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Tadros, M. The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt: Democracy Redefined or Confined? New York: Routledge, 2012.

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Tadros's book *The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt: Democracy Redefined or Confined?* asks seemingly simple questions: If the Egyptian people elected the Muslim Brotherhood after the revolution, how could anyone subsequently object to their rule? The book also asks why the country's first democratic election resulted in such political trauma that within the first year of leadership, the president was overthrown. In order to answer these questions, the author studied not only the literature of the Muslim Brotherhood itself but also the thoughts and analyses of Egypt's political leaders and religious clerics. Through the book's eight chapters, the author discusses the Muslim Brotherhood's politics and foundational beliefs, as derived from its texts and literature.

Tadros's book focuses on the historical and ideological roots of the Islamist organization the Muslim Brotherhood since its inception in 1928 as the largest civic association in Egypt; the Brotherhood was founded as a social "movement," but it quickly became a political entity, often acting as the country's most organized political oppositional force.[1] The work examines the ideological and theoretical thoughts of the group from their literature, situating the Muslim Brotherhood in Egyptian society and assessing its relationship with Sharia (Islamic religious law), the civil state, political pluralism, Copts (Egypt's Christian minority), and women.

Since the beginning of Egypt's 2011 revolution—which began with marches, demonstrations, occupations of public spaces, and acts of non-violent civil disobedience[2] and culminated in riots that resulted from clashes between security forces and protesters—many questions have been asked about the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the post-revolution era. After the revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood launched a political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, and won a number of elections, including the 2012 presidential election, in which its candidate, Mohamed Morsi, became Egypt's first democratically elected president. However, Morsi's ousting and arrest by the military following massive demonstrations only one year later left many to wonder how the group's ideology is connected to the government in Egypt in terms of democracy, identity, and the civil state. These questions are critical to understanding the political environment in Egypt since the revolution. According to the Tadros, despite the Muslim Brotherhood's founding as a civic group, it has developed into an organization that is highly influential in the social and political life of the nation.

Studying the Muslim Brotherhood as a social movement and political group in Egyptian society is a study of power relations and power struggles within the state. Since its creation, the group has acted as a check and balance system for the government, often vigorously opposing ruling parties. During Nasser's government in the 1950s, the group was restricted,[3] but under Sadat, it became more visible and prominent in society. By 2000s, it had begun winning seats in the parliament. During Mubarak's regime, the group was banned from official political participation, though Mubarak ultimately allowed the group occasional participation in politics when he believed its participation would suit his purposes. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood was a political tool to be used only when necessary.

According to the text, the majority of the literature written about the group focuses on the group's political and sociological history. However, the author finds it is equally important to examine the reasons behind the group's position and its relationship with the Egyptian government and society. The book's thesis is to determine whether the group should be considered "progressive and moderate" or "reactionary and conservative." Toward this end,

instead of isolating the Muslim Brotherhood as the sole political movement and/or social organization involved in the revolution, the author focuses on understanding the group at its foundational and institutional levels (as based on its slogans, speeches, and declarations). The author also examines the group's political and social practices as well as how the group's conceptual foundation has been represented in practice through its civic involvement and political engagement.

Solidifying the importance of this book is the author's desire to track the group's involvement in politics as well as its practice in society—as opposed to merely focusing on the group's beliefs without discussing the implications of these beliefs on Egyptian society and politics. Considering the group as a political movement helps to understand its relationship to the power structure within Egyptian society. In particular, chapter three examines the concept of a civil state with an Islamic foundation in regard to how the Muslim Brotherhood has perceived and practiced politics within the state. The author argues that the group's involvement in politics cannot be fully understood without tracking the literature of the group and its thoughts. For instance, it is important to examine the difference between what the Muslim Brotherhood purports to believe in regard to democracy via its literature and what it practices in its governance.[4]

Chapter four discusses the notion of political pluralism with an Islamic reference in regard to how the Muslim Brotherhood has practiced and exercised political pluralism. The author investigates the extent to which the Muslim Brotherhood is involved in pluralism. In addition, the author discusses how the group seized every opportunity to become involved in politics that was presented to it. (Interestingly, the Supreme Guides of the Muslim Brotherhood at first refused to establish a political party because they believed that the group itself was already a political entity and that no separate party name or designation was necessary. By the 2000s, the group began to officially participate in politics, with Brotherhood members gaining seats in the parliament, yet official participation in politics under the "Muslim Brotherhood" name was prohibited. As such, after the collapse of Mubarak's government, the group decided to establish its own party, known as the Freedom and Justice Party.)

In chapter five, the relationship and political struggle between the Muslim Brotherhood and Christian Copts is examined. The author explains how the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic discourse caused tension between the group and the Christian Copts. Similarly, in chapter six, the author discusses the notion of "Islamic citizenship" (and who qualifies for such citizenship) based on the beliefs and practices of the Muslim Brotherhood as they are related to non-Muslims in Egypt. The discussion of how gender and women play roles in the Muslim Brotherhood are discussed in chapters seven and eight. The author concludes with a discussion of the group's ties to the Salafi movement[5] and an examination of why the Muslim Brotherhood rejected some laws based on reformist readings that were presented to parliament. According to the author, the collection of political practices and arrangements undertaken by the Muslim Brotherhood suggest that the group is less of a progressive, reformist, and moderate movement and more of a conservative, traditional movement.

This book is well-researched; the author not only deconstructs the politics of the Muslim Brotherhood but also illustrates how the religious discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood was comprehensively implemented in group practice within the state, via the group's views and practice of civil society, citizenship, identity, constitution, and relationships toward women and toward non-Muslims in Egypt. This book would a useful resource for advanced graduate students in Middle Eastern studies, especially for anyone interested in the history of the Islamist

movement. The book not only discusses the Muslim Brotherhood's beliefs but does so within the context of Sharia texts. As such, researchers and students in religion and Islamic theology would also benefit from reading this book.

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[1] Although the group initially focused on education and charitable work, it quickly grew to become a major political force, championing the cause of disenfranchisement. The group also identifies as "Islamist," attempting to restore links between traditional Islam and modern politics and life.

[2] Protestors' grievances focused on legal and political issues, police brutality, lack of freedom of speech, corruption, economic issues including inflation, unemployment, and low wages. The primary demands of the protestors included the end of the Mubarak regime, an end to "emergency law," a responsive, non-military government, and a voice in electing political leadership.

[3] When restricted by Nasser, the group was welcomed by Saudi Arabia, where it was able to thrive and influence education and social organizations. In addition, the Saudi Arabian government supported the group in order to blackmail Nasser's regime. When Sadat came to power, he opened the door to the Muslim Brotherhood and released its members from prisons, while Saudi Arabia closed its door to the group again.

[4] It is important to note that the various constituencies within the Muslim Brotherhood are not always unified; the Muslim Brotherhood did not officially join the revolution in the beginning. Instead, the youth of the group joined the protesting revolutionaries, which illustrates the divide between the leaders of the group, who represented tradition, and the youth of the group, who represent more progressive ideals.

[5] The Salafi movement is an ultra-conservative reform movement with different variations within Sunni Islam that references the doctrine of "Salafism," or a more "fundamentalist" approach to Islam that espouses emulating the Prophet Muhammad.