losing power even faster in 2013. However, the loss of power was not the most dramatic milestone in the organisation's history. Indeed, borrowing the methods of G. A. Nasser towards the organisation, the new president of Egypt, A. F. el-Sisi, benefiting from the support of the military brass, sealed the fate of the MB, which leaders were either sentenced to death, imprisoned, or forced to emigrate. The focus of the present article is twofold. On one hand, it examines the process of the gradual political ascent of the MB and their *arx Tarpeia Capitoli proxima* (pride comes before a fall) moment after gaining power. The author argues that the most prominent reason of the organisation's political success was their proficiency in maintaining a constant connection with Egyptian society, which was broken after the conquest of power. On the other hand, the investigation shows that nowadays the MB faces new challenges, implying a loss of self-identification and a tangible shortcoming of its ideology. These setbacks make the current debacle even more dramatic in its consequences than during the wilderness years under G. A. Nasser.

Keywords: political Islam; Muslim Brotherhood Association; Abdel Fattah el-Sisi; Arab Spring; modern Egyptian politics.

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Introduction

The beginning of the 21st century was characterised by the strengthening of the role of Islam in the regulation of the socio-political life of the Middle East countries. This phenomenon resulted in a significant expansion of the political presence of religiously oriented parties and organisations. In this pattern, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Association, or the Brothers, Brotherhood (hereinafter – the MB) occupied a special place among Islamist political groups. Over many years of its activity, it evolved from a solely religious community to the most influential political group in Egypt. However, the path leading the MB to political heights was fraught with pitfalls and the organisation experienced periods of ups and downs throughout its history.

The most difficult period of its activity was marked by the harsh repression carried out by the regime of G. A. Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the MB not only managed to maintain their integrity, but transformed into an even more stable and competitive political organism, able to withstand the challenges of the external environment and to quickly respond to the demands of society. Since the 1980s, the organisation had been gradually conquered the Egyptian political arena. They reached the culmination of all their activities in 2012 and won the parliamentary and presidential elections in Egypt.

Nevertheless, a resounding success turned into a crushing failure. One year after he was elected as President of Egypt, M. Morsi, the representative of the MB, was dethroned and sent to prison. The new administration of Egypt, headed by President A. F. el-Sisi, unleashed a harsh repression against the MB, and the association was forced to act underground and return again to illegal activities. It is noteworthy that, unlike under G. A. Nasser, it was the Egyptian people who took to the streets of Egypt to demand M. Morsi's resignation shortly after voting for him.

Such a rapid fall of the popular political organisation actualises the question of the factors that brought it to power in Egypt, and the reasons for the rapid loss of trust within the Egyptian society. This issue becomes even sharper, taking into account the fact that the organisation has always positioned itself as an offshoot of society. Furthermore, one additional question needs to be contemplated: is the current harsh period going to prompt a refit of the MB (as it was the case in 1960s), or, on the contrary, is the association doomed to remain forever in exile outside of Egyptian political life?

The problem of the ideology and political activity of the MB throughout its history has been covered by

a number of sources and investigations. The fundamental work of the founder of the association H. al-Banna «Collection of messages of Imam Shahid Hasan al-Banna» represents one of the main sources of the MB ideological background, kept by the association till nowadays [1]. But the organisation has seriously transformed its political narrative throughout its nearly century-old existence, so the programme documents represented an important source of political thought of the MB in the period of their vigorous political activity (for example, Statement on democracy of 1995, the electoral programme of the MB Freedom and Justice Party during the parliamentary elections in Egypt in 2012)¹.

Historiography of the MB activity is represented by a significant number of investigations mainly in Russian, French, English and Arabic languages. The ideology and activity of the MB from the time of its creation till the beginning of 2000s was examined by the Russian scholar M. Razhbaddinov in a full-fledged monograph «Egyptian movement of the “Muslim Brotherhood”» [2]. The leading Belarusian expert in Arabic studies V. Koshchev investigates the modern and contemporary history of Egypt as well as the activity of the MB in this context [3; 4]. American and European researchers C. Wickham, B. Rubin and B. Rutherford [5–8] are the authors of numerous books and articles dedicated to the activity of the MB association before and after Arabic Spring. These scholars focused on main stages of the organisation's social and political activity and its formation as an influential political group.

Different aspects of the MB activity during the period of el-Sisi presidency have already been covered by a certain number of articles, published online by experts of international think tanks or non-governmental analytical initiatives as «Carnegie», «Hudson», etc.² They focus mainly on different aspects of president A. F. el-Sisi's repression on the MB and consider it as the main driver for the current crisis experienced by the organisation. American researcher of Egyptian origin K. al-Anani analyses this issue in more diverse ways, giving an idea of the MB response to repressions and its strategy of survival³.

Dissecting the political path of the MB, the present article aims to show the interconnection between the response of the organisation to public demands and its political success. Using a historical-genetic method, the author traces back social and political activity of the MB in line with the main problems of Egyptian society was facing at different stages, and it investigates the further transformation of the MB as the leading

¹The programme of the Freedom and Justice Party. Cairo, 2011. 80 p. (in Arab.) ; Statement of the Muslim Brothers on democracy // Rowaq Arabi. 1997. Jan. P. 139–143.

²Zollner B. Surviving repression: how Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood has carried on [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/03/11/surviving-repression-how-egypt-s-muslim-brotherhood-has-carried-on-pub-78552> (date of access: 15.01.2023) ; Manmoud Kh. Sisi's grab for Brotherhood assets [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/77427> (date of access: 16.01.2023) ; Tadros S. The Brotherhood divided [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/the-brotherhood-divided> (date of access: 18.01.2023).

³al-Anani Kh. Rethinking the repression-dissent nexus: assessing Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood's response to repression since the coup of 2013 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/77427> (date of access: 16.01.2023).

oppositional political force. This method was also used to show the process of the association's degradation as a ruling power and rapid loss of trust of Egyptian society. Historical-comparative method was used to reveal similarities and differences of MB inner state as well as its

interaction with Egyptian society during repressions of Egyptian presidents G. A. Nasser and A. F. el-Sisi, emphasising the internal crisis association has undergone and determining the trajectory and perspectives of its development, as well as changes in public opinion towards it.

The genesis of the movement in a British garrison

In the first half of the 20th century, in spite of a formal sovereignty gained in 1922 Egypt still remained under the political, economic and cultural grip of the United Kingdom. This state of dependence nurtured the ideological basis of social movements of Egypt raising in the 1920s and 1930s [3, p. 95].

Unlike the elite and secular-bourgeois Wafd Party, the MB was born in the deep Egyptian society. As such, it was created in 1928 by the school teacher H. al-Banna, a paragon of people's intelligentsia. Son of Hanbali imam, he graduated from Dar al-Ulum, one of the first Egyptian «modern» institutions, specialised in teachers' education.

The MB emerged in Ismailia, a British garrison situated on western bank of the Suez Canal. There, the process of foreign domination and its procession of unemployment, social stratification and westernisation of mentalities were more blatant than in the rest of the country, echoing a negative reaction in the population, which openly and regularly protested against the British [4, p. 99].

Such an environment crafted the robustness of the MB's primary goal, which was the preservation of the cultural and religious identity of Egypt, and the return to

real independence. H. al-Banna tried to propose a domestic governance formula to all social and economic issues by returning to Islam as a comprehensive and self-sufficient system of governance, as it used to be under the Righteous Khalifs. This message was understandable and close to the Egyptian ordinary people, 90 % of which were Muslims and followed Islamic rules.

However, the comprehensive transformation of economic, political and social areas of Egyptian society could not be the matter of a single day. Therefore, a concept of gradual penetration of the MB ideology into all the strata of the state system was worked out. Obviously, the religious education of Egyptian population was seen as the first and the most important step to build an Islamic state. Thus, the MB began their activities with the opening of schools for the study of the Qur'an, charity and preaching, without interfering in politics [3, p. 4]. As time passed, the MB was gaining more and more influence among the population and began to go beyond purely religious discourse. In 1935, the association crossed the Rubicon and was officially identified as a political movement which set the creation of an Islamic state as its primary goal [2, p. 86].

From the oppression of G. A. Nasser to a political institutionalisation facilitated by A. Sadat

By the 1940s the MB turned into one of the most influential opposition organisation. Involved in the political struggle, they became a real counterbalance to the power. They supported the military coup organised by G. A. Nasser and Free Officers in 1952, which resulted in the overthrow of King Farouk and the establishment of the republic. However, G. A. Nasser rapidly considered the MB as inveterate political rivals and launched a merciless repression campaign against the organisation [9, p. 96]. As a result, most of the leaders of the MB were imprisoned or executed, and the association itself was outlawed in 1954 [10, p. 771–775].

This crackdown became the first serious challenge to the history of the MB. However, the society was not destroyed. The survival of the organisation found its grassroots in complex and siloed structure, expressed in the system of «families» (usar), scattered throughout Egypt. Each «family» consisted of 5–7 members, headed by amir. After some time amir might create a new family and appoint the new amir. «Families» epitomised the system of social corporatism of the MB, while the ideological preparation was entrusted to the phalanxes. The main unit of the phalanx was a group of

10 people – ushra. Four ushras made up a larger unit – ashir (40 people), five ashirs constituted rakht (200 people), five rakhts were united into a phalanx – katiba (1000 people) [2, p. 74–75].

These sui generis structures of the MB were hard to destroy due to their flexibility, decentralised mechanisms and comprehensiveness. Moreover, they gave birth to a generation of highly motivated and devoted activists, who maintained a constant steadiness in the context of an all-round repression against its prominent leaders. Pragmatically, the MB put the project of political leadership aside, focusing on its ideological work within the society. This tactic attracted more and more supporters.

Ironically, the oppression against the MB prompted the association's development abroad. Indeed, numerous key members were forced to immigrate to different countries all over the world and gave birth to the international network of the organisation [12, p. 85].

The return of the MB to politics happened after A. Sadat came to power in 1970. The new president tended to rehabilitate the Islamists, deemed to be a useful counterweight to the Nasserists [2, p. 245]. In 1971,

during a general amnesty, most of the MB members were released from prisons. Using the loyalty of authorities, the organisation restarted to work almost openly. Though, their activity was not officially legalised. Such a half-legal status put them at the mercy of the president, who ambited to turn them into a «pocket opposition». However, the situation helped the MB to gradually gain more political influence. In 1977, the organisation controlled the student unions of all Egyptian 13 universities. In 1978, the association won control of the Egyptian National Student Union [5, p. 116].

The control over student unions became the first leverage towards politics. After the assassination of A. Sadat in 1981 the MB continued to climb up the political ladder, disseminating their activities in professional syndicates. In 1984, the MB began to control the medical syndicate, in 1986 – the syndicate of engineers, in 1988 – the syndicate of pharmacists [10, p. 44]. Having gained significant political experience in labour associations, the

members of the MB went to the parliamentary elections. In 1984, the coalition of Wafd Party and the MB won 58 seats in the National Assembly, 8 of which belonged to the members of the MB [2, p. 201]. However, the coalition soon fell apart due to internal feuds for leadership. Therefore, in the next elections in 1987, the MB opted for an alliance with the Socialist Party of Labour and the Liberal Socialist Party and won 36 seats in Parliament [2, p. 211].

The political thaw of the A. Sadat time was materially beneficial to the MB. The society expanded the network of MB-affiliated schools, free of charge or inexpensive hospitals, and charity organisations, etc. [8, p. 85]. The influence and prestige of the organisation among Egyptians skyrocketed, as the association assumed the social functions of the state, where the latter was unable to intervene properly, all the more since president's A. Sadat liberal Infitah policy⁴, had fueled cronyism and marginalised wide ranges of Egyptian society, including employees of the public sector.

Regaining political influence through adherence to democratic principles

After the successful start in the late 1980s, the MB won only one seat in the Parliament in 1995 [7, p. 45], linked to two factors.

The group was hit by a string of arrests, and was forced to go underground for the second time in its history.

Besides, the results of the vote obviously illustrated, that the MB declined and lost its electorate. The group failed in its community outreach. Political activity of the organisation targeted wider circles of the Egyptian population, rather heterogeneous in social and religious terms. This required a precise, robust and overarching political programme. The vague slogan («Islam is our solution»), tailored by H. al-Banna, was deemed a bogeyman. The days of the fight against westernisation and confrontation with Israel had sunk into oblivion. Egyptian society became more inclusive and globalised, and an excessive focus on Islam repelled potential voters.

Nevertheless, this political failure acted as an incentive for political transformation. The MB started to develop a new political programme based on democratic tenets. In 1995, the organisation issued a Statement on democracy, in which it officially declared its commitment to democratic principles⁵. The political programme of the MB of 2000 (with it the organisation ran for parliamentary elections) was based on this statement. A turn to democracy really helped the MB to regain the trust of the voters. It gained 17 seats in the

National Assembly. In 2005 the success of the organisation became even more significant: they gained 20 % of the mandates and became the most widely represented opposition group in the National Assembly [13, p. 83]. On this occasion, the MB managed to meet peoples' aspirations and to work out a comprehensive programme tailored to the society's aspirations. Moreover, the organisation's representatives in Parliament acted as a real representative of the people's interests and raised the most pressing issues that worried the public: corruption in the ruling National Democratic Party and government, emergency law, police brutality, etc. [14, p. 167].

But the MB became dangerous rivals for Egyptian powers. On 10 October 2010, the very day after the organisation announced the nomination of their candidates for parliamentary elections, 22 members of the group were detained in Mansur and Alexandria⁶. By the end of November, the number of members arrested, according to the chief lawyer of the association, A. Maksud, reached 1206 people, including 5 members running for elections. All of them were charged with membership in an illegal organisation and the use of religious slogans⁷. At the beginning of the pre-election race, it became clear that the MB was unlikely to repeat its electoral success in 2005. The elections were held with such flagrant violations that the association's supreme mentor, M. al-Badia, announced the refusal of the MB candidates to participate in the second round.

⁴An «open door» policy aimed at expanding foreign investment and the private sector. A. Sadat has been always criticised for its not very successful outcome – widening social gap, expressed in the formation of a layer of oligarchs with a general decline in the standard of living of the population.

⁵The Statement of the Muslim Brothers on democracy. Cairo : Cairo Inst. for Hum. Rights Stud., 1997.

⁶Elections in Egypt. State of permanent emergency incompatible with free and fair vote. N. Y. : Hum. Rights Watch, 2010. 28 p.

⁷Shalaby A. 76 Brotherhood members arrested while hanging up campaign posters for Brotherhood candidates [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/printerfriendly.aspx?ArticleID=274975> (date of access: 27.10.2010).

Tahrir Square in January 2011: the opportunistic springboard to power

Predictably, when Egyptian revolution broke out in 2011, the MB supported all its slogans in accordance with the political programme of the group: democratisation of socio-political life, freedom of speech, abolition of the state of emergency law. The members of the MB constituted a significant part of the protesters. In the middle of the uprising period on Tahrir Square, there were about 600 thousand of MB activists⁸. Moreover, the MB provided direct organisational support to the demonstrators. The organisation set up a series of checkpoints on the accesses to the square in order to prevent H. Mubarak's supporters from entering Tahrir Square and to avoid bloodshed. Besides, they provided food and medical care, they set up a pedestal with a microphone and a loudspeaker on the square [14, p. 140]. Without coming to the forefront, the members of the association took the most active part in the revolution, worked with the wind of the uprising without pretending to lead it. The MB could not pretend to play the role of the ideological mastermind of the revolution.

The revolution of January – February 2011 was a united protest of the Egyptian society, diverse and heterogeneous in its social, political and religious composition [15, p. 139]. During the revolution the MB acted as a part and on behalf of Egyptian society and demonstrated total awareness of the people's needs.

After the revolution, the MB continued to adapt to the political mainstream that dominated in the society. The MB tried in every possible way to demonstrate its adherence to the ideals of the revolution. Its members put forward a democratic programme. Despite the preservation of the thesis of the compliance of legislation with Sharia law (which, however, was already present in the legal system of Egypt) the newly formed political party of the MB – the Freedom and Justice Party – advo-

cated for an independent judiciary, freedom of speech, political pluralism, anti-corruption and social justice⁹.

In addition, the Freedom and Justice Party nominees for the parliamentary elections were not directly affiliated with the party, but campaigned within the so-called democratic alliance, a hodgepodge of moderate Islamic movements and civilian parties, such as the Nasserist Karama Party (Dignity), the secular democrats Ghad el-Thawra, Free Egyptians and the Democratic Generation Party, the Labour Party, the Egyptian Arab Socialist party¹⁰.

This demonstrative willingness to cooperate with other political forces was fruitful. Indeed, the Freedom and Justice Party won the elections to the Egyptian People's Assembly, and obtained 47 % of the seats in the Parliament. Further, following the beaten path of the promotion of a democratic programme while preserving basic Islamic principles, the MB candidate M. Morsi won the presidential elections¹¹ with the final result of 51.73 %.

To many observers, the final electoral success of the MB after the revolution again was a result of their interaction with Egyptian society in the broadest sense. The people of Egypt did not vote not for M. Morsi or the MB itself, but rather for the ideals of revolution, embodied by the organisation. In this situation, the victory of the MB did not mean an unconditional support of their ideology by the people. Voters assumed that, as the ruling power, the MB would continue the policy of solidarity with all layers of Egyptian society and political forces. The maturation of a new-built democratic system implied a strict observation of the principles of fair political competition. This challenge entirely fell on the new president, who was elected subsequently to the democratic revolution in Egypt in 2011.

The short-lived experience of power

Yet, the main shortcomings of the MB came rapidly to the surface. It turned out that this time the group was unable to take the pulse of the country and to build a new political equilibrium favouring interaction within the society.

At odds with his pledge to embrace a democratic orientation and trying to find a compromise with other political forces, M. Morsi, by inertia, followed the authoritarian path of his predecessor. He launched an all-round offensive against the positions of other influen-

tial political forces like military and secular democratic parties.

The new president started with personnel changes: first, in August 2012, he dismissed the head of the General Intelligence Service, the commander of the Republican Guard, the commander of the Presidential Guard, the director of Cairo Security and the Governor of North Sinai¹². Formally, this dismissal justified by a terrorist attack which took place earlier in North Sinai on the border with Gaza and Israel. Nevertheless, his

⁸Yah'i M. Musa, Sharia and Abu al-Madaj go out onto the Tashiro to support protesters // Al-Masri al-Yaym. 2011. 5 Feb. P. 5 (in Arab.).

⁹The programme of the Freedom and Justice Party. 80 p. (in Arab.).

¹⁰Democratic alliance (Freedom and Justice) [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/33/103/26895/Elections-/Electoral-Alliances/Democratic-Alliance.aspx> (date of access: 02.01.2012).

¹¹Muslim Brotherhood's Mursi declared Egypt president [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-18571580> (date of access: 01.07.2012).

¹²Domestic and foreign affairs in Morsi's third month [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/positionpapers/2012/09/2012967561441983.html> (date of access: 01.10.2012).

next actions demonstrated that this sacking was aimed at transforming the political space.

M. Morsi fired the Minister of defence and the head of the Supreme Forces M. H. Tantawi, as well as a number of other representatives of the council who served under H. Mubarak. Moreover, he cancelled a constitutional declaration that limited presidential powers issued by Supreme Council of Armed Forces in June¹³. This step caused a wave of discontent among high-ranking officers. Yet, it was just the beginning. In November 2012, he issued a Constitutional declaration, which unprecedentedly expanded the powers of the president, by depriving the judiciary of the right to challenge his decisions, as well as authorising him to dissolve Parliament and the Constitutional Assembly. As a result, the powers of the president went far beyond the executive power. In addition, the head of state was endowed the right to take any necessary measures in the event of a threat of revolution, national unity and security. In fact, it exhumed the disparaged state of emergency, which had been canceled right after the revolution [16, p. 41]. As it was marked by al-Jazeera Centre for Studies, «Morsi had more powers than Mubarak did»¹⁴. Eventually, the concentration of power in the president's hands was a vigorous attempt to downgrade the power of the military apparatus – main rival of the MB – in the political system.

The next step towards the maximisation of MB's power was made in January and May 2013, when president M. Morsi appointed members of the organisation

to the government, increasing their number to 10 (out of 35). In a similar way, in September 2012 and June 2013, 10 out of the 27 new Egyptian appointed governors were also the representatives of the MB. The opposition denounced then a «Brotherhoodisation» of the state¹⁵.

Having started with the governmental level, M. Morsi targeted public organisations. On 29 May 2013 he initiated the draft law, regulating the activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), allowing the government to restrict the funding and operation of NGOs. The authorities acquired the right to object to their internal decisions and activities. Not surprisingly, this step caused a flurry of criticism and let the opposition groups to accuse the MB of authoritarianism. The critics became even harsher when in June 43 people were sentenced to prison for being member of illegal organisations¹⁶. Ironically, oppressed under G. A. Nasser and H. Mubarak as an illegal group, the MB went down the same path as their oppressors.

Dissatisfaction grew among the political forces of Egypt and ordinary citizens. In November 2012, the leaders of the secular opposition M. Baradei, H. Sabahi, A. Nur, M. M. Musa called on the Egyptians to take to the streets to protest against M. Morsi's dictatorship¹⁷. As a result, on 27 November 2012, about 100 thnd of Egyptians gathered in Tahrir Square, calling on the president to cancel the abhorred legislation. Moreover, many called for M. Morsi overthrow, saying that he had betrayed the principles of the revolution¹⁸.

Pride comes before a fall

On 3 July 2013 M. Morsi was overthrown by a military coup staged by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and spearheaded by the Minister of defence A. F. el-Sisi. The context of the coup, was very reminiscent of the revolution that had replaced H. Mubarak two years earlier: in July 2013, over one million of citizens demonstrated on the streets of Cairo, demanding the immediate resignation of president M. Morsi¹⁹.

Sharing the destiny of his predecessor H. Mubarak, M. Morsi was taken into custody and detained²⁰. The MB was officially declared a terrorist organisation.

The essence of the crackdown was dictated by the logic of the military, which acted as a counterweight to the MB, and aspired to neutralise their opponents and take over completely, implementing the doctrine of the 1952 coup.

Paved with decades of hardships, the protracted political experience of the organisation could not prevent the MB from clinging to power for more than a year. Demonstrating solidarity with the aspirations of the people throughout the history of their activities in the opposition, reaching power with a democratic

¹³Egypt president orders military chief Tantawi to retire [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-army-tantawi-idUSBRE87B0IQ20120812> (date of access: 02.10.2012).

¹⁴Domestic and foreign affairs in Morsi's third month [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/positionpapers/2012/09/2012967561441983.html> (date of access: 01.10.2012).

¹⁵Momani B. In Egypt, «seep state» vs. «Brotherhoodisation» [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/in-egypt-deep-state-vs-brotherhoodization/> (date of access: 01.10.2012).

¹⁶Egypt: new draft law an assault on independent groups [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/30/egypt-new-draft-law-assault-independent-groups#:~:text=The%20draft%20would%20give%20the%20government%2C%20and%20in,and%20Political%20Rights%20%28ICCP%29%2C%20Human%20Rights%20Watch%20said> (date of access: 01.06.2014).

¹⁷ElBaradei, Sabbahy and others call for anti-Morsi protests on Friday [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/elbaradei-sabbahy-and-others-call-anti-morsy-protests-friday> (date of access: 10.04.2013).

¹⁸Egypt: protesters descend on Tahrir Square [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/27/egypt-protesters-descend-tahrir-square> (date of access: 10.12.2012).

¹⁹Egypt faces more bloodshed as Muslim Brotherhood offices torched [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/01/egypt-muslim-brotherhood-offices-civil> (date of access: 11.10.2013).

²⁰Morsi ousted, under house arrest, as crowds celebrate in Cairo [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/morsi-ousted-under-house-arrest-crowds-celebrate-cairo-flna6c10523507> (date of access: 12.10.2013).

programme, the MB slipped into authoritarianism as soon as they took authority.

By following the path of institutional seizure of influence, their representative M. Morsi went astray. His political basis eroded day by day, and was rapidly limited to staunch and loyal MB. The Egyptians who voted for him felt deceived and betrayed.

In addition, he clearly underestimated the power of the military, who did not tolerate any challenge of their positions and encroachments in their sole preserve. As a result, the generals became the thriving force that mechanically prepared the ground for the overthrow of the MB.

Furthermore, the exercise of power was detrimental to the MB. They lost their comparative advantage of understanding the society, on which they had gained their popularity. The MB did not feel, or simply ignored, the conflicting various ideological currents that existed within the Egyptian society. They behaved as if they were the only one influential political force, and did not pay attention to the actual change in the political conjuncture and its demands.

M. Morsi ruled as an oriental despot. He eliminated political rivals and gnawed off larger and larger pieces of the political and economic pie. His behaviour was forgiven neither by the leading political competing players – the military, nor by the Egyptians themselves.

Predictably, the armed forces brought their main representative to power again. In May 2014, A. F. el-Sisi gathered 96.91 % of the popular vote and was elected the President of Egypt²¹.

Towards a structural weakening of the organisation

At first sight, the dire situation endured by the MB presented similarities with G. A. Nasser's era, when a whole galaxy of the MB activists had to move outside Egypt, including to Europe, where they had managed to build up the infrastructure to preserve the association's existence, but also to expand its influence abroad and organising the whole system of the MB representation in exile.

However, in 2010s and 2020s the organisation was not anymore the young and ambitious, though experienced, organisation, still gaining influence and developing its infrastructure. They represented a worldwide

A widespread repression targeted the MB in the aftermath of his election, effectively repeating G. A. Nasser's stance.

The general guide of the MB M. Badie was detained right after the coup in August 2013, and was eventually sentenced to life imprisonment. M. Morsi himself was convicted and sentenced to death in May 2015, before seeing his sentence commuted to life imprisonment in June 2016. He died in 2019.

Further, the repressive mechanisms became self-reinforcing: even former repentant members of the association were accused of having links with the MB and were arrested: in 2018, A. M. A. A. Fotouh, who left the group before the 2011 revolution, was taken into custody and then identified as a terrorist. In January 2021 along with M. Ezzat, general guide of MB in 2013–2020 and H. Malek, one of the largest MB financiers²², he was sentenced to 15 years in prison²³ in May 2022. June 2022 9 members of the MB including its leader Y. Moussa, were sentenced to death²⁴.

Subsequently, a significant amount of prominent members of the organisation, as well as MB-affiliated officials, were forced to immigrate. In order to preserve its existence, the headquarters of the MB were moved to London. Turkey became a safe haven for many activists²⁵. The next general guide appointed after the arrest of M. Ezzat was I. Munir, who had been granted political asylum in the UK in the early 1980s and actively participated in creating the local MB infrastructure. The current official leader of the movement S. Abdel-Haq, elected in February 2023, has been living outside Egypt from 1990s²⁶.

deployed social and political network, possessing an appropriate organisational, financial and personnel base.

Having this pattern in mind, the authorities opted for a decapitation of the MB at all levels, aiming to deliver the final blow to the organisation's infrastructure.

Financial resources of the association were targeted first. The assets of arrested MB leaders were frozen directly after their condemnation. K. al-Shater and H. Malik, former largest Egyptian millionaire businessmen were not spared. Further in April 2018, A. F. el-Sisi issued a new repressive law, by which the state could seize the assets of entities recognised as terrorist organisations.

²¹Abdel Fatah el-Sisi sweeps to victory in Egyptian presidential election [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://theguardian.com/world/2014/may/29/abdel-fatah-al-sisi-sweeps-victory-egyptian-election> (date of access: 10.06.2014).

²²Egypt places 50 Muslim Brotherhood leaders on terrorism list [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://egyptindependent.com/egypt-places-50-muslim-brotherhood-leaders-on-terrorism-list/> (date of access: 10.03.2021).

²³Court jails Egyptian former presidential candidate for 15 years [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/court-jails-egyptian-former-presidential-candidate-15-years-2022-05-29/> (date of access: 11.06.2022).

²⁴Egypt places 50 Muslim Brotherhood leaders on terrorism list [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://egyptindependent.com/egypt-places-50-muslim-brotherhood-leaders-on-terrorism-list/> (date of access: 10.07.2022).

²⁵Turkey open to bids for refuge by Muslim Brotherhood exiles [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/16/world/europe/turkey-open-to-bids-for-refuge-by-muslim-brotherhood-exiles.html> (date of access: 10.03.2021).

²⁶Salah Abdel-Haq appointed acting guide of Brotherhood [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.thedailyreports.com/salah-abdel-haq-appointed-acting-guide-of-brotherhood/> (date of access: 10.03.2023).

In September 2018, Egypt's Committee for Inventory, Seizure, and Management of Terrorist Funds confiscated the assets of MB-affiliated companies, schools, NGOs, hospitals, etc. for 3.4 bln US dollars feeding directly the Egyptian treasury²⁷.

Such a blow had far more far-reaching consequences than simply depriving the association's elite of money and capital. MB-affiliated businesses and social infrastructure played an important role in ensuring loyalty of existing members and attracting new ones. Not only the owners, but a significant part of the clients and employees of the MB companies belonged to the association. Its educational and healthcare establishments provided high quality and cheap or even free services to the MB members²⁸. The government pressure led to the breakdown of the organisation on the grassroots level, depriving the livelihood of not only prominent activists, but even ordinary members and sympathisers, who were not related to political activity.

But material factor was even not the most dramatic one. Such an extended social network led to the formation of a peculiar microcosm, gated the MB community. Its collapse led to real social apocalypse of its members and loss of all the supports, plunged them into a state of social uncertainty, causing their strong demotivation and depression. In these circumstances the essential strategy of the rank-and-file members of the MB was to focus on their own survival, not association's one.

Arrests and exile of the MB leaders also resulted in the internal split, further weakened the organisation. Some young members insisted on the continuation of the violent resistance, while the old guard pursued a policy of retreat into the shadows and suspension of any political activity. With the official leadership in exile, the previously marginalised youth started to play a more significant part in the MB activity inside Egypt and even formed its own governing body called Supreme Administrative Committee led by former member of the organisation's Guidance Bureau M. Kamal, though, not recognised and soon dissolved by the MB official leadership. Anyway, its dissolution didn't stop the process of rethinking association's activity in Egypt by the MB youth and their increasing distance from the old leadership. This situation as well as the flow of repressions in some cases led to emergence of a kind of political absenteeism in its ranks. Famous researcher and the MB expert K. al-Anani gave the following example: «Mustafa Ahmed, a 23-year-old member in the Brotherhood who fled the country to Sudan after he was released from prison on bail, believes Sisi's regime has consolidated its power and there is no value in resisting it. As he states, "I don't believe anymore in peaceful change. I don't

believe in pushing back either. I don't care about politics. What I do care about is the release of thousands of people who are now in prison." He also expressed bitter sentiment towards the Brotherhood's leaders which led him to abandon the movement. According to him, "The Brotherhood achieved nothing since it entered politics a few decades ago. They failed in politics miserably and should focus on law and charity"»²⁹.

Such a tendency reveals one more problem, the MB faced with. Its strategy of gradually infiltrating society in order to gain political supremacy suffered a crushing fiasco when the association came to power. This political failure caused the predictable crisis of identity and ideological uncertainty. If under G. A. Nasser epoch the MB members were inspired by a higher purpose of creating an Islamic state, nowadays this aim seems to be absolutely unattainable. The organisation unconvincing experience in power demonstrated that a main addressee of its political narrative – Egyptian society – was not ready for the Islamic discourse of the MB, which they sought to implement. In this way, the existence of organisation turned out to be senseless and nowadays the association works solely to secure its own survival.

Under G. A. Nasser, in spite of brutal oppression of the MB, it had still one very significant advantage. It was a relatively young organisation with innovative ideas, reflecting the needs of Egyptian peoples. 1950s in the history of Egyptian state were marked by the search of political direction of the young republic and its desperate and unsuccessful confrontation with Israel. In the context of G. A. Nasser's pan Arabism failure, the Islamist ideology advocated by the MB seemed to be a reasonable alternative. Moreover, the fact that the MB struggled against the monarchy along with Free Officers and then were rapidly repressed, gave them the image of scapegoats of political games and paradoxically led to its transformation into a leading opposition organisation.

On the contrary, the political failure of the MB after the revolution was nothing, but their own fault. The organisation demonstrated total inability to maneuver in the political space and weak applicability of its ideology in contemporary Egypt. The organisation return on the Egyptian political stage seems to be unrealistic and a very distant prospect. Now, the outlawed MB is doomed to return to underground activities and find the best way to function in new conditions. Though, throughout all its history the MB is already fitted with a well-functioning scheme of interaction with repressive regimes and the total destroy of its Egyptian wing is highly unlikely. However, now the association has to act not only in hostile environment, but also in conditions of internal divisions and a self-identification crisis.

²⁷Mahmoud Kh. Sisi's grab for Brotherhood assets [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/77427/> (date of access: 15.01.2022).

²⁸Egypt: social programmes bolster appeal of Muslim Brotherhood [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/26150/EGYPT-Social-programmes-bolster-appeal-of-Muslim-Brotherhood> (date of access: 10.04.2012).

²⁹al-Anani Kh. Rethinking the repression-dissent nexus: assessing Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood's response to repression since the coup of 2013 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/77427> (date of access: 16.01.2023).

In these circumstances the most pressing issue the MB facing nowadays is the search of suitable forms of activity and a system of self-preserving mechanisms,

that would allow it to restore the long-established connection with the Egyptian society, which was lost during the period of their rule and repression by the authorities.

Conclusions

The political history of the MB can be labelled as diverse and unstable: the association experienced periods of ups and downs, either entering the political vanguard, or going into the shadows, even being forced to move to illegal activity. The harsh policies of president G. A. Nasser almost led to the complete destruction of the group, but the MB rose from the ashes and rebuilt their infrastructure both in Egypt and abroad.

At the same time, throughout the entire period of its existence, the MB has built its activities on the basis of the requirements and aspirations of broad segments of Egyptian population. Moreover, the association not only positioned itself as a part of it, but also competently integrated into it, gradually expanding its sphere of influence at all levels and gaining popularity among ordinary Egyptians. The organisation did not only promote its ideology to the masses, but rather transformed it in accordance with the most pressing problems Egyptian society was facing, and managed to develop the image of political force concentrated on the protection of public interests. During the period of dependence on Great Britain, the MB insisted on the real sovereignty of Egypt and the preservation of national and religious identity, during the years of G. A. Nasser's rule they developed an international network, using the status of victims of repression,

and during the times of A. Sadat and H. Mubarak, they advocated social equality, the fight against corruption and the democratisation of socio-political sphere. Their vigorous activity during the revolution of 2011 and the electoral success of 2012 was fully consistent with this strategy: partly silencing the Islamist component, the association promoted a programme based on the ideals of Tahrir, suitable for a wide range of voters.

But after taking authority, the MB moved away from this approach and began to pursue a policy actually opposite to the principles declared by them before, trying to concentrate power in their hands as much as possible and quickly came to the political collapse.

Moreover, as in the days of G. A. Nasser, the new president A. F. el-Sisi unleashed a wave of repression on the MB, questioning the very possibility of its existence in Egypt. Despite all the similarities with the times of G. A. Nasser, the situation in which the MB occurred now is even more difficult: the repression is even more severe and comprehensive, and the association itself is experiencing a serious internal crisis caused by the loss of confidence of the Egyptian society, as well as its own members. In this way, the MB have again returned back to square one and will be forced to build a new political identity in unfavourable conditions.

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