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Evolution through Revolution? The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Syrian Uprising

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Submitted in accordance with the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

December 2017

I confirm that the work submitted is my own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Acknowledgment

First of all, I would like to reflect on the blessing of getting the opportunity to go through the experience of writing a thesis at a time when all eyes were focused on the Syrian crisis. It is a true privilege to have had the chance to examine such a sensitive and important topic at my age and using my long years of experience which I gathered through living in many different countries and integrating in different cultures and communities.

I would like to extend a heart-felt thank you to my incredible husband Abdul-Malek who stood behind my achievements and continued to facilitate for me to keep going even when times getting tough. His passion to work for his beloved, war-torn Syria has never ceased to inspire me and I am so proud of the steps we have walked together. Perhaps the most significant one of our achievements is undoubtedly our six children who have all outdone any expectations we ever had for them, academically and politically. I appreciated their quite critical reflections on my hypothesis and analyses during our countless cups of morning coffees. This filled me with delight and joy and will continue to be my source of happiness during turbulent times.

I would also like to cordially thank the plentiful interviewee respondents; by addressing a special and great "*thank you"* to all members of the SMB who participated in this research. They gave me their time and input without expecting anything in return and were truly some of the utmost pleasant people I have worked with in my journey. As a woman and a researcher, I was highly respected and very much welcomed although at times this thesis was probably not a priority for any Syrian person given the experienced turbulent times in Syria.

Every family, every person, every community, every organisation, every child, and every mother in Syria has an absolutely heart-breaking story, which members of the Western academic world would never be able to understand or take in. The scale of the crisis is simply huge and the suffering is unimaginable.

This journey back into academia could have never happened if it was not for the endless support from my supervisors Dr Lars Berger, Associate Professor in International Security and Dr Hendrik Jan Kraetzschmar, Associate Professor in the Comparative Politics of the Middle East and North Africa, who stood by my decision to take up a controversial topic and highlight its significance given the current climate. Their support is what refined my academic standards and made this thesis what it is; despite having to put up with slightly unconventional approaches I brought with me from my previously creative career path, Lars and Hendrik did a fantastic job at adding to my skillset and igniting my passion for academic research!

Writing this thesis would not have been possible without my parents. This may be perhaps unusual as I am 65; where people (usually?) retires. Although my parents have passed away long before I even considered continuing with my studies, if it was not for the critical and political upbringing from my early childhood days, this day would never have come true.

May they rest in peace

Abstract

Syria's peaceful uprising turned into an armed conflict with Assad's lethal response to demonstrations demanding dignity and freedom. Looking for an oppositional Syrian political power who might have influenced dynamics on the ground, light was shed on the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB). As dictatorships toppled in 2011 in the region and were replaced by MB-related parties such as in Egypt and Tunisia, the interest into the previously exiled SMB increased as a Syrian alternative. Research in this area was predominantly concerned with SMB's history, and did not examine how the SMB's shaped the ongoing events in Syria, and how in return, the conflict shaped the SMB.

This thesis analyses, mainly through exclusive interviews, the SMB's evolution as a prominent Syrian opposition group both on the domestic and international level. Findings show a shift in priorities within the organization from the hierarchal system to a wide-spectrum approach through various charitable, social and political activities enabling the SMB's reintegration into the Syrian society. Nevertheless, due to pressures from international and domestic powers, the SMB diluted into the wider opposing bodies and lost the forefront position within the political stage.

The international scrutiny facing the SMB increased as the Egyptian MB experienced political damage following the military coup in 2013. This was followed by the threat-driven apathy from the Gulf states towards the MB. Western Governments also did not support the SMB despite the democratic and pluralistic vision for a future Syria being inherent in the SMB's principles. Eventually, the SMB kept itself over water as Turkey and Qatar acted as a lifeline.

The above-mentioned issues including wider historical links and the internal structures of the SMB creates a fascinating angle to the Syrian crisis which had not been researched before and provides the basis for future research on this ever-evolving situation.

Table of Content

Acknowledgment **2**
Abstract **4**
Table of Content **5**
List of Charts: **7**
List of Abbreviations **8**

Chapter 1: Introduction **9**
1.1 Research Objectives, Questions, and Contributions **11**
1.2 Research Design and Methodology **17**
1.3 Thesis Structure **23**

Chapter 2 Literature Review **26**
2.1 Introduction **26**
2.2 The Muslim Brotherhood as a Socio-Political Actor **26**
2.3 The SMB, as a Moderate Islamic Organization, and its Democracy Rhetoric **27**
2.4 Literature on the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood **29**
2.5 Concluding Remarks **30**

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework **32**
3.1 Introduction **32**
3.2 Key Terms and Concepts **32**
3.2.1 Social Movement Theory as Applied to Islamic Movements 32
3.2.2 Political Opportunity Structure 38
3.3 Concluding Remarks **39**

Chapter 4: The History and Organization of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB) **41**
4.1 Introduction **41**
4.2 The Founding and Evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) *Ikhwan Al-Muslimin* in Egypt **42**
4.2.1 Hassan Al-Banna and the Birth of the Organization 43
4.2.2 The Muslim Brotherhood under Gamal Abdul Nasser 46
4.2.3 The Nasser Suppression of the MB and the Radicalization of the Organization 48
4.2.4 The MB under Sadat 48
4.2.5 The MB under Mubarak 50
4.2.6 The Arab Spring and the Post-Revolutionary Period 55
4.3 The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria **56**
4.3.1 Origin, Founding, and Connection with the Egyptian MB 56
4.3.2 The SMB, the Education System and the Colleges of Religious Studies in Syria 59
4.3.3 The SMB and Politics at the Time of Mustafa Al-Sibai 60
4.3.4 The SMB During the Baathist Era, 1963-1980 63
4.3.5 The SMB in the Post-Hama Era 65
4.4 The SMB in Europe **66**
4.5 The SMB post-2011 and the Demise of the Egyptian MB: Lessons Learnt from the Egyptian Situation **68**
4.6 Concluding Remarks **74**

Chapter 5: The SMB's Organizational Internal Discussions and Responses to the Syrian Crisis **76**
5.1 Introduction **76**
5.2 Organizational Discussions Surrounding the Syrian Uprising **79**
5.3 The SMB's Internal Statutes pre-2011 ..... **80**
5.4 The SMB's Internal Statutes post-2011 ..... **83**
5.5 The Modest 'Fast Track' Option versus a Reflective Change Option **94**
5.6 Concluding Remarks **109**

Chapter 6: Discursive and Behavioural Responses to the Syrian Uprising: Domestic Level 111
6.1 Introduction 111
6.2 The SMB's Humanitarian Outreach and Social Service Activities 115
6.3 The SMB's Democracy and Rights Discourse 120
6.4 The SMB and the Foundation of '*Wa'ad*' Party: 'The National Party for Justice and the Constitution' *(Hesb al Adala wa al Dustour)* 137
6.5 The SMB and the Non-State Brigades in Syria 156
6.6 Concluding Remarks 160

Chapter 7: The SMB's Organizational, Discursive, and Behavioral Responses to the Syrian Crisis: Regional and International Level 165
7.1 Introduction 165
7.2 The Syrian Regime and their Allies Fighting on Syrian Soil 167
7.2.1 The Shia Allies: The Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah 169
7.2.2 The Russian Federation 172
7.3 The Relationship between Russia, Iran, and the SMB 176
7.4 International Responses to the 'Crimes Against Humanity' 178
7.4.1 Human Rights Bodies, Humanitarian Organizations, and other NGOs 178
7.4.2 Responses from Western States 184
7.5 The Role of the SMB Within Political Opposition Bodies and their Engagement with the International Community 185
7.5.1 The Syrian National Council 187
7.5.2 The Syrian National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces 189
7.5.3 The Syrian Interim Government 191
7.6 The SMB and Regional and International Actors 192
7.6.1 The Friends of Syria Group 192
7.6.2 The Relationship Between Turkey and the SMB 194
7.6.3 The Relationship between Arab Gulf States and the Muslim Brotherhood 195
7.6.4 The Future of the SMB in the Gulf Region 199
7.6.5 The Relationship Between the USA and Western European Democracies, and the SMB 201
7.7 Concluding Remarks 207

Chapter 8: Conclusion 212

9.0 References 224
Appendix1 Sample of Interview Questions 238
Appendix 2 239
Appendix 3 List of Interviewee 242

List of Charts:

Chart 1: Places were interviews were conducted..... 18
Chart 2: Intended interviews in percentage. 19
Chart 3: Shows the conducted interviews from segments of the Syrian society 21

List of Abbreviations

AI Amnesty International

CRM Civil Rights Movement CRM

DAESH *Al Dawla al Islamia fe al Iraq wa al Sham*

EMB Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

FOS Friends of Syria Group

FSA Free Syrian Army

HRW Human Rights Watch

ICM International Constitutional Movement

IDP Internally Displaced Persons

IRGC The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

ISIL Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

ISIS Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

JIM Joint Investigate Mechanism

MB Muslim Brotherhood

NGO Non- Governmental Organisation

NCC National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change

OPCW Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

SDF Syrian Democratic Forces

SMB Syrian Muslim Brotherhood

SMT Social Movement Theory

SNHR Syrian Network for Human Rights

SIG Syrian Interim Government

SSNP Syrian Social Nationalist Party

SWP Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik SWP.

UNO United Nations Organization

Wa'ad The National Party for Justice and the Constitution

Chapter 1: Introduction

The "Arab Spring" of 2011 was fuelled by the uncontained emotions of the Arab people. Ordinary citizens and political organizations made calls for freedom of speech and dignity. The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) was active in this call for human rights from the onset (Al Jazeera, 2009). Considering their history of repression (Human Rights Watch, 2010) coupled with their lack of governmental experience [1], the MB's decision to enter unexplored political territory can be described as that of initiative and resolve. They entered the public arena by mobilizing major demonstrations throughout the streets, spreading nation-wide slogans after Friday prayers in numerous Arab states. Having observed these unprecedented region-wide events, Middle East analysts reported a direct correlation between the dramatic falling of the resistant autocratic Arab leaders and the political rise of the Muslim Brotherhood.

After protests broke out on March 15th 2011 (Telegraph, 2014), and following the events of Tunisia and Egypt, Syria was expected to follow the same pattern; Assad was thought to step down and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB) was predicted to rise into the political limelight (Rafael Lefèvre, 2013). Though the SMB was an exiled organisation, non-existent in the public sphere for three decades, their re-awakened public appearances outside the country was an indication of their successful retention of organizational structure and grassroots support. It was thus thought to be inevitable that Assad's expectedly imminent download would be swiftly followed by the SMB's rise to political power.

Seven years later, after continuous struggle and an exponentially deteriorating situation, the above predictions did not materialise. The revolution[2], which once comprised of men and women peacefully protesting and children scribbling slogans on their school walls in Dara'a (Hanano, 2013), devolved into increasingly violent and complex clashes. The disproportionately violent response of the Syrian authorities catapulted the Syrian

[1] Although the Muslim Brotherhood has representatives in some parliaments, they rarely were considered the ruling party.

[2] The term 'revolution' is used by the SMB to describe the events occurring in Syria since 2011 and it is therefore appropriate for the same term to be used in this thesis. Different parties refer to the situation in Syria differently. The analysis of whether Syria is a civil war, revolution, war for independence, proxy war, or war on terror is outside the scope of this research.

uprising into an unprecedented humanitarian disaster - the most serious case witnessed since World War II (United Nations News Service, 2017).

Despite strong criticism from Western nations, Syria's president Bashar al Assad did not halt his use of lethal force against his opponents (Deutsche Welle, 2011) . In attempt to demolish "terrorists" (The Independent, 16.10.2016), a term he assigned for the Syrian rebels, he began by utilizing his sniper forces; thereafter resorting to internationally prohibited barrel bombs (dpa/odg: SZ 2013); and most recently ordered the use of chemical weapons (McGregor, Aglionby, Carnegy 2013). The highly motivated, yet untrained, unorganized, and disunited Syrian youth would thus have no choice but to flee or remain and fight for the fall of the Assad regime.

Numerous brigades formed as a result. Great numbers from the Syrian Arab Army defected and formed an umbrella rebel group by the name of the 'Free Syrian Army' (FSA) (Abouzeid, 2012). Alongside affiliated brigades, they showed willingness to reduce civilian casualties to the best of their ability (Fortin, 2012). However, over time the nature and ideology of rebel groups diversified; militarised and extremist Islamist groups formed such as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) – also referred to as *Daesh*.[3] Once they invaded large parts of "rebel-held" northern parts of Syria (Tuysuz et al., 2013), things took a turn for the worst. Due to the wide array for political ideologies fighting each other in such a convoluted manner, coupled with external support from supporting nations (Pierpet, 2013), it became difficult to envisage a peaceful end.

Despite the non-violent nature of the initial protests, the Syrian people's demands for reforms were met with brutal force (Lasensky and Woocher, 2011). As hope was lost for millions of Syrians civilians, there were mass attempts to flee into neighbouring countries (BBC News, 2014). While millions escaped, numerous foreign extremists entered and joined the battle (Westcott, 2015) . This volatile mix of events caused the mass migration and subsequent influx of Syrian refugees to be the major focus of both regional and global politics. A variety of domestic opponents, alongside Western supporters, created the 'Friends of Syria' (FOS) group (Al Jazeera, 2012). The Syrian regime continued to latch onto power. Nevertheless, stakeholders sketched out scenarios

[3] Daesh stands for: *al-Dawla al-Islamiyyah fil Iraq wa al-Sham*, which translates to 'The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham' – ISIS.

for the fall of Bashar al-Assad. Others devised power-sharing agreements, which could at least attempt to stop the inhumanities taking place (Rosiny 2013; SWP 2012; PILPG 2012).

External states with a vested interest in Syria chose a group on the ground to support in the hopes that said group would represent their interests in Syria in the future. However, the 'Friends of Syria' group did not show any intention to apply the UN's 'Responsibility 2 Protect' (R2P) regime as carried out in Libya (keeler, 2011). This dissent was primarily due to the Russian and Chinese veto at the UN Security Council (The Guardian, 2011). This global anti-interventionism created an opportunity both the Russian military and Iranian militias to step in to defend Assad's regime, obtaining the biggest chunk of the Levant (Barfi, 2016). This brief analysis outlining the complexity of the situation conveys the urgency to develop a better understanding of the main actors involved in the on-going Syrian crisis.

1.1 Research Objectives, Questions, and Contributions

The issue of who represents the domestic opposition in Syria is one of the primary questions pertaining to the Syrian crisis. In early 2011, analysts looked to the SMB as noteworthy components of the opposition. In August 2011, the organization was recognized as the primary initiator behind the official formation of the oppositional Syrian National Council in Istanbul, Turkey (Al-Droubi,Vinna, 2014). This granted the SMB political prominence and media attention, in turn piquing interest amongst researchers and analysts alike. The history of the SMB was therefore studied in great detail, in particular the organization's difficulties and path to survival (Lefèvre, 2013; Pierret, 2013; Hinnebush, 2012; Landis, 2012; Rubin, 2013; Khatib, 2013). However, most research has been observing the past, with little analysis towards the SMB's reaction and development to the current Syrian crisis from 2011 onwards.

Given the aforementioned political interests in the Syrian conflict and its main actors, this research is expected to generate academic and political interest by unearthing new empirical evidence regarding:

1) The SMB's internal decision-making

2) The SMB's vision for a post-Assad Syria
3) The SMB's relationship within the Syrian opposition body
4) The SMB's interaction with crucial regional and external political actors

These four primary signposts will act as the core premises throughout the research, guiding an in-depth analysis in order to answer the following question:

How did the Syrian uprising impact the SMB, and how was the organization's evolution as a socio-political player in domestic politics influenced by the on-going revolution on Syria's ground?

This case study is significant, not just due to the unique political opportunities that have subsequently arisen, but also due to the SMB's tragic history; that of oppression and grievances as far back as the 1980s. It is firstly argued that the challenges the SMB had to overcome as an organization in exile have equipped both the executives as well as the regular members to deal with the challenges posed and opportunities opened by the Syrian crisis. Residing in a number of countries with varying backgrounds and political ideologies, from Arab states to Europe and the USA, they managed to adopt new organisational skills in the dynamic processes of political and economic transformation. It is further argued that the SMB Old Guard[4] succeeded in maintaining the organization's identity throughout the decades. The MB had a distinct hierarchical structure founded by Hassan Al-Banna in Egypt in 1928. It was extremely organised with a strong emphasis on grassroots development. This structure was only slightly adjusted by the SMB founder, Al-Sibai, in accordance to the Syrian circumstances in the mid 1940s.

This research argues that the dynamics of the unprecedented Syrian humanitarian and political crisis shape the degree to which the SMB, an exiled organisation, is accepted or rejected by the local population. As such, it highlights why it is rather difficult for the SMB, as an exiled organisation, to attain prominence and power in the domestic scene. Other Brotherhood-linked organisations such as Egypt (See Chapter 4) and parties in

[4] The term old guard issued by academics alike Lefèvre to describe the SMB's members of the executive board who have been in those positions over decades due to the existing hierarchical internal organizational system (See also Chapter 5)

other Arab countries were able to build upon decades of grassroots and political activism in their countries.

Two further questions are posed: 1) after 30 years in exile, how did the SMB respond to the opportunities created by the Syrian uprising? 2) How did the SMB seek to reconnect with the Syrian people to gain traction as a leading political player? This study will demonstrate that after thirty years of negative and derogatory stereotyping, from school books to media channels, the primary, long-term challenge for the SMB will be to overcome the resentment and scepticism within Syrian civil society towards the group (Akraa, Killis, 2015; Al Bayanouni, Oxford, 2015; Hannoura, Killis, 2015; Salem, London, 2014).

Moreover, this study reveals the SMB's difficulty in achieving an international, or even broad regional, recognition as a political player; the SMB's Islamic-based ideology has been questioned by global power states. Due to the wide spectrum of Islamic ideologies, the SMB found themselves outside the scope of acceptability from a variety of different groups and nations. They are deemed too moderate for the Wahhabi[5]-influenced Saudis, too Islamic for democratically-ruled Western states, too sectarian for the Shia-led Iranian Mullahs, and simply too religious for the broad scales of powerful political secularist actors such as Russia and China (The Guardian, 2016). This research highlights how and why these kaleidoscopic observations took the SMB by surprise, as they may have hoped that their socio-political and intellectual identity was used as a basis for potential partnerships amongst the opposition.

Having analysed these two major obstacles, this research will also argue that those facts affected the organization's internal understanding of how to efficiently and diplomatically handle these emerging multi-layered dynamics. The younger generation therefore demanded internal reforms, viewing the internal structure as inflexible, archaic, and out-dated. This study sheds further light on the organization's internal decision-making processes, which proved to be underdeveloped, forcing ordinary members to

[5] The term Wahabi belief or Wahabism is a narrow Islamic Sunni belief, which define Islam and Sharia law in a strict manner. The name Wahabism originated from its founder Mohamad ibn Abdel-Al Wahab (in the 18th century) who fought beside Mohamad ibn Saud to establish the today existing Islamic ruled Monarchy of Saudi Arabia.

devise plans and make decisions under time-restraints. Reform-oriented members thus applied pressure for constitutional reforms in order to react sufficiently to the dramatically changing dynamics on the ground.

Building upon this analysis, this research will further assert that in such challenging periods, the SMB requires sustainable coordination of both social fabrics: The Old Guard's 'Wisdom' and the youth's dynamic vitality. Explanations are given as to why the SMB's leadership nonetheless decided to postpone key steps towards internal reforms, as demanded by reformist sections within the membership. Eventually, it will be demonstrated that while the SMB leadership refused to instigate internal reforms, new paths have emerged for ordinary group members to engage in political, social, educational, and humanitarian initiatives, in turn strengthening the SMB's ties within Syrian society.

This study undertook qualitative research in the form of broad varied testimonial interviews. They outlined SMB's initiative of founding and supporting small agricultural projects for rural communities or minor industrial plants. Such projects were intended to provide the families with products to cover sufficient nutrients for the communities' daily survival. Due to instability on the ground, from Assad's attacks to Russian airstrikes (The Guardian, 2016), the projects' outcomes were limited. Moreover, questions arose as to how such projects would be financially sustained. Nonetheless, it demonstrates the SMB's focus on healthcare through establishing fundamental medical commodities alongside equipped functioning surgeries.

In the educational sector however, the SMB gained noteworthy traction, as they liaised with local councils to establish shelters for pupils in abandoned school-buildings. They developed those buildings into orphanages and day-care homes. With continuous supervision and professional care, these schools provided a first-hand curriculum for all levels of school attendees. As tens of thousands of children lost vital years of schooling [6], it was in everyone's best interest to provide for the children. The SMB were therefore granted permission to offer regular educational programs of varying levels for every age

[6] The Cost of War: Calculating the impact of the collapse of Syria's education system on the country's future - Save the Children https://static.guim.co.uk/ni/1427711553264/Save-the-Children-Cost-of-W.pdf

group. This developed to the extent that they were able to offer internationally recognised high school graduate certificates.

This study further explores the SMB's vision to set milestones for a post-Assad Syria. This in turn demonstrates an undeniably positive impact on the SMB's relationship with the broader opposition, as well as its interaction with important regional and international political players. The research explains how these relations evolved and how they were shaped by a desire for greater recognition in both domestic and international politics. Efforts were made with powerful Arab Gulf states as well as possible allies in Turkey. Nevertheless, they fell short in securing positive relations with both pro-Assad Russia and anti-Assad Western democratic governments.

By presenting an in-depth account of how the 2011 uprising shaped SMB governance structures and external relations, this research seeks to make a contribution to the broader theoretical debates in Social Movement Theory on the role and significance of opportunity structures. To understand the post-2011 revolution of the SMB, the political realities of the state opponents of the Arab world over last half century must be taken into consideration. Islamic movements dealt with political opportunity structures that were shaped by forms of authoritarianism of varying levels of tyranny. Therefore, any changes to the political determinants of Islamic activism were evolutionary at best. However, the 'Arab Spring' and the challenges to authoritarianism across the region presented Islamic movements with their first meaningful exposure to dramatic revolutionary change.

This research will explore an empirically challenging concept forwarded by Wickham's analysis, namely that: "Indeed...the portrayal of the mainstream Islamist actors as single-mindedly bent on seizing power to achieve a set of fixed goals is a gross oversimplification - indeed a caricature - that cannot survive close empirical scrutiny"(Wickham, 2013). The thesis will therefore focus on the distinction of the unprecedented dynamic on Syria's ground, as well as the regional and international political and military interventions in Syria that continue to challenge the exiled SMB movement. It encompasses the unique challenges of this organization as an Islamic social movement. It will focus upon how crisis-related dynamics influence the SMB's

evolution as a social-political movement, rather than simply an ideological one. This will be covered by granting particular focus on the treatment of the SMB as an Islamic social movement throughout their exile until today. Multiple dimensions of change within the organization are outlined, especially in relation to their relationship with their nation's civil society as well as their dealings with powerful global actors that continue to have a vested interest in the region.

An essential part of this research examines the impact of each Brother's[7] individual circumstance in exile as well as the subsequent personal learning outcomes of those experiences. The analysis follows the history of the SMB as an Islamic social movement that primarily attracted intellectuals before its abolishment by Ba'athist law (Law No. 49 introduced on the 7th of July 1980). The SMB was thereafter labelled a terrorist group, and members were stripped of their rights to live freely in Syrian civil society. Many SMB members were granted asylum for decades in both Arab and Western countries, successfully integrating into those societies(Fattah, 2006)[8]. The SMB were thus taken aback at the negative reaction of those countries following the current uprising. The history of the SMB and its relationship with the international community is therefore a crucial part of this study.

While maintaining the importance of studying Islamic movements from afar, given their complex nature, a large part of this research is based on empirical data collected directly from interviews with key stakeholders from within the SMB and from beyond its ranks. In-depth information has been gathered in order to explore whether or not the SMB has been able to remobilize the urban people. However, the conducted interviews have also shed light on the question of whether the Brothers have been able to step forward and fill the much-disappointed and clearly underprivileged rural population. Primary methods include supplying ad hoc relief and addressing long-term matters which the Assad regime previously enjoyed a monopoly over, such as education. This has been upheld as an important addition to this study as it appeared to have provided the Syrian Brothers with the capability to deal with a variety of upcoming challenges during the revolution.

[7] An official member of the Muslim Brotherhood is called a "Brother"
[8] Many SMB leaders were living in Europe

1.2 Research Design and Methodology

This research is comprised of a single case study – the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. Findings are comprised of a range of primary and secondary resources collated between 2013 and 2017. The core analysis is based on broad data collection gathered through more than 40 semi-structured interviews. Interviews were not held with people inside Syria or in restricted refugee camps due to security concerns and required authorisations from relevant host governments. Given that the situation in Syria changed dramatically post 2011, it became questionable whether the internal statues of the SMB is still fit for purpose since its founding. Thus, the aim is to contribute through primary research to the on-going academic discussion about the SMB as a network of members and as an Islamic social movement. This is vital as in analysing "Islamist Social Movements", Wiktorowicz noted that "[P]ress reports, organizational charts, and secondary material are often insufficient for delineating and studying these networks" (Wiktorowicz, 2004).

Resources at the University of Leeds have been utilised, such as the academic connection with the Syrian Brotherhood and other Syrian oppositional actors. Fluency in the Arabic language and a strong knowledge of the Syrian culture facilitated the ability to conduct interviews in a suitable environment. Not requiring a translator for interviews accelerated progress in interviewing Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leaders, spokesmen, and influential and widely recognized members within the organization. Knowledge of Islamic tradition further facilitated the interview process, as religious requirements were catered to, such as prayer times or special occasions (Ramadan, Eid, and so on).

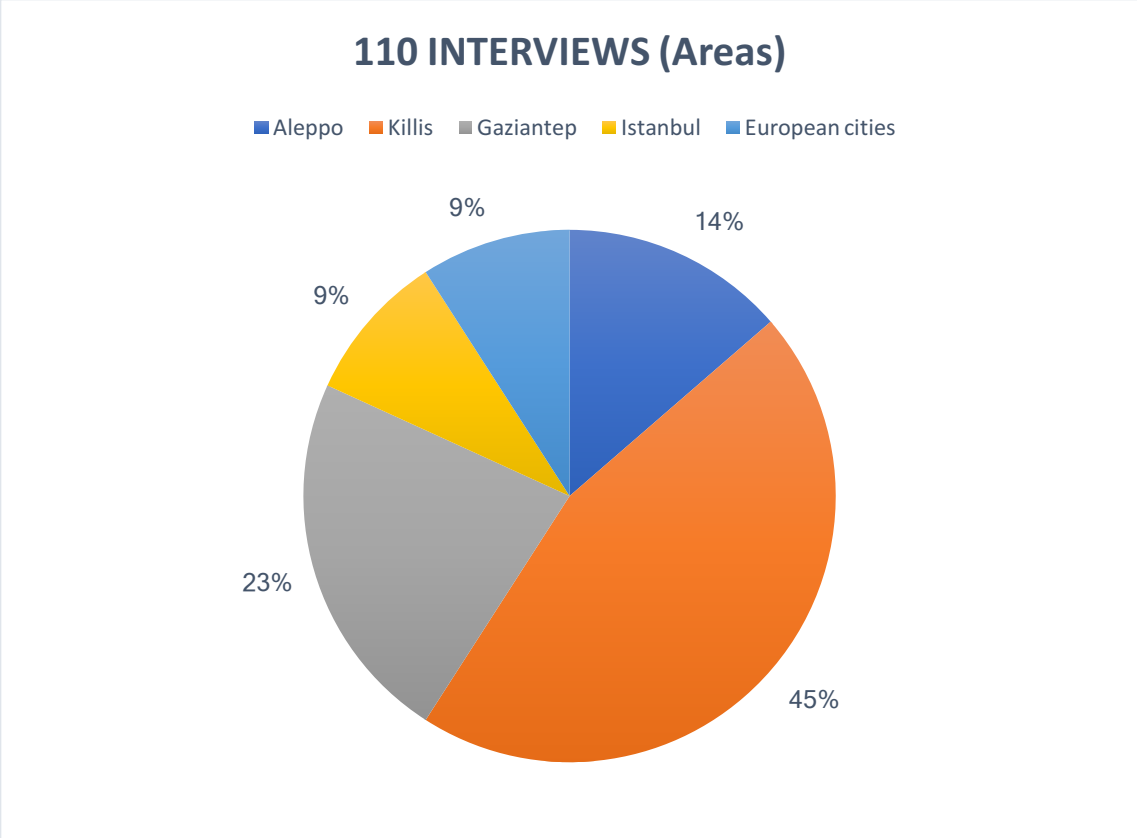

Chart 1: Places were interviews were conducted.

An in-depth understanding of Syrian history in general, and the history of the SMB in particular, were appreciated and respected, thereby facilitating openness and transparency. These interviews were invaluable in conveying the political vision of the SMB not only to international actors, but also to the Syrian people themselves. In order to get the widest possible perspective, interviews were conducted in a number of different locations where key stakeholders reside. This also addressed the issue of travel restrictions some respondents had, due to lack of visa permits as an example.

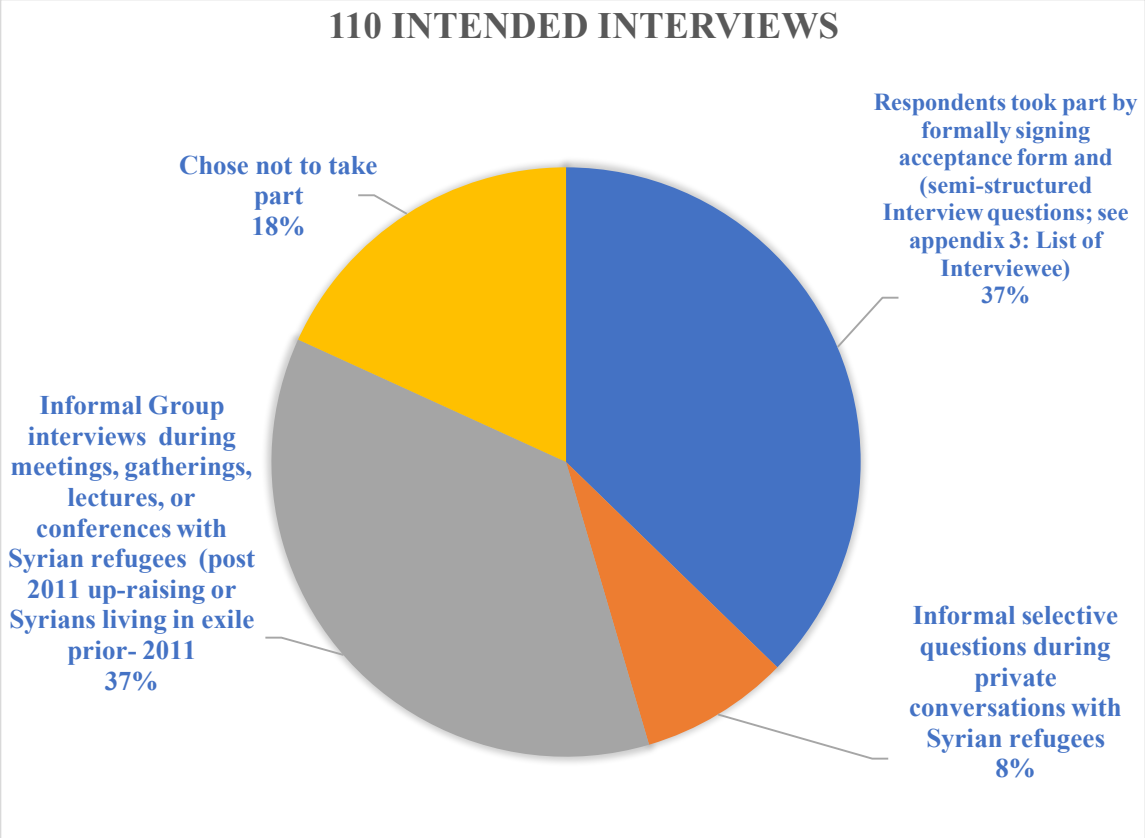

Chart 2: Intended interviews in percentage.

The research participants have been carefully selected. The approach has three parallel paths. The first set of respondents were selected by virtue of them making appearances in publications about SMBs or other Syrian oppositions and intellects who either have been living inside Syria, but left post 2011 or who have been for years /or decades living in exile. The second path involved identifying popular Syrian respondents by visiting webpages of newly formed Syrian organizations, mostly NGOs or bloggers , as well as the webpage of the SMB organization and political parties. The third path involved building upon existing personal connections to Arab journalists, human rights lawyers, and prominent Syrian activists in Europe. This was done either by being introduced personally at scheduled meetings or lectures in the UK ie .in London, Manchester or in Turkey i.e. in Gaziantep. However, through a snowball effect, after providing the intended participants with information about my personal background as well as the aim and the institution of this research, eventually a wide network of connections were formed. Leaders of the SMB, as well as spokesmen and general members of both genders has been identified and contacted. Many of those belonged to groups of different diverse background both ideological and ethnical. Through this access, numerous SMB

executives were interviewed in UK, Austria and in Turkey, showing no objection. Such transparency proved to be key in achieving a holistic understanding of the situation. Younger SMB members were also interviewed, mostly during conferences or lectures in Turkey. Over thirty of the interviewees from this segment demonstrated a positive attitude towards this research, with no hesitation to take part in it. Other participants requested anonymity; primarily due to their serious concerns of safety and treatment of their families under the Assad regime. Others were living in countries that do not hold a positive attitude towards the SMB.

In order to achieve a holistic and balanced approach, one third of the interviews were conducted with other than SMB opposition figures such as, commentators, academics, and intellectuals of the Syrian civil society (see semi-structured questionnaire appendices). Not all information obtained was a result of formal interviews, were participants had to sign certain forms, the research gained great insights from questions and discussions at quite informal private invitations, gatherings, or even Ramadan Breakfasts. Informal consent was obtained with regards to all information, as it is also been built upon mutual trust (see for example appendix 2). This trust lead to valuable deep and insider perception eventually leading to the research significant findings regarding the SMB's evolution through revolution.

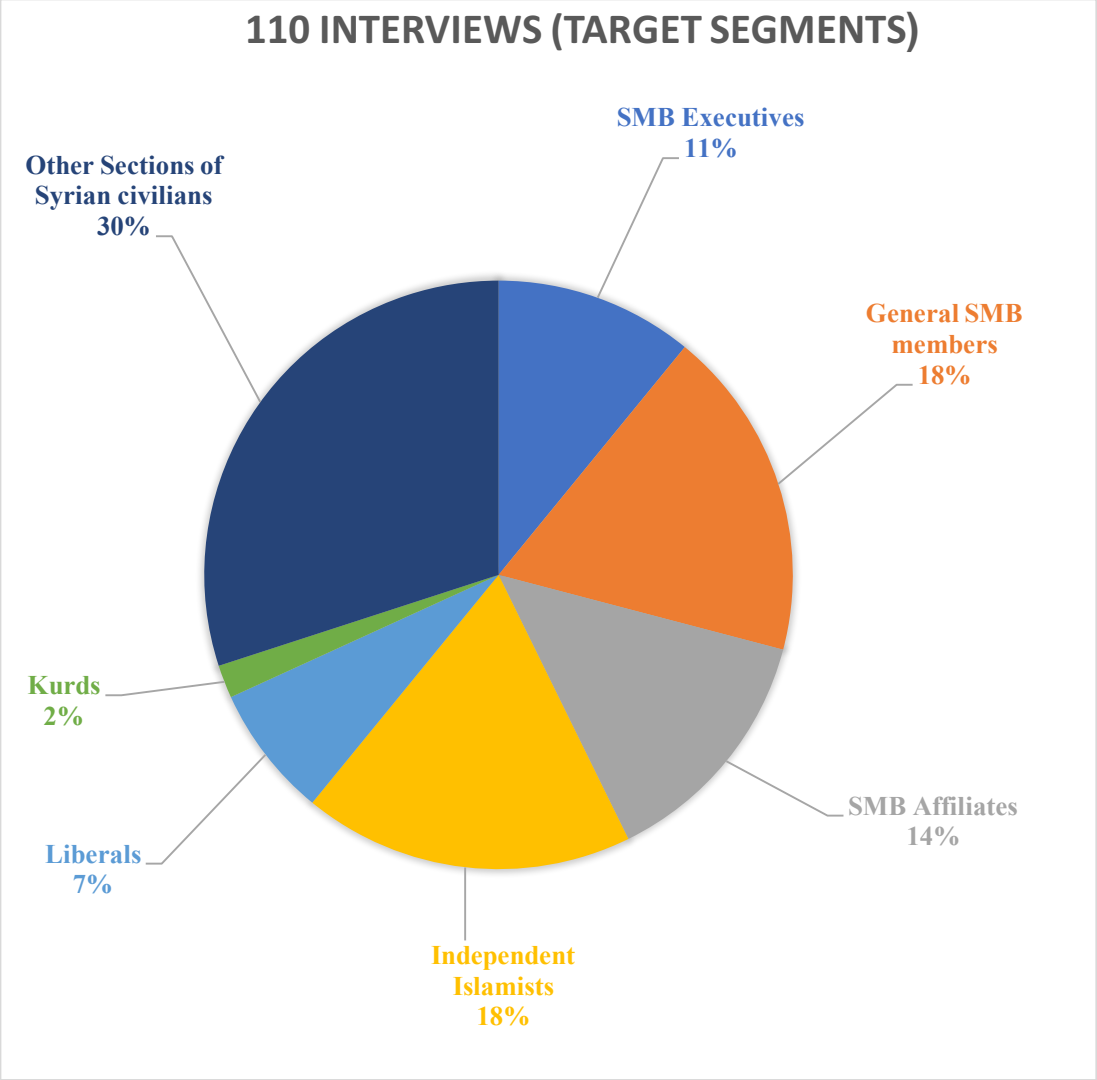

Chart 3: Shows the conducted interviews from segments of the Syrian society

All interviews conducted are based on the University of Leeds's guidelines for ethical research. Approval has been sought and granted from the AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee. All interviews with above-mentioned research participants were conducted to the principles of good practice and integrity adopted by the University of Leeds. The ethical issues identified in this research pertain first and foremost to the safety and wellbeing of the research participants. To ensure this, a number of precautions were taken:

First, all interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis. During the interview process, the interviewees were not persuaded or urged to answer any of the questions. The interviews were terminated as soon as the subject requested. Second, the research

participants were informed, in full, as to the nature and relevance of this research. Their involvement was explained before commencing the interview, and a written synopsis of the research and its aims was given to them prior to the interview. Furthermore, they were requested to sign a participant consent form with their own duplicate copies. Third, hard copies of the interview questions were sent prior to the interview in order to ensure that they are comfortable with the content. Fourth, if the participant requested to stay anonymous, procedures have been put in place in both the research and the to anonymize the interviewee. Those will be kept in confidential records. Fifth, as agreed by the AREA committee at the University of Leeds, in the case of any politically sensitive issues that have risen or might arise throughout the circumstances in Syria concerning the participant's personal safety or his/her family members, the interview will be treated with extra care and awareness. The person concerned will be anonymized upon the research participant's request.

Nevertheless, there have indeed been a number of challenges in conducting this research that needed to be overcome. First, coordinating meetings with subjects in various countries over three years required careful planning. Interviews were conducted in the UK (London, Oxford, Manchester, and Leeds), but also in Turkey (Istanbul, Gaziantep, and Killis). In order to succeed, discipline and precise schedules were imperative. Efficient travel plans were needed to limit travel times and reduce expenses, which were self-financed. Second, though interviews with leaders, elites, and numerous members of different levels the Syrian society were conducted on the ground in Arabic, translating and reflecting those interviews into English in a professional manner has been an equally time-consuming task.

Most notably, the biggest obstacle to this research project has been the rapid and unpredictable changing political dynamic in Syria as well as the international community. As a result, at several instances, the analysis was adapted and reconsidered, especially as the role of the SMB in the revolution continued to evolve. The focus of the study begins in 2011, the start of the uprising. Since then, a number of significant events forced the focus of the study to change or else face inapplicability. Such examples include Russian military intervention, the election of Trump, the appearance of ISIS, the creation of an interim government, and the disappearance of some armed groups. All of

these changes had a significant impact on the SMB, whether directly or indirectly. Following the conflict closely was therefore vital to efficiently adapt the thesis while maintaining a structured approach.

1.3 Thesis Structure

The above-mentioned issues have been interwoven in a manner that facilitates the understanding the Syrian situation post-2011 through the lens of the SMB. This has been done by contextualising the present situation through the events of the last thirty years. The future of the SMB is also discussed, as the organization continues to be relevant. This carefully chosen approach delves into the SMB's position on domestic, regional, and international socio-political issues. Within some sub-topics of this research, a broader theoretical framework of Social Movements applicable to the SMB was recalled in order to further understand how grassroots movements lead themselves into powerful political organizations.

In order to build on already existing material while creating an original contribution, Chapter 2 conducts a thorough literature review of social movements in the MENA region, with a focus on those movements with an Islamic reference. This then sets the scene for Chapter 3, which examines the theoretical framework that will be applied to the study of the SMB as a social, religious, and political actor. To understand the present dynamics of the SMB, both locally within Syria and internationally, it was important not to overlook its history. Chapter 4 therefore briefly analyses the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the original Brotherhood. This helped contextualise the formation of the SMB which transpired thereafter in Syria. It highlighted the 'Hama massacre' of 1982 (SHRC, 2006) as a crucial turning point for the SMB, as it led to the exile of most of its members followed by their asylum in Europe.

Chapter 5, 6, and 7 then constitute the empirical heart of the research. Chapter 5 draws on a series of in-depth interviews with key actors from within the SMB alongside figures outside the SMB in order to study the group's internal discussions and response to the Syrian crisis. As such, this chapter explores all the basic elements of the SMB's internal statutes, followed by a critical analysis of its post-2011 applicability. This is an essential procedure for its internal decision-making process. As a result, two potential

organizational schemes have been identified to offer an alternative, a fast track option for members to join and/or changing the organisation's form into an NGO.

Chapter 6 then focuses on the SMB's behavioural responses to the Syrian uprising on the domestic level. It explains in detail the SMB's humanitarian outreach and social service activities, attesting to their humanitarian commitment towards their fellow Syrians. The chapter also establishes that the social and humanitarian work of the SMB was not the only procedure by which they were appreciated in the minds of the Syrian people, but that they engaged in a broad range of political activities. The most notable of such activities was the launching of the *Wa'ad* Party in order to advance the SMB's democracy and rights discourse in Syria. It further illustrates how the SMB, by focusing on substantial political options for the future of Syria, clearly outline their views against establishing non-state brigades in Syria.

Moving beyond Syria, Chapter 7 focuses on the response of the SMB at the regional and international level. This is done by indicating how the Syrian regime and its international allies reacted to the 2011 Syrian youth uprising. International politicians' responses will be cited, as will humanitarian organizations' reports and UN statements. Further, this chapter will present the SMB within the wider realm of opposition politics in Syria. It will illustrate why the SMB have no possibility of accreditation from both regional and international powers. Though the organization portrays itself as a political organization with self-embodied democratic visions, it nonetheless represents an Islamic ideology with strong sharia undertones. It therefore will not be recognized as a partner in the political landscape. As a result, the powerful stakeholders in Syria have a significant role in deciding the Brother's political fate.

Chapter 8 concludes the analysis, highlighting the distinct and exceptional journey of the SMB. It reviews the socio-political challenges the SMB faced as an organization, illustrating the opportunities granted to SMB members to bridge the gap with Syrian civil society after decades in exile. The chapter then summarises the group's evolution throughout the Syrian revolution, noting that it could still be described as a 'success story' of sorts. After highlighting the plight of the SMB members for over thirty years,

the research concludes that their achievement of not only remaining relevant but acting as major players in the revolution is a noteworthy feat.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 analysed the literature surrounding social movements, which forms the basis of this study. It explained concepts that are essential to understanding the SMB's commitment to the cause, as well as its recent evolution. This chapter aims to explore the literature surrounding the SMB. It also aims to fill some of the gaps in the existing literature regarding Muslim organizations in general, and the SMB in particular, by offering a detailed account of how movements such as the SMB react to revolutionary upheavals and are shaped by them. The following review will explain more clearly the research aims of this study.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first explores publications regarding the MB as a socio-political force, which have aimed to examine the organization's historical, social, and political impact around the world (excluding Syria). The second section analyzes the existing literature discussing the SMB's moderate Islamic ideology and its democratic agenda. Finally, the third section presents the literature surrounding the SMB as an Islamic organization, showing that much of the literature thus far on this topic has focussed on the SMB's survival following the Hama Massacre of 1982. Particular attention will be paid to the literature discussing the SMB's role in the Syrian uprising post-2011. The concluding sub-chapter will summarize the findings and the potential benefits of this research, including its closing of the knowledge gap regarding the SMB's structure and its role as a socio-political force throughout the Syrian revolution.

2.2 The Muslim Brotherhood as a Socio-Political Actor

Academics have demonstrated a keen interest in the MB since Hassan Al-Banna founded the Islamic social movement in 1928[9] (Commins, 2006; Hamzawy and Brown, 2010; Kramer, 2011; Mitchell and Voll, 1993; Pargeter, 2010; Weismann, 1993, 2005) . The repression, persecution, and execution of prominent MB members in Egypt was of particular interest following the rise to power of Gamal Abdel Nasser and his militaristic

[9] Richard Mitchell called the organization a "society" (Mitchell, 1969).

regime in 1952 (S. Cook, 2013). In the early 1990s, as will be shown Chapter 4, a large body of social scientists begun analysing Islamic movements in general across the Arab world.

The Arab Spring of 2011 led to a renewed focus on the region, with most scholars focussing on identifying its causes and how social media allowed it to progress (Filieu, 2011; Gerlach, 2011; Gelwin, 2012; Krämer, 2011; Ramadan, 2012; Ramadan, 2013; Perthes, 2011). This study aims to explore the SMB's role in the Syrian uprising, as well the effects that the Syrian uprising had on the SMB as an organization and a socio-political force. By doing so, this research aims to add to existing literature on the topic, including Krämer's (2010) biography of Hassan Al-Banna, the MB's founder, and Zollner's (2013) biography of Al-Hodaibi, who is often viewed as being a controversial MB leader. Thus, this research aims to further the work of those who have begun to focus on the changes in structure, aims, activities, and public discourses of the MB and its affiliates across the Arab world (Browers 2009; Krämer, 2011; Zollner, 2011; Bush, 2012; Drieger, 2010).

Some scholars have attempted to explain how the MB's branches have survived as 'clandestine' organizations within their home countries (Metzger, 2011). The SMB utilized the experience and resources that they gained whilst in exile to re-establish themselves as a socio-political force in post-2011 Syria. Landis (2012) and Rubin (2007; 2010) have explored the case of the SMB, but they have not provided an in-depth analysis of its evolution in the context of the Syrian revolution - something this study aims to do.

2.3 The SMB, as a Moderate Islamic Organization, and its Democracy Rhetoric

To understand the SMB's evolution throughout the Syrian crisis, as well as its ability to handle challenges, the MB's dogma and principles need to first be examined. John O. Voll and claim that, from a global perspective, the efforts of Muslims to develop viable forms of Islamic democracy could have a huge impact on the globe with the introduction of democratic Islamic institutions. Wolf (2008) states that the MB, as an Islamic

organization, makes use of democratic discourse in one way or another. In many cases, they have taken part in election campaigns and have contested parliamentary seats.

A difference of opinion exists regarding the motives of this participation in elections, and regarding why MB-affiliated organizations are so often successful in Arab countries when they do take part. Gudrun Krämer (2010) links the success of Islamic organizations in elections directly to their abilities to address the "demand for actions and the perceived need to reach some kind of accommodation with the authorities." The MB's reputation hinges primarily on a long track record of providing social services to citizens where governments have failed to do so. There is limited research that has focussed on the MB's integration into the transiently open political arenas of a number of Arab countries in the 1980s and 1990s. A growing number of comparative studies have also focussed on the MB as an Islamic political party, or on their members as independent MPs. Many authors have investigated how the MB and its affiliates have managed to join election-orientated political parties (Brown and Hamazawy, 2010; Clark, 2006; Langohr, 2001; Ozzano, and Cavatorta, 2013).

In Syria, the regime has openly repressed the SMB; membership of the SMB was sufficient to legally incur the death penalty. Therefore, the SMB faced greater challenges than their counterparts in other Arab countries. Studies examining the MB's structure and its strategies of civil engagement may offer clues to help understand the SMB's choices post-2011. Though direct comparisons are difficult to make, this research will frequently draw on the recent experiences of the MB in other Arab countries, including their remarkable rise and fall within the space of one year in Egypt (Wickham, 2013; Zahid, 2012; Zollner, 2013; Landis, 2013; Hinnebush, 2013; Ruby, 2013). This is essential because, as the analysis will show, the SMB has been paying close attention to the actions – and their consequences – of their MB counterparts in other Arab countries.

As well as discussing the SMB's effect on post-crisis Syria and post-crisis Syria's effect on the SMB, this study also aims to contribute to the debates surrounding how governmental actions in Arab countries push MB-affiliated organizations towards moderation or radicalization. The analysis in this study shows that this question is not easily answerable in the case of Syria due to the SMB's exile for three decades. This

exile meant that the SMB did not interact with local institutions in the same way other MB organizations did, and so its exact stances during this time, as well as the Syrian population's past opinion of it, is difficult to gauge.

Kraetzschmar et al. (2013) detail the types and dynamics of cooperation amongst opposition groups in response to regime actions ranging from inclusion and tolerance to outright repression. Kraetzschmar et al. (2013) show that: "the myriad of ways in which opposition groups have sought to coalesce into broader reform coalitions" has challenged the governments of both monarchical (e.g. Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco) and republican (e.g. Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen) regimes, pressuring them into democratic reform. This pressure has included electoral pacts, local government coalitions, broader opposition alliances, and networks of resistance.

Schwedler's (2006; 2007; 2011) in-depth research into the internal decision-making processes of Islamic movements has shown how political participation has made the MB more moderate in monarchical Jordan, but more radical in republican Yemen. The political climate in Syria is a lot less benign that that of the slowly liberalizing Arab autocracies of the 1990s and early 2000s. However, the research on cross-ideological cooperation amongst opposition groups is still largely relevant when discussing the SMB post-2011.

2.4 Literature on the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood

Until 2012, there was little published work shedding light on the SMB. The SMB's evolution post-2011 differed hugely from that of their counterparts in Egypt and Tunisia. Compared to other MB organizations, the SMB, until the recent Syrian crisis, had received little attention. International and Arab think tanks and analysts are now investigating how the SMB emerged as the most influential organization within the Syrian National Coalition, despite having been exiled for three decades (GIGA, 2013; United States Institute of Peace, 2013; Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2013; Carnegie Endowment 2013; Rosiny, 2013; Lefèvre, 2013). Some authors have already begun to predict what is to happen following the fall of the Assad regime, and the role the SMB could play in the aftermath (Heydemann et al., 2013). Analysing the SMB's actions

whilst bearing in mind its unique structure and traits will serve to provide new insights to the situation in this analysis.

Hinnebush (2012) mentions that Islamic organizations are able to use religion to attain power. He argues that this is true in Syrian society because the majority of the Syrian population are devout Muslims. Lefèvre (2013) delineates the obstacle-ridden historical path of the SMB, as well as in-depth details regarding its founding leaders, structure, and the framework of its political activities; he claims that they are preparing for a comeback following their expulsion from Syria after the 1982 Hama Massacre by Hafez and Rifaat Al-Assad. Pierret (a2013, b2013) uses a different approach to explain the SMB's position within Syria. He examines the historic relationship between the Sunni *Ulama* (religious scholars) and the Ba'ath Party, which has been governing Syria since 1963. He recognizes the SMB as being the most important, contemporary, organized, Islamic social movement, and he maps their historic path throughout the political power struggle with the autocratic Syrian regime.

Some analysts argue that due to the fact that the SMB functioned as an opposing body to the Syrian regime whilst in exile, their actions need to be viewed with an understanding of domestic/regional politics in mind (Abdul-Ahad, 2013; Hassan, 2013; Heydemann, 2013; Landis, 2014; Rosiny, 2013). Their analyses take into consideration the influence of well-known, wealthy regional actors, such as the rulers of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, on the SMB. Other authors have analysed the Shia Iranian government and the Lebanon-based 'Hezbollah' fighters' support of the Alawites in Syria, including their supplying of war machines and logistics experts to the Assad regime (Shanahan, 2013). However, no peer-reviewed publication has covered the relationships that existed between Western powers and the exiled SMB.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

Very little research has been carried out to unravel the structure and analyse the behaviour of the SMB. Much published literature discusses the Egyptian MB, and the small amount that does discuss the SMB focuses primarily on their historical rise to power and their relationships with regional powers. Post-2011, however, there has been a

large increased in the volume of published literature regarding the SMB, acknowledging its regional influence despite its exiled status.

Syria's current crisis is unique in many ways, bringing with it unprecedented challenges and opportunities. No published papers studying the SMB's evolution throughout this crisis were found. This study aims to adopt a novel perspective for analysing the SMB. By providing a focussed and structured analysis of the SMB post-2011, it is hoped that its regional and international activities, internal structure, and decision-making process will be elucidated, as well as the demands placed upon it and its plans for the future.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

The term 'social movement' is defined as the voluntary and deliberate effort of organizing individuals to work as a group to make a change in society. According to Denton Morrison, "social mobilization involves two steps: consensus mobilization and action mobilization" (Morrison, 1971). Social movements are seen as power-oriented as opposed to participation-oriented. This means that the actions of a movement's members serve the movement's wider goals, which may not necessarily benefit the individual member (Morrison, 1971).

The current literature on Islamic movements does not fully appreciate the complexity of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB). This complexity allows researchers to broaden the study of these types of organizations. Therefore, there is a need for a study that analyses the SMB in an appropriate theoretical framework. Using the social movement theory (SMT) defined above, this study will analyse how the SMB has operated and achieved popularity with the Syrian people.

3.2 Key Terms and Concepts

3.2.1 Social Movement Theory as Applied to Islamic Movements

The social movement theory (SMT) provides an appropriate framework to study the SMB. The available literature on Islamic movements has allowed this theory to analyse, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Palestine, and Jordan (Munson, 2001; Robinson, 2004; Sohrabi, 2002) . However, the application of this theory on the SMB is sparse in the literature. The need to analyse the SMB in this way is vital, especially following the 2011 revolution. This section will present why the SMT is a more appropriate theoretical approach to this issue as opposed to other frameworks like 'rational choice' or 'structuralism'(Lindenberg, 1995). Francis Robinson argues that using the SMT to analyse Islamic movements allows a balanced approach when evaluating instances of their contentious collective action (Robinson, 2004). This provides a middle ground between the rational choice and structuralism schools of analysis. Both rational choice and structuralism analyse social movements differently.

Two important factors distinguish these two frameworks: their unit of analysis, and the level of volunteerism acknowledged.

In explaining collective action, structuralism studies large units in order to understand large outcomes such as a social revolution. These large units may include states or even the international political system. A change in these units can result in 'revolutionary violence'. Structuralism studies these changes by looking at dependency models as well as the impacts of globalization on collective revolutionary violence (Wallerstein, 1989). In her book States and Social Revolutions, Theda Skocpol provides a comparative analysis of revolutions that have occurred in France, Russia, and China (Skocpol, 1979) .Skocpol argues that the factors that bring about social revolutions are few and predictable. This is the same for the pathways that these revolutions follow (Little, 2014). Despite this, Skocpol acknowledges the complexities of Islamic movements after witnessing the Iranian Revolution in the late 1970s. Several components of the Iranian Revolution as well as its causal factors did not fit Skocpol's argument of the predictability of social revolutions. Skocpol thus labels this significant event in Iran's history as "a sort of a social revolution" (Skocpol, 1979).

The rational choice theory differs from structuralism in that it uses the individual as a unit of analysis. Unlike structuralism, it does not view groups, states, and systems as decision makers. It is only up to individuals to make the choices that affect a collective action such as a revolution (Popkin, 1979).The unit of analysis used in the SMT is the social movement group itself. The theory views the individual as a part of the group that makes decisions in dynamic contexts and political networks (Davis et al., 2005). At the same time, the theory recognizes the importance of the large structures in which the movement operates. It also recognizes that changes to these structures can create the conditions that allow for a collective action. In Syria – and the Middle East in general – communities and family relations play an important part in individual perceptions of political movements (Hopwood, 2013). It is therefore important to study social movements through the lens of both structural changes as well as individuals that act within these changes. In other words, "not all similar structural changes lead to similar political outcomes; how groups take advantage of change is critical to understanding the difference in outcomes". Thus, the SMT becomes an appropriate framework to utilize when investigating Islamic movements such as the SMB.

The second factor in distinguishing sociological frameworks is the level of volunteerism considered. Structuralism does not view volunteerism as significant in contributing to large political changes: “No single acting group, whether a class or an ideological vanguard, deliberately shapes the complex and multiply determined consists that bring about revolutionary crises and outcomes”. On the other hand, the rational choice school of thought views volunteerism as an important part of bringing about collective action and subsequent structural changes (Goldstone 1994).

The SMT strikes a balance between these two opposing frameworks. It states that, while structural changes occur outside the control of individuals, they do not dictate its outcomes. The theory acknowledges the importance of individual agency. However, this agency is restricted within the dynamic social context in which it develops (Berejikian, 1992). The SMT thus accepts the importance of volunteerism in promoting collective action (Wiktorowicz, 2001) Chapter 4 will explore the value of volunteerism in attracting people to Islamic movements like the SMB.

Throughout this study, the SMT will be used as a framework to analyse the SMB. Three variables from this theory will be used. The first of these variables is the analysis of the impact of structural changes on collective action. Changes in political opportunity structures arise from different sources. These include changes in international political systems, regional regime changes, national legal changes, or within the group itself (Mati et al., 2016). Post-2011, Syria witnessed all these changes to an extent. This led to the appearance of new political opportunities. This study will explore how the SMB seized these political opportunities in a structurally changed Syria.

The second variable from the SMT focuses on the mobilizing structures used by the group being studied. These structures can be mobilized in three ways: through informal (e.g. social and family networks), formal (e.g. political parties), or illegal channels (e.g. underground terrorist organizations). Social movements recruit like-minded individuals through one or more of these channels. Doing so allows them to mobilize contentions in a population while solving the free rider problem (Robinson, 2004). However, it must be noted that the legality of mobilizing structures differs between Arab and Western nations. In Syria, for example, formal mobilizing structures such as political parties were outlawed under both Assad regimes. Prior to Hafiz Al-Assad’s regime, however, they

were considered legal. Using the above terms to categorize mobilizing structures might thus present a challenge when evaluating the SMB.

The third variable from the SMT is the use of 'cultural framing'. This variable is not used in either the structuralism or the rational choice frameworks. Cultural framing highlights the importance of culture in shaping the ideology of a movement and its members. Every society's cultural toolbox contains a variety of stories, symbols, and histories (Swidler, 1986). This toolbox is used to construct a set of values which may then be interpreted differently by different groups. For example, complete subservience to a governor is considered a cultural and religious imperative by some religious groups in the Middle East. This notion was promoted by many regimes in the Arab world – Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria – to deter their people from protest (Al-Alawi, 2011). The idea of obeying unjust or incompetent governance was challenged by countless oppositional movements during the Arab Spring, including those with Islamic ideologies like the SMB (Talhamy, 2012).

In summary, the SMT is an appropriate theory to study contentious collective action by the SMB. It stands as a middle ground between the structuralism and rational choice schools of thought. The SMT uses groups as its unit of analysis, while acknowledging that volunteerism contributes to collective action to an extent. This theory is criticized for lacking the accuracy and clarity of the other schools of thought. Nevertheless, it still provides a useful tool to robustly analyse contentious collective action (Csecsődi, 2013).

The choice of SMT is informed by two broader considerations: First, social movement theory has increasingly been accepted among social scientists as an effective theoretical lens for dealing with Islamic movements which have received considerable academic and media attention. This is not withstanding the fact that some such as Mejjer's have concerns that those movements "[yet] have been so little understood" (Meijer, 2005; p:279). Second, by choosing this popular lens the research could present an important contribution by increasing the chance of making the findings of the SMB' evolution, relevant for those scholars more interested in broader regional or even global comparisons. The benefits of bringing together SMT and the study of Islamic movements are twofold: First, scholars of Islamic movements (e.g. Bayat, 2005; Secor, 2001; Wiktorowicz, 2004) have recognized the contribution this theoretical lens can

make towards ensuring a broader academic rigour and wider academic relevance of the remarkable increasing number of studies of Islamic movements. While theory building is in and of itself not an objective of this research, Wiktorowicz (2004) has rightly pointed out that the tendency of many applications of SMT to Western contexts does limit the potential for further theory development. In short, by applying SMT this research of the `SMB set apart from the descriptive and/or historical analysis of the SMB offered by other academics, alike Lefèvre, Khattib, or Perrier; and instead intends to use a path which, according to Roel Meijer (2005), may be used to produce original, "brilliant insights" into how contentious politics play themselves out in a Muslim majority political context.

As acknowledged above, the challenge for this analysis' use of SMT has been the fact that SMT scholars like Charles Tilly, Dough McAdam, and Sidney Tarrow in the United States and later on Hans-Peter Kriesi and Bert Klandermans in Europe designed this theory in the context of Western societies (Meijer, 2005; p:280). Yet, Karl- Dieter Opp insists that while SMT might have originally been formulated in the context of studying specific groups or types of individuals, "like the peace, environmental, anti-nuclear and civil rights movements" (Opp, 2009; p:40) it has the potential to "capture a rather wide class of very specific esplanade" (Opp, 2009; p:44).

At first thought, this research chose to follow the well-established SMT mainly adopted by Tilly (1994, 1995a) and by Mc Adam, Mc Carthy, and Zald, (1996a) which has had a significant impact synthesizing the academic's knowledge for three decades. This decision was made as this theoretical framework is applying political opportunities, mobilizing, and cultural framings which should be able to explain the phenomenon of the post 2011 public reappearance of Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB) as an Islamic Social Movement in exile and the dynamics challenging the organization's evolution, like the on-going revolution, in its home country. Yet, carefully consulting the criticism stated by Jeff Goodwin's and James M. Jasper's "Rethinking Social Movements" (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004), the research will not just follow the dominant theoretical structural approach, which emphasizes four main enquiries: a) economic resources, b) political structures, c) formal organizations and finally d) social networks. However, these four variables have not been systematically applied to the SMB, but "extract[ing]

certain mechanism and processes from the existing theory, rather than to adopt[ing] the theory as whole' following Tilly's recommendation (Tilly in Wictorowicz 2004, foreword). In addition, as this research will focus on the ideological, organizational, and operational character of the SMB with an expanded cultural and constructionist approach. This approach explains four further variables in SMT: frames. Identities, meanings, and also emotions which has been based by realistically examining the "Theoretical turmoil among analysts of social movements" (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004; vii).

More fundamentally, the application of SMT can also help overcome some of the major problems with Western analysis of Middle Eastern and Muslim politics, which is the emphasis on Islam as a possible explanatory factor. By studying the cohesion, ideas and actions of Islamic movements through the lens of SMT (Bayat, 2005), academics can produce an insightful analysis of political mobilization (Secor, 2001) that does not fall into the trap of Orientalist reductionism and opens the door toward understanding any Islamic movement as a "dynamic movement without focusing on Islam as the determine factor" (Meijer, 2005; p:287). Therefore, this research is intending to strengthen Meijer's aspect in creating a more neutral, unbiased set of theoretical tools through analysing the dynamics and evolution of the SMB throughout the revolution. In providing an analysis of implied essential elements of contention that exceed the specificity of "Islam" as a system of meaning, identity, and basis of collective action" (Wiktorowicz ,2004; p:3), it will indicate the dynamic, the process, and the framing of the Islamic movement's organization. This outcome could support further researches to avoid mere labelling, which so often is a trend in the research on the Islamic movements (Kurzmann, 2004; Meijer, 2005).

The research benefits from already existing deep inside knowledge on the SMB, which will contribute towards broadening the theoretical applicability of the SMT. In addition, it is in line with Quintan Wiktorowicz's evaluation of empirical research on social movements, (originating in the context of democratic and basically liberal societies) which he regards as limited in the "generalizability of findings and conclusion" (Wiktorowicz 2004, p:4), as well as it hopes to match with Anna Secor's prospect that

"[A]s a result we may come closer to understanding the complexity of the role of Islamic movement play, both locally and globally" (Secor, 2001; p:130).

3.2.2 Political Opportunity Structure

Professor of sociology Doug McAdam observes that collective action is constructed on available political opportunities: "Social movements and revolutions are shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to national context in which they are embedded" (McAdam et al., 1982). Analyses of Islamic movements have struggled to fully understand the Muslim Brotherhood's mobilization since its inception in 1920s Egypt. This holds true with the SMB, if not to a greater extent. This study will utilize the SMT's concept of political opportunity to analyse the SMB. The concept of political opportunity has been used to understand social movements throughout history, including the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (McAdam et al., 1982; Munson, 2001).This concept focuses on the impact of a specific (political) environment on a social movement's evolution. Different actors in this environment can promote or obstruct important political events in the movement's development. When revolutions and protests transpire, changes occur within groups as well as in the political structures they inhabit. The political opportunity model theorises that opportune political conditions need to be present in order to influence mobilization of a group. Using this model, mobilization can also be understood by focusing on the relationship between social movements and the institutions they work within (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; McAdam et al., 1982).

Political opportunity affects different types of collective action. The activities undertaken by social movements depend heavily on the political environment they exist in (Kriesi, 1995). A parallel can be drawn between 1980s Eastern European democratizing movements and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Both emerged under similar conditions after changes to the political opportunity structure (Ekiert, 1996) . The political opportunity model has previously been used to study the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as well as Hamas in Palestine (Munson, 2001; Robinson, 2004). This study will

demonstrate the utility of this model in analyzing the SMB, which was founded under similar conditions – and follows the same ideology – as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (Teitelbaum, 2011a). To do this, it is fundamental to scrutinize the socio-political context in which the mobilization of the SMB has occurred.

Four central aspects of the political opportunity structure are usually discussed: declining state repression, increasing political access, divisions among the elite, and formation of influential alliances(McAdam et al., 1996; Tarrow, 1992). Distinctly, in the case of the SMB, these aspects can be rapidly excluded. The SMB has been repressed and exiled by successive Syrian regimes since 1982 (Afanasieva, 2015). It has had no access to the Syrian political system besides a brief period in 1963 before the *Ba'ath* party came into power (Lefèvre, 2013). The SMB did not receive much support from Syrian elites. As an exiled group, it could not secure support from strong alliances either (Rafael Lefèvre, 2013; Teitelbaum, 2011a). Despite these concerns, the political opportunity structure model may still be used.

This study will identify the core aspects of, and changes to, the political structure that are relevant to the SMB. These include significant historical moments such as the colonization of Syria by the French, the political conflict with Israel, and the revolts against the Assad regime in 1979 and 1982. Post-2011, there have been three political opportunities that appeared for the SMB. First, the SMB has been able to freely conduct its activities in areas controlled by the Free Syrian Army. Second, it was able to form alliances with oppositional parties to create bodies such as the Syrian National Coalition and the Syrian Interim Government, and third, the SMB has established the *Wa'ad* Party, its first political party since the revolution (see Chapters 5 and 6).

3.3 Concluding Remarks

The current thesis aims to provide an analysis of the evolution of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, completed from a perspective that was inspired the social movement theory approach towards Islamism. The empirical knowledge and the data obtained in this thesis from interviews of the Muslim SMB members will be interpreted through the social movement theory. The present thesis has been inspired by those group of experts who analysed Islamism with a social movement theory approach. A unique publication

(Wiktorowicz, 2004) on the subject edited by Quintan Wiktorowitz that brings those scholars together who take a social movement theory approach towards Islamism will serve as an essential basis for the current thesis. Inspired by these authors, in the followings it will be argued that the key of the Muslim Brotherhood's successes relied on their ability to embrace the operational style of social movements through which they have successfully managed to promote their religious and political ideologies (Wiktorowicz, 2004). It will look at whether the SMB has explored and utilised the political opportunity structure that was presented to it, as a social movement, after the Syrian uprising. Therefore, this thesis seeks to contribute to both social movement and political opportunity literature by looking at the case study of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. As the next chapters will look at the SMB internally, nationally, regionally and internationally, these two concepts will be kept as cross cutting issues.

Chapter 4: The History and Organization of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB)

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter set out the theoretical basis for this research. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB), examining how it was established, how it has evolved, and how it organizes today. The SMB has its origins in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), formed in Egypt (Pew Research Center, 2010). Following the successful establishment of the Egyptian MB, Muslim brotherhoods were formed in many other countries the Middle East and the rest of the world, including Syria.

The SMB as it stands today is very different from both the original Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and even the SMB as it was when it was first established. The MB in its original form was accepted as a mainstream political organization, rather than a group of religious fanatics, as the group is often characterized now. To understand the Muslim Brotherhood, we must understand the political environment at the time of its establishment and the role it played in shaping both the Arab Spring and contemporary Middle Eastern politics more generally. This chapter will trace the evolution of the MB, examining how it moved from being a social and educational body, to a political organization with a central role in the politics of the Arab Middle East, North Africa and the rest of the Islamic world.

This chapter examines the MB and SMB's ideological background and the ways in which that background influences both organizations' actions. Since MB's establishment in 1928, political events have shaped its approach as well as its views on concepts such as democracy and pluralism. The Egyptian MB and the SMB have developed in similar ways, but with some notable differences, which this chapter explores. Some of the SMB's actions are in line with the vision set out by Hassan Al-Banna and Mustafa Al-Sibai when they founded the movement in 1928. Their vision has remained a reference point to this day, but there have been multiple changes in approach, from the social, to the radical to the reformist, and much debate within the movement.

This chapter will focus on the foundation, social origins and ideological background of the SMB. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was established in the mid-1940s and continued to develop until the Syrian revolution in 2011. While it has always been independent of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, it shared much of its ideology with the Egyptian organization at its inception. However, it quickly began to participate in mainstream parliamentary politics, which the MB in Egypt did not. The MB was a mass movement, working outside of the parliamentary system, and with a widespread popular appeal across social classes. It was headed by a charismatic, populist leader in its founder Hassan Al-Banna (Mitchell and Voll, 1993). By contrast, the SMB was relatively elitist and lacking in popular appeal Weismann, 2005).

In its early days, the SMB had more in common with other mainstream Syrian political parties than it did with the Egyptian MB (Teitelbaum, 2011a). The SMB sought to unite Syrians around this message, eschewing the country's deep sectarian divisions.

The Muslim Brotherhood offered the Arab region a force to unite behind - a third way that was ideologically somewhere between Arab nationalism and radical Islamism. This was true especially in the years following the World War II and the creation of Israel in 1948. During this period, many in the region questioned the ability of nationalists to provide effective leadership. Political Islam began to develop and play a greater role in the Middle Eastern politics. The Muslim Brotherhood was part of the political Islam movement and a major influence in its development. This chapter will explore how the ideological development of the MB and SMB was influenced by political changes in the Middle East.

4.2 The Founding and Evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) *Ikhwan Al-Muslimin* in Egypt

This section will focus on how the phases of the MB's organizational development went on to influence the SMB's reaction to and role during the Syrian uprising. It will provide an understanding of how the SMB became a critical observer of its Egyptian peers and learned much about how to respond effectively to its own domestic political challenges.

4.2.1 Hassan Al-Banna and the Birth of the Organization

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) was founded by Hassan Al-Banna in Ismalia, Egypt in March 1928 (Mitchell and Voll, 1993; Pargeter, 2010). He was its first General Guide, or leader. He established the Brotherhood because he believed that Islamic teaching at that time was not capable of increasing the status and reach of Islam in Egyptian public life and society. He felt that a greater level of activism was needed among Egyptian Muslims. As a student at Al–Azhar University in Cairo, he began to organize students and started preaching in mosques and in public places. He was influenced by the Islamic ideology of Rashid Rida, Mohamed Abduh, and Ahmed Tymour Pasha (Wickham, 2013). All three were prominent Muslim scholars known for their articulation and dissemination of reformist ideas and their concern with the preservation of Muslim identity and culture (Esposito, 2017).

Following his graduation in 1927, he was appointed teacher of Arabic in the city of Ismailia. At the time, many Egyptians lived a relatively secular lifestyle. Of those who were religious, the majority were Sufi Muslims. Sufi teaching focused primarily on the development of a personal relationship with God and individual religious conduct, rather than on politics. The practice of Islam was limited to Mosques and Islamic schools (Moussalli, 2013).

Ismailia was the home of the headquarters of the Suez Canal Company and with it, a sizable Western community. When Al-Banna started preaching in the city, he warned his audience of workers, students, and civil servants against adopting a Western, liberal lifestyle. He taught that Islam was a way of life, with a role to play across society, including politics. Al-Banna believed that Islam would prove to be the solution to growing social injustice, caused by the weakness of Egypt's domestic politicians and the dominant influence of foreign powers in the country, as was the case with many other Muslim countries in the region (Moussalli, 2013).

In Egypt, this was mainly attributed to the weakness of the Ottoman Empire and its fall in 1924, followed by the colonialist approach of Britain and France after World War and the signing of the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916. The agreement affected nearly every Muslim country in the Middle East, with the exception for the Hijaz and Najd Regions (now Saudi Arabia) and Yemen. However, threats to Egypt's Islamic identity and

attempts to shift the country towards the adoption of Western values were rejected by the vast majority of the Muslim population (Al-Qaradawi, 1999).

The Muslim Brotherhood spread rapidly after its establishment in 1928, with its ideas becoming influential in Egyptian society. Al-Banna ordered the re-starting of the *Al-Manar* Magazine, a monthly religious publication founded by Sheikh Mohammed Rashid Rida, the most prominent Islamic scholar in Egypt at the time. The magazine helped the MB spread its ideology across Egypt, with articles promoting Islamic values and espousing reform of Egyptian society and the Islamic world based on those values (Mitchell and Voll, 1993)

From 1932 to 1933, Al-Banna moved the headquarters of the MB to Cairo. There, he met with his brother, Abdul Rahman Al-Banna, who ran the Society of Islamic Culture. The society became the first branch organization of the MB. In 1934, word of the Muslim Brotherhood had spread to more than 50 towns and villages across Egypt. In each location, the organization worked to provide public services including schools, hospitals and social welfare (Leiken and Brooke, 2007). Historians refer to the Muslim Brotherhood's early period in Ismailia as its first phase, with its second phase coming after its move to Cairo and subsequent spread across Egypt (Ismail, 2010). This second phase also saw the movement spread outside Egypt to neighboring countries, with new members in those countries helping it spread its message further and cement its position in the region (Ismail, 2010).

The MB began to play an important role in Middle Eastern politics. The year 1936 was a particularly significant one. It was in this year that Palestinian resistance and revolution against the British occupation began. The MB heavily promoted the Palestinian cause in Egypt, keen to help their neighbors fight against British colonialism (Swedenburg, 2003). In 1938, Al-Banna made an official declaration at the MB's fifth conference that the organization would be involved in politics. This was unprecedented among Egyptian religious movements, which had until then avoided political involvement in completely (Ismail, 2010).

The strength of the MB's political involvement became evident during World War II. The organization worked to establish a salvation front, alongside other Egyptian political movements and parties. All members of the front shared a common goal: to force the

removal of the British from Egypt by disrupting their lines of supply and subsistence. The front attempted to establish ties with Germany, whose armies were at the time marching towards North Africa on the back of a successful European campaign. When the US joined the war, Germany's fortunes turned and the Allies were victorious, damaging the front's plans (Abdul Halim, 1978).

The MB continued to promote resistance to the British within Egypt. Under the government of Ismail Sidqi Pasha, Egypt retained close ties with the British. Sidqi Pasha advocated a formal Anglo-Egyptian alliance, and signed the Bevin-Sidqi agreement in 1946. This was met with revulsion among many other Egyptian politicians and parties, including the MB (Doran, 1999). The British began to crack down on anti-colonial demonstrators and in response, the MB stepped up their campaign. They demanded the British leave Egypt from 21st February 1946. They declared this a day of public grieving and announced a general strike, led by a committee formed of all major parties in Egypt, except the Al Wafd Party, which refused to participate (Kraemer, 2014).

The MB under Al-Banna and subsequent leaders including Hassan Al-Hudaybi and Umar Al-Tilmisany did not advocate violence (Bae, 2011).Instead, the organization saw involvement in the political process the most effective way to bring about change. Bae states: "The Brotherhood recruits members from lay professionals instead of clerics, and its guiding ideology affirms the belief that an ideal politics will follow, not lead, a society polished by Muslim values, belying the idea of a government that will strong-arm its people toward more overt expression of faith" (Bae, 2011).

Barabara Zollner (2009:9) points out in her work on Hassan Al-Hudaybi that official statements made by the Muslim Brotherhood "clearly emphasize non- violence, with an occasional reference to Du'at la Qudat (Preachers, not Judges) (Zollner, 2009).

Al-Banna ran for election twice. The first was in 1942, but he withdrew his candidacy after reaching an agreement with the Wafd party. The second was in 1945, but he found himself defeated (Zollner, 2009). Despite his lack of electoral success, Al-Banna established the basis for an ideological reconciliation between *Sharia* and the principles of procedural democracy, including pluralism and individual rights, within the MB. For

example, he considered democracy to be compatible with the *Sharia* principles of *ikhtilaf* (difference of opinion), *Al huquq al-shariah* (legal rights) and *Shuraa* (consultation) (Esposito, 2013). However, as Zollner (2009:11) points out, the MB's official stance towards party politics was negative, labelled pejoratively as '*hizbiyya'* (rule of party politics). Al-Banna believed that party politics served to advance the interests of the parties themselves and their members, rather than ordinary people and Islamic teaching.

The Muslim Brotherhood's approach was heavily influenced by the Palestinian uprising. The Brotherhood established a secret military arm, which began sending volunteers to Palestine to join the uprising. Some of these volunteers became involved in acts of violence without direction from the movement's leadership ((Zollner, 2009). This lead to clashes with the Egyptian government, most notably during the government of Prime Minister Mahmoud Al-Nuqrashi in 1948. The Muslim Brothers were linked to a number of assassination attempts and accused by the government of inciting terrorism. This led to the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1948 and the assassination of Hassan Al-Banna on 12 February 1949 (Zollner, 2009:13).

The assassination of Al-Banna led to uncertainty and power struggles in what was left of the Muslim Brotherhood. This uncertainty continued until Hassan Al-Hudaybi was appointed leader. Al-Hudaybi was a retired judge who lacked charisma but had good connections within the Egyptian hierarchy. Under him, the MB was able to reform and continue its work. Soon, a new ideology was to emerge in the movement, led by Sayyid Qutb, who joined the MB in the early 1950s.

4.2.2 The Muslim Brotherhood under Gamal Abdul Nasser

In July 1952, a military group calling itself the 'free officers' staged a coup against King Farouq in Egypt (Gordon, 1999). The coup toppled the Egyptian parliamentary monarchy and established full independence from the British. Although the British had granted Egypt formal independence in 1922, they had retained power in four areas: the security of Imperial communications in Egypt; the defense of Egypt against all foreign aggression; the protection of foreign interests and minorities in Egypt; and the Sudan (Vatikiotis, 1991). The Muslim Brothers played a significant role in that coup

(Crompton, 2014) .Crompton quotes from King Farouq's memoirs, first published in October 1952 in the British Empire News a few months after his abdication: "Who are the men behind Naguib? I will tell you! They are a secret politburo of the Muslim Brotherhood… and that efficient coup d'état which cost me my throne was not planned by Naguib in the candlelight of his simple army tent, but was worked out for him by a group of foreign military advisers" (Crompton, 2014).

Following the coup and the abolition of the monarchy, Gamal Abdul Nasser came to power in 1953, establishing a single-party republican regime. He banned all political parties other than his own. Nasser's charisma resonated with many across Egypt and the rest of the Arab world (Fürtig, 2012). Nasserism was driven not by a single vision for the future, but by a number of ideological components. They included opposition to the British and to the Egyptian monarchy (Awadi, 2004), and the elimination of social injustice. Nasser promised an end to the monarchy and colonial rule, and greater fairness and equality across the country (Fürtig, 2012). Socialist elements (Ayubi, 1996) were mixed with pan-Arab Nationalism and Third Worldism (Zubaida, 1993). Nasser deliberately reached out across the Arab world for support, speaking of the Arab entity, sharing a common language and culture as well as a common goal in the struggle against Western colonial powers (Fürtig, 2012). In 1956, he nationalized the Suez Canal, affording him even greater popularity in Egypt and much of the rest of the Arab world (Ranko, 2015)

The MB was allowed to remain active under Nasser, but it quickly became clear that the MB and Nasser held conflicting views. The MB was offered a cabinet post in Nasser's government, and a leadership position in the Liberation Rally, Nasser's first project for a single party system. The MB refused, unwilling to grant legitimacy to a regime that would not implement Islamic law or retain a multi-party system. The MB believed that the army's power should have ended when the coup was finished and the presidency handed to a civil authority. They had agreement in this from Muhamad Naguib, who performed the coup alongside Nasser. The MB offered him considerable support (Ibrahim, 2004).

The relationship between Nasser and the MB deteriorated quickly. Alongside the communists, the MB organized demonstrations against the regime, demanding a return

to civilian rule. The crisis came to a head when a young member of the MB tried to assassinate Nasser in October 1954 (Scharfe, 2014). The attempted assassination boosted Nasser's popularity and gave him the opportunity to move against the MB, banning it (Cook, 2013, pp. 60–61). Tens of thousands of MB members were arrested, tortured, and placed on trial. Many received lengthy jail sentences with hard labor. Seven, including Hasan Al-Hudaybi, were condemned to death, although Al-Hudaybi's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment (Ibrahim, 2004). Despite this, the MB in Egypt retained a membership of between 250,000 and 300,000. Under the presidency of Anwar Al-Sadat from 1970-1981, the group was made legal once more.

4.2.3 The Nasser Suppression of the MB and the Radicalization of the Organization

Nasser's move against the MB continued throughout 1955. The majority of its members were executed, arrested, or exiled to other Arab countries. Those in prison or in exile continued to stay in contact with each other, and the movement retained some of its power base as a result. Sayyed Qutb began to emerge as leader during this time (Cook, 2013, p. 86). This period of persecution brought about new lines of intellectual thought in the MB, influenced by their treatment at the hands of the government. It also meant that the MB looked further outward, away from Egypt and towards the rest of the Arab world. It established branches in Syria, Sudan, Lebanon, Tunisia and Algeria. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, MB members were released from jail under the leadership of Anwar Sadat. Sadat himself was executed in 1981 by militant Islamists.

4.2.4 The MB under Sadat

In 1971, Anwar Sadat became president of Egypt. He immediately felt the force of opposition from both Nasser's supporters and those on the left. He turned to Islamic groups, including the MB, to help balance this opposition and cement his own position. He gave the MB and other Islamic groups greater freedom of expression, as part of his process of "de- Nasserization" (Edgar, 1987). In general, the MB and other Islamic groups welcomed their new alliance with Sadat. However, some began to move against the regime as early as 1972. In 1977, the Islamic Liberation Organization attempted a coup against Sadat, which failed. Its leaders were executed and most of its members

imprisoned. Later in 1977 another group, *Gama'at Al-Muslimin* (also known as *Al-Takfir Wa al-Hijra*) moved against Sadat with violence (Esposito, 2013, p. 239).

The MB itself was not involved in the violence from either group. The leaders of both groups were former MB members, but with no evidence of any formal connection, the MB was allowed to continue operating under greater security. Sadat was still anxious to oust supporters of Nasser and to allow opposition parties to organize, in the hope that they would offer a counter against the leftist Nasserist parties that were still operating. In this context, the MB was able to operate freely, though they were not yet legalized.

Sadat wanted to move away from Nasserist domestic policies and cut Egypt's ties with the Soviet Union. This met with considerable opposition, and in 1972-73, he faced protests from students. As a counterweight, Sadat encouraged the formation of Islamic societies in Egyptian universities, believing that they would naturally help drive out the leftist, Nasserist groups behind the student protests(Wickham, 2013, p. 20). This strategy worked, with Islamic groups thriving and weakening the left. Sadat's success in defeating the left helped raise his personal popularity and led to the legitimization of Islam in Egyptian politics. Sadat continued to release MB members from jail, and allowed them to publish religious papers once again. However, the organization remained officially illegal, and by the late 1970s, there was a return to conflict between the MB and the government.

Both the MB and other Islamic groups, including those that Sadat had helped to create, began to turn against Sadat, in disagreement with many of his policies. With tension increasing throughout the country, the gradualist approach of the MB was rejected by many. More radical, militant Islamic groups began to gain influence and members. Sadat recognized the threat that they presented, and implemented *Sharia* law in an attempt to placate them. It was not enough, and Sadat was assassinated by militants in October 1981. He was succeeded by Hosni Mubarak.

4.2.5 The MB under Mubarak

80s accommodations

Mubarak adopted a policy of accommodation towards the MB (Campagna, 1996). He released the organization's leader Omar Al-Tilmassani and others arrested by Sadat during his "Autumn of Fury" in September 1981. Mubarak was keen to establish a friendlier relationship with the MB, although the organization was still not legal. With Mubarak facing a thread from radical Islamic groups, the MB was seen as a counterweight and given some freedom to organize and publish (Campagna, 1996).

The MB used its newly-found freedom to focus on social welfare, and avoided openly criticizing the Mubarak regime. They held a moderate stance politically, opposing violence and advocating peaceful change. According to Kepel (1995): "As long as they did not directly challenge the state in political matters, but saw in the sharia (Islamic law) the opportunity to improve society morally, restraining deviant behavior, they were welcome." (Kepel, 1995:115).

The Egyptian political analyst Dia'a Rashwan states that the Mubarak government was "Convinced that the Brotherhood posed no real threat, the regime continued to overlook its growing presence till (sic) 1984 when the group scored impressive gains in parliamentary elections through its alliance with the secular *Wafd* Party" (Rashwan, 1995). The MB achieved political victories in 1984 and 1987. This led them to try and gain legitimacy, asking the government to make them a legal organization once again (Campagna, 1996) . Lawyers acting for the MB disputed the organization's illegal status. In 1984, they won eight seats in the elections to the 360-member People's Assembly (Aly, 2007). This was unexpected, and did serve to prompt some change in official attitudes towards the group. It demonstrated that the MB held considerable popularity, and "alerted the regime to the potential political force of the Brotherhood and prompted it to closely examine the organization's activities" (Rashwan, 1995).

The government was concerned that the MB would use its newly-elected members to step up its criticism of government policy. This worsened relations between the MB and the government, who now saw the group as a threat. The MB wanted *Sharia* law to be implemented in parliament, but this was rejected. In general, this was a time of stability,

with Islamic radicals having only limited influence, largely confined to universities (Rubin, 1990). In 1987, the MB formed an alliance with the Liberal and Socialist Labor parties. Their alliance won 36 seats in the Assembly, further demonstrating the organization's appeal to ordinary Egyptians. At the same time, the MB was gaining presence in professional associations, civil institutions, university faculty clubs and students' unions. They had worked to develop this influence since the early 1980s, and their electoral success helped cement it, giving them credibility. This strategy gave them a means to communicate their ideas directly with large numbers of Egyptians, which in turn helped them gain electoral success.

The MB gained a number of important victories among professional associations, winning elections to their boards. It gained control of the medical association in 1986, and of the engineers' and pharmacists' associations by the end of the 1980s. By 1992, they'd gained control of every major professional association except the journalists' association. Notably, this included the formerly secular bar association.

These were significant victories, helping the MB gain visibility in civil society. At the time, professional associations were one of the only forms of organization that maintained independence from the Egyptian state. Gaining control of them gave the Brotherhood an important legitimate power base with which to further its political aims. For the government, this was a serious challenge. Egypt's official, legal opposition parties were weak, and the MB filled the space that they left. As well as taking control of professional associations, the MB created a social services network. With these roots laid down, the Brotherhood gained support across Egyptian society and challenged the establishment, dominated by the National Democratic Party (NDP).

Between 1984 and 1989, the Egyptian state rarely confronted the MB. The security services would occasionally arrest and investigate members, and there was some criticism of the organization in the country's semi-official state media. This was not necessarily a deliberate policy, but a result of pragmatism. One the Egyptian academic Ahmed Abdallah said:

> "Deferring confrontation was an instinctual trade-off, not a carefully thought-out state policy. The government turned a blind eye to Islamist grassroots power. In return, the Islamists did not confront state corruption and inefficiency." (Abdallah, 1993)

By 1989, there was a change in the government's approach. In April of that year, then Interior Minister Zaki Badr issued a public statement criticizing MB for alleged links to radical Islamic groups. This was despite the group being demonstrably non-violent. Suggestions that the MB was linked to radical groups would continue and intensify over the years to follow. In August 1989, twenty Brothers were arrested along with eight children (US. Dept. of State et al., 1989, p. 1368). All of them had been at a four-day recreational camp in the city of Alexandria. According to the Egyptian daily newspaper Al-Wafd, the camp was held in defiance of the Interior Ministry. Further arrests followed under the orders of the Interior Minister, who was at the time embarked on a campaign of repression against groups across the political spectrum. He was sacked in January 1990 by Mubarak (Vatikiotis, 1991). This increase in state activity against the Brotherhood demonstrates the polarization that was developing between hardliners such as Zaki Badr, and others in the Mubarak government who were less confrontational. This polarization would widen as the years went on. After the 1989 arrests, efforts to confront the MB intensified as the MB's opposition to the regime increased (Hashim, 2011).

90s tensions

The assassination of Sadat in 1981 led to fears that Egypt would struggle to regain stability. Sadat's successor, Mubarak, was head of the Air Force at the time of the assassination. He promised stability and, despite his lack of charisma and limited political experience, he achieved it, staying in power until 2011 (Hashim, 2011). Mubarak saw Egypt as a regional leader and guarantor of regional stability. Islamic groups were seen by his regime as one of the key enemies of both regional and national stability. It was for this reason that Mubarak sought to prevent the MB from participating in politics (Iskander, 2012). Mubarak's emphasis on the need for security and stability, and his belief that only secularization could achieve this was a Cold War era hangover. Mubarak took a top-down military approach to government that relied entirely on the army to maintain security, without there being any real scrutiny of the army's work (Monier and Ranko, 2013). The military remained loyal to Mubarak because they were given considerable autonomy, with officers creating and running lucrative military-industrial businesses (Hashim, 2011).

The MB was cast as the enemy by Mubarak. He used the presence and perceived threat presented by the MB and other Islamic groups as a form of pressure against domestic opposition and a way of maintaining alliances with the West. Mubarak's state media portrayed the possibility of a religious state as wholly undesirable, intolerant and extremist. In contrast, his own civil, secular state was portrayed as one that would safeguard citizens' rights.

The MB became a symbol of the Islamic threat and they were often referred to as *Al-Mah'thura*, or the prohibited group. The threat was also said to include Hamas (an offshoot of the MB in Palestine), Hezbollah, and the Iranian government. All were portrayed extreme radicals, seeking to change the character of the whole Middle East and threatening the stability of the region. When security services uncovered a Hezbollah cell in the Sinai on April 8, 2009, the Egyptian government and both state and independent media portrayed Hezbollah and Iran as major threats to the Arab world. This narrative claimed a central place for Egypt in the politics of the Arab world, although Arab nationalism and Arabism had declined (Bilgin, 2004).

Mubarak's authoritarian presidency did not prevent him from claiming a role for Egypt as a leader among Arab nations. Egypt has claimed this role for itself consistently since World War II, as a way of consolidating domestic power for its governments and enhancing its regional and international status (Doran, 2002). Egypt resisted British rule partly by attempting to establish itself as a champion of Arab interests, particularly under Nasser (Monier and Ranko, 2013). Michael Barnett states that "Arab politics as a series of dialogues between Arab states regarding the desired regional order" (Barnett, 1998).

From the 1990s, the same tactics were used by Islamic groups, who claimed that they were the natural champions of Arab interests. The Egyptian government resisted their assertions and launched a strong campaign to remove their influence. In November 1995, Egypt's Supreme Military Court sentenced 54 leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood to prison terms of between three and five years, with hard labor (Campagna, 1996). The trial of these 54 MB members marked the culmination of four years of repression of the organization by the Egyptian state. The MB had remained an illegal organization, and so the state was able to try them for membership of an illegal

organization, and order the closure of their Cairo headquarters. It was the first prosecution of members of the MB by a military court since 1965, when Nasser had tried and imprisoned its leadership.

The move against the MB by Mubarak was a notable departure from the more tolerant approach of the 1980s. The MB had been allowed to function for some time as a legitimate organization, despite still being illegal, participating in elections and growing its power base in civil society (Campagna, 1996). The trial of the 54 led to considerable debate in Egypt. Opposition commentators noted that there was to be a parliamentary election the same month, and suggested it was a way of preventing the MB gaining the substantial victories they were forecast. This suggestion was supported by the fact that there were further trials of another 81 MB members, all former parliamentarians, leading civic activists, or parliamentary candidates. They represented the young, dynamic leadership of the Brotherhood, in professional associations, university faculty clubs and NGOs.

In the People's Assembly (*majlis al-sha'ab*) election, 150 Muslim Brotherhood candidates stood, either as independents or for the Labor (*Al-'Amal*) Party. None of them w name won a seat. Human rights groups heavily criticized the Mubarak regime for interference in that election, including repression of MB candidates and campaigners (Campagna, 1996).

2009 accommodation

As tensions increased between Mubarak and the MB, both sides openly criticized each other, and each accused the other of illegitimacy, socially, politically and legally. This criticism softened in 2009 as Mubarak moved to accommodate the MB to an extent. Al-Awadi (2009) argues that this happened because the MB were able to mount a serious challenge to the regime's legitimacy, with its network of contacts and provision of social services giving it legitimacy in the eyes of many Egyptian people (Al-Awadi, 2009).

4.2.6 The Arab Spring and the Post-Revolutionary Period

Following the revolution in 2011, the MB was legalized (Hope, 2011). Members in exile, such as scholar Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, were able to return to Egypt and participate in the events that followed the end of the Mubarak regime. In the period immediately following the revolution, more than eighty political parties were created (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015).

In April 2011, the MB launched a political party of its own: The Freedom and Justice Party. Elections to the People's Assembly were held between November 2011 and January 2012 that, according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, resulted in victory for Islamic groups, with the Freedom and Justice party gaining 47% of seats, and the Salafi *Nour* Party gaining 24%. All liberal and secular parties put together gained less than 30% of seats. In addition, Islamic parties won almost 90% of seats in the upper house, the *Shura* Council, resulting in an Islamic majority in both houses. As a result of the Islamic groups' success, in June 2012, Supreme Constitutional Court dissolved the People's Assembly just two days prior to presidential elections. The court's judges were primarily Mubarak supporters, appointed by his regime (Carnegie, 2015).

Later that month, democratic presidential elections were held. Mohamed Morsi won with 52% of the votes, becoming Egypt's first democratically elected president (Kirkpatrick, 2012). He faced immediate and virulent opposition, particularly from those who had been in power during the Mubarak era (Saleh, 2013). He also faced international criticism, even from those who had not previously been vocal critics. New York Times correspondent Patrick Kingsley, who covered the events in Egypt for the Guardian, wrote: "Morsi was seen as increasingly divisive, open only to Islamist ideas, and loyal only to the Brotherhood" (Kingsley, 2015).

Morsi attempted to grant himself considerable power, creating a constitution that would give the president total control over the state. He did not put this constitution to the judiciary, but instead put it to a vote without any debate. This led to unrest on the streets, with lethal fights between MB members and leftists/liberals (Kingsley, 2015). Egyptian media played a considerable role in the vocal opposition to Morsi, as did former members of the military. A year after Morsi's election, there were huge demonstrations

against him in Egypt, leading to a coup led by Abdul Fatah Al-Sisi (Kingsley and Chulov, 2013). Morsi was arrested and the Muslim Brotherhood was declared a terrorist organization by countries that supported Al-Sisi: Russia, Egypt, UAE and Saudi Arabia (Reuters, 2014). All these countries were opposed to the MB and its role in revolutions that happened as part of the Arab Spring.

As Morsi was ousted, so MB supporters took to the streets of Cairo to oppose the coup against him (BBC News, 2013a). They wanted to see Morsi's return as democratically elected president. The demonstrations were peaceful and allowed to continue for a month and a half before the police, supported by the army, cracked down violently against the protestors. According to Human Rights Watch, 817 demonstrators were killed in *Rabi'a* Square alone, the location of one of the largest demonstrations (Human Rights Watch, 2014). At this time, Syrian revolution was entering its third year of war following rebellion against the Assad regime. Most anti-Sissi, pro-Morsi Egyptians became afraid to express their political opinions openly, fearing that Egypt too would descend into conflict.

4.3 The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria

4.3.1 Origin, Founding, and Connection with the Egyptian MB

The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria (the SMB) was founded in 1942 by Mustapha Al-Sibai. He was born in Homs in Syria 1915 and studied in Egypt, at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo in 1933. It is not clear whether the SMB was founded by the MB in Egypt or whether it was established independently in Syria. It is likely that it was established independently, but with the same ideological basis as the MB in Egypt (Teitelbaum, 2011a). Al-Sibai had met Hassan Al-Banna while in Cairo and became an active member of the MB. He participated in anti-British activities while in Egypt, for which he was imprisoned in 1934. He returned to Syria along with fellow Syrian students, taking with him anti-nationalistic and pro-pan-Islamic ideas (Mitchell and Voll, 1993). Al-Sibai founded an association in Syria called Muhammad's Youth (*Shabab Muhammad*). This later became the SMB, along with a number of other Islamic organizations.

One of Al-Sibai's classmates in Cairo was Mohamed Al-Hamid, who was born in 1910 and lived until 1996. During his long life, he was an important ideological influence in the SMB. Both Mohamed Al-Hamid and Mustafa Al-Sibai attended meetings with Hassan Al-Banna and listened to him preaching at Al-Azhar University (Weismann, 2005). Even before the SMB was established formally, the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood began to make itself felt in Syria's civil associations, or *Jamiyyat*. The *Jamiyyat* were originally largely elite organizations, focused on providing social welfare to their members (Mitchell and Voll, 1993). Later, some became political, and widened their membership beyond the elite. In the 1920s and 30s, working and middle class Islamic *Jamiyyat* began to emerge, working to encourage religious belief and oppose Western cultural influence in Syria (Mitchell and Voll, 1993).

Muhamad Mubarak helped set up some of this new breed of *Jamiyyat* in Damascus and Aleppo. They later became part of the SMB. The *Jamiyyat* provided the early SMB with a strong initial power base from which to grow, and suggests that the organization grew up separately from its Egyptian sister organization. Despite this, we know from the writings of SMB founder Mustafa Al-Sibai that the Egyptian MB provided him with much of the inspiration and ideological basis for the establishment of the SMB. Al-Sibai encouraged students at the University of Damascus to set up study groups (or *halaqas),* focused on the teachings of Islam and spiritual reform. These were the same messages being preached by the Egyptian MB, and these study circles were part of the early establishment of the organization.

The first study circle to form outside Damascus came into being in Aleppo in 1935. In 1937, this circle was legalized and given the name *Dar Al-Arqam*, after the first meeting point of the Prophet Mohammad in Makkah, where Islam was preached for the first time. *Dar Al-Arqam* hosted the Young Men's Muslim Association in Aleppo and became the city's first Islamic center (*Markaz*). At this and other centers, the SMB established itself and began to spread its message. However, the various centers and *Jamiyyat* were not connected until the mid-1940s. Conferences were held in an attempt to unify the movement, including in Homs in 1937 and in Damascus in 1938. It was decided that *Dar Al-Arqam* in Aleppo should be the primary center in a loose network of *Jamiyyat*. The *Jamiyyats* continued their work until World War II, but after the end of the war, they lost influence (Al-Dakheel, 2012).

Unlike the MB, the SMB was an urban organization, with little support in rural areas or in the military. They worked primarily from Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama. Between them, these cities comprise more than two-thirds of Syria's urban population (Adams, 1984). In 1941, Al-Sibai left Egypt and returned to his home city of Homs. He became politically active on his return, working to oppose Syria's French colonial leaders. He was soon imprisoned by the French regime, and released in 1943. Once released, the *Jamiyyat* held another joint conference in Homs, at which it established two paramilitary youth organizations: *Futuwwa* and *Saraya.* In 1944, a conference in Aleppo decided to move the group's headquarters and its newly-formed Supreme Central Committee from Aleppo to Damascus, as the Syrian capital. That conference was attended by a representative of the Egyptian MB, although the SMB had still not been formally established (Teitelbaum, 2011a).

Between late 1945 and mid-1946, the group of *Jamiyaat* began to unite as the SMB, with Al-Sibai as its Controller General (*Al-Muraqib Al-Am*). In Arabic, this title implies a lower level of leadership than the title General Guide (*Murshid Al-Amm)* given to Hassan Al-Banna in Egypt. This may have been a deliberate attempt to ensure that the SMB remained less significant than the Egyptian MB (Teitelbaum, 2011a). However, Ali Al-Bayanouni, the SMB's Controller General between 1996 and 2006, stated that the use of the title was simply a different choice, rather than a significant one. He said:

"But it meant that Al-Muraqib Al-Am is the head of the different centers (*Jamiyyat*) of the SMB that were distributed in different cities of Syria. As it was called (*Dar Al-Arqam* in Aleppo, *Al-Jamiyaa Al-Garra* in Damascus, and *Jamiyaat Al-Hydaia* in Homs, etc.)" (Al Bayanouni, personal communication, London, 2017).

He also added that the SMB "was organizationally independent from the MB in Egypt, even though it adopted the ideology of Hassan Al-Banna, which is the ideology of moderate Islam which refers to the Quran and the teaching of prophet Mohamed" (Al Bayanouni, personal communication, London, 2017). The use of these titles remained the same after Al-Banna was assassinated (Teitelbaum, 2011a).

No financial connection has been established between the Egyptian MB and the SMB, and there is nothing in the rules of either organization that indicates a formal link. The two appear to be connected only by ideology, and not by organization (Teitelbaum, 2011a). Al-Sibai was Controller General of the SMB between 1945 and 1958 (Rubin,

2010a). In 1957, he had serious health problems, and left Syria for Europe to get treatment. He spent some years writing articles and books, and providing advice to young Muslims, until his death in 1967. He continued to be revered in the SMB after his death.

The SMB continued to grow. In 2011, the organization took advantage of the opportunity to spread its message further, as discussed in Chapter 5. By then, the SMB was well-established, with decades of experience (Lefèvre, 2013).The organization drew most of its membership from prosperous urban Syrians, had established its own education system, and was in a good position to recruit members.

4.3.2 The SMB, the Education System and the Colleges of Religious Studies in Syria

During the colonial period, Syrian public education followed the French system. This meant that local religious schools had little influence and no public funding. These local schools offered religious education, taught by clerics (Adnan Saad Aldin, 2010). The SMB worked to include religious education in public schools in Syria (Adnan Sadd Aldin, 2010). Many of those who had been through the religious school system were unable to gain work in public schools, able only to work as Imams and preachers. This was low-paid work, and most of them were keen to move to public education.

The SMB helped by beginning to teach the government's curriculum for public schools in religious schools. This meant that graduates of these schools could gain recognized qualifications that would allow them to work in universities or find better-paying administrative work. Mustafa Al-Sibai worked to establish Islamic Studies departments in Syrian universities, allowing students to gain a formal Islamic Studies qualification. Those holding this qualification could work in schools, at *Al-Awqaf* (the Authority of Islamic affairs) and in the judiciary. In 1955, Al-Sibai opened the first Islamic Studies faculty was opened at Damascus University, and became Dean of that faculty (Adnan Sadd Aldin, 2010).

He focused the faculty's work high-quality research and on producing graduates who would be well-versed in modern research methodologies and able to give expert views on the application of Islamic law across a wide range of spheres. He also created an

Islamic law encyclopedia, which would become a valuable reference for scholars (Adnan Sadd Aldin, 2010).

4.3.3 The SMB and Politics at the Time of Mustafa Al-Sibai

After World War II, politics in Syria underwent a number of changes. The Cold War put Syria at the geographical center of its two major powers: the US and the Soviet Union. Political Islam grew in popularity, as did opposition to it. Debate was had about the nature of Islam's relationship with politics and law. At the center of this debate was the SMB (Teitelbaum, 2004).

The SMB was a strong believer in the importance of political participation, unlike some other branches of Islamic thought, such as Sufism. The organization participated in the country's first parliamentary elections following its independence from France, in July 1947. While they did not appear on the ballot papers as a party, SMB members stood as candidates and won seats in Hama, Damascus and Aleppo (Rubin, 2010a). This success spurred the SMB on and they established a political party, the Islamic Socialist Front (ISF) in November 1949. The ISF stood for election at the 1949 parliamentary elections in Damascus and won three seats. Another seat was won by a known ISF supporter, but in the name of the People's Party, in Aleppo. At the same time, the Baath party began to gain its own foothold in Syrian politics, winning three seats (Adnan Sadd Aldin, 2010).

As SMB leader, Al-Sibai acted as ISF leader. He opposed a People's Party proposal to merge Syria with Iraq (Torrey, 1964). In December 1949, Colonel Adib Al-Shishakli, supported by opponents of the proposed union successfully mounted a non-violent coup. Khalid Al-Azim, an independent, was asked to form a government until elections could be held. He included Al-Dawalibi and Mubarak in his cabinet. The ISF took part in writing Syria's new constitution. They wanted Islam to become the country's state religion, but met with stiff opposition, including from the Baath party. After lengthy parliamentary debate, the Syrian Assembly decided to include in the constitution a requirement for the country's head of state to be a Muslim and provided for Islamic law (*fiqh)* to be the main source of Syrian legislation (Teitelbaum, 2004).

The inclusion of religion in Syrian politics remained controversial. In 1952, Adib Al-Shishakli, Akram Hawrani, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), and other secularist parties moved against the SMB/ISF in order to remove religion from politics. The resulting political tension led the government to attempt to weaken the SMB, but limiting its political and social activities. In January 1952, SMB branches were closed, its newspaper banned, its youth organization dissolved and some leaders arrested. The SMB decided to end its participation in politics and concentrate on social activities (Teitelbaum, 2011a).

In the mid-1950s, the left was rising in Syria. Both communist and socialist parties gained support among the working-class. The communist parties in Syria as well as Egypt and Iraq received support from the Soviet Union. Russian books and journals about communism were translated into Arabic in Moscow (Adnan Sadd Aldin, 2010). The Arab-Israeli conflict contributed to the growing support for communism in the region. The Soviet Union and China supported Arab countries against Israel, while Britain, France, and the US provided consistent support to Israel (Adnan Sadd Aldin, 2010). The SMB sought to fight communism by providing an alternative in moderate Islam and participated themselves in resistance against Israel. In 1947 the SMB had declared its support for the creation of an Arab state in Palestine (Campbell and Despard, 1983) and in 1948, Al-Sibai led the SMB into the war against Israel.

In 1954, Syria held another parliamentary election, while the country was dividing into broadly communist or socialist, and religious camps (Adnan Sadd Aldin, 2010). The SSNP, Shishakli's Arab Liberation Movement, and independent candidates all stood in the election. The SMB did not, upsetting many of its members and supporters. Al-Sibai himself was unsure of the decision but the decision had been made by the leadership committee. The SMB's weakness helped the communists gain traction. The decision not to participate in the elections was criticized by long-term SMB leader Adnan Saad Aldin, both at the time and later, in his book. He argued that by failing to participate, the SMB had failed to fulfil its obligations to its supporters and the wider society (Adnan Sadd Aldin, 2010).

In the mid-1950s, Egypt's President Nasser began a campaign of repression against the Egyptian MB, including the arrest, torture and execution of some of its members and its

leader Hassan Al-Hudaybi. In 1954, Al-Sibai offered the MB the SMB's support and the SMB actively demonstrated against Nasser in support of the MB. This caused tension between Egypt and Syria, and difficulties for the country's ruling Baath party. At the time, Britain was moving to protect Iraq, its last remaining Middle Eastern colony from the Soviet Union, which was looking to expand its power base in the region. The Baghdad Pact was signed in 1955, accepted by Iraq and opposed by Egypt (Butt, 2003) . In Syria, the Communist and Baath parties opposed the pact and supported Egypt. The SMB also opposed the pact, but did not support Egypt, because of their argument with Nasser (Seale, 1965). Nasser became a popular figure in the Syrian Baath party, seen as standing up against western imperialism. As happened in 2011, the SMB's position was shaped by a regional power struggle.

The SMB and the Baath party clashed in cities across Syria. At the same time, the SMB's boycott of the 1954 election meant that the Baathists increased their political representation, winning 22 seats. Secularist, nationalist, socialist parties were growing in appeal in Syria, and Nasser was becoming something of a hero. By boycotting the election, the SMB had made it easy for the Baath party to capitalize on that mood and increase its power (Adnan Sadd Aldin, 2010).

In 1958, Syria and Egypt created a short-lived union, the United Arab Republic (Jankowski, 2002). The union fell apart in 1961, after Nasser attempted to control all of Syrian politics, dissolving its political parties (Palmer, 1966). Syrian officers in Damascus mounted a coup against Nasser. The SMB had remained politically inactive during these years, but in 1961, Al-Sibai fell ill and Issam Al-Attar became SMB leader. His leadership marked a return to active politics for the SMB, which participated as the IFS in the elections held in 1961 and won 10 seats. The Baath party was in disarray, divided over the union with Egypt and the coup. But in 1962 Michael Aflaq re-organized and re-established the party (Jankowski, 2002; Lefèvre, 2013). In March 1963, there was another coup that brought the Baath party to power. The SMB had mounted much of the resistance to the Baath party, and so it was subsequently banned.

4.3.4 The SMB During the Baathist Era, 1963-1980

From 1971, the Baath party and the senior levels of the Syrian military were dominated by the Alawite sect (Pierret, 2014), in particular, the Assad clan. The Alawites are a branch of Shia Islam, adding a sectarian element to the party's conflict with the mainly Sunni SMB. By the late 1970s, this conflict had become an armed struggle that reached its peak in 1982, when thousands of civilians were killed by the military.

The coup in 1963 was followed quickly by restrictions on political freedom. Power was concentrated in military hands, and the majority of senior positions were given to Alawites. While the majority of Syrians were Sunni, there was no Sunni representation in government. The SMB was the strongest and most vocal opposition party. Since 2011, the SMB has sought to emphasize its role in opposition after the 1963 coup. At the same time, they have stressed that they are now committed to peace. During 1964 and 1965, the SMB was engaged in active conflict with the state, including strikes and mass demonstrations. These were quelled by the military.

In 1971, General Hafez Al-Assad seized power. He took full control of the legislature, judiciary and executive (Ziadeh, 2011). He justified this by holding and winning a referendum to ratify his actions. He proposed a new constitution designed to cement his power. He banned all political parties other than his own. Elections were still held in Syria, but Assad was the only candidate. His regime became more repressive, with the media controlled by the state and the secret state intelligence (*Mokhabarat)* becoming increasingly feared.

In 1973, Syrians demonstrated against the new constitution, which did not require the president to be Muslim despite 95% of the country's population being so. There was further unrest when Syria intervened in the Lebanese civil war in 1976. Some leading members of the government were assassinated, and the SMB claimed responsibility. This led to an Islamic uprising, beginning in 1976.

The uprising failed. This was partly because the SMB was ill-prepared, lacking internal unity and strategically naïve. They were also unable to create the kind of mass mobilization they would have needed to succeed. At the same time, the uprising failed to win enough support either from Arab states or the West. Assad's response was strong.

The failed uprising caused division in the Islamic movement, with conflict between the SMB and their jihadi opponents (Lia, 2016). The failed 1976 uprising continues to affect the SMB's thinking post-2011 (see Chapter 7).

Violence against the SMB and its high-profile supporters continued. One such supporter, Aleppine professor Yusef Al-Yusef, was assassinated. On 16 June 1979, a violent group within SMB carried out a retaliatory attack on the Aleppo Artillery School without the consent of their leadership , killing eighty-three cadets (SHRC, 2003a). The Syrian government responded by sentencing fifteen prisoners to death for belonging to the Islamic resistance. Violence continued, especially in Aleppo and other northern cities, with the government generally ascribing blame for attacks to the SMB. However, as the resistance movement grew and spread, more armed groups appeared and it is difficult to establish how much of the violence was at the hands of the SMB.

A SMB leaflet in November 1979:

> "We, the SMB, reject all forms of despotism, out of respect for the very principles of Islam, and we don't demand the fall of Pharaoh so that another one can take his place. Religion is not imposed by force." (Adnan Saad Aldin, 2010).

In March 1980, protests, strikes, and street conflicts escalated in Aleppo. Demonstrators, supported by a diverse group of secular and religious organizations including the SMB, demanded that the Assad regime:

1- Lift the state of emergency and cancel the exceptional material courts.
2- Return all powers to the general judiciary.
3- Re-instate the independence of the judiciary.
4- Respect the international law of human rights and cancel laws in Syria that are not in accordance.
5- Hold elections where people can choose their representatives freely.

The government responded with brutal force, with tens of thousands of troops on the streets, supported by tanks and helicopters. Hundreds were killed and 8,000 arrested. The uprising was ended by April. President Assad's brother, Rifaat Al-Assad, published a

statement that said the government would "sacrifice a million martyrs" to crush "the nation's enemies". At the time, Syria's population was around ten million. In July 1980, the Assad government made membership of the SMB punishable by death. It also continued to use fear to dominate its people, executing eighty people living in one Aleppo apartment block, in response to an attack on troops in the city. In April 1981, 400 people in Hama, some as young as fourteen, were executed, accused of being members of the SMB.

The government then held a 50-day moratorium on the death-penalty for SMB membership. Over a thousand members turned themselves in, in the hope that their lives would be spared. Many of them were professionals, including teachers, engineers and professors, who were part of professional associations. Others were students, generally under the age of twenty-five. The majority were from Syria's major cities, including the capital Damascus. The regime continued to blame the SMB for terrorist attacks, including car-bombs against military and government targets in Damascus that killed hundreds in 1981. In February 1982, SMB led a revolt against government in Hama. This revolt spread quickly across the city, and was met with force in the form of indiscriminate bombing of the city. This became known and the Hama Massacre, and killed 30,000 of the city's 250,000 population (Kenner, 2011).

The SMB marked the official defeat of the SMB and other Islamic opponents by the Assad regime. Despite this, the SMB retained a clandestine network, continuing some of its activities under a variety of names.

4.3.5 The SMB in the Post-Hama Era

After Hama, most surviving SMB members escaped into exile. Some were still in prison in Syria, although some of these were released in the mid-1990s. After the death of Hafiz Al-Assad in 2000, his son Bashar Al-Assad came to power after the constitution was changed to accommodate his young age, while promising greater political openness and social freedom. In May 2001, the SMB, then led by Ali Al-Bayanouni, published a statement calling for democratic elections in Syria and an end to violence. He then successfully led negotiations with the Assad government to release political prisoners in Syria, most of whom had been in custody for over 20 years without trial. While some political freedoms were won, they were revoked months later.

The SMB continued to receive support from many in Syria while in exile. Its supporters and sympathizers included many secular Syrians, such as Riyadh Al-Turk, who said he saw the SMB as “the most credible" Syrian opposition. While in exile, the SMB worked with other opposition groups to produce the National Honor Pact in 2001 (Ziadeh, 2012, p. 69). This pact committed the SMB and other groups to democracy in Syria. In 2005, the SMB endorsed the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change, along with other opposition groups including Islamic, Nationalist, Kurdish and leftist groups (Zoepf, 2005). In January 2006, Al-Bayanouni emphasised the SMB’s commitment to peaceful change in Syria, and their desire for an investigation into the Hama Massacre of 1982 (Abedin, 2005). He concentrated on the need for Syria to become a civil democracy, rather than an Islamic state. This shows an indication that the SMB has matured politically.

Abdul Halim Khaddam, a Syrian defector, and the SMB jointly launched the National Salvation Front in Brussels (Lefèvre, 2013, p. 177). The launch was attended by a number of prominent opposition figures, calling for peaceful change. However, the alliance with Khaddam was damaging to the SMB, as he had been part of the Assad regime, and they received criticism for it. The SMB withdrew from the Front in April 2009.

Turkey’s ruling party, the Justice and Development Party, was on good terms with both the Assad regime and the SMB. The party sought to mediate between the two, but their efforts failed when the regime refused to make the SMB legal again. Unable to return to Syria, the SMB has continued to work in exile, creating branches in the mostly European countries in which they now live.

4.4 The SMB in Europe

The International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood (IOMB) came into being soon after the creation of the Egyptian MB in 1928. The MB’s ideas spread quickly across the Arab world and beyond, with branches established in many European countries, including Spain, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy. When the SMB leadership was exiled from Syria following the Aleppo *Midfayaa* (Artillery Academy) in 1979 and Hama Massacre in 1982, many SMB leaders found their way to Europe. There, they sought support from politicians, academics and the media in their

host countries, especially in Germany, Italy and Spain. However, they failed to gain the interest or sympathy they wanted. This was in large part due to the violent nature of the Assad regime, which was feared by journalists in particular

The SMB eventually persuaded a German journalist, Bein Veit of Die Welt, to report on the violence suffered by the SMB. In return, the SMB helped him cover the Iran-Iraq war. Veit arranged a one-hour interview with the SMB leader, Adnan Saad Al-Din, on German TV channel ZDF[10]. Al-Din spoke about the violence in Hama and Aleppo, and the interview generated considerable interest among other western media, including the German network ARD, Agence France-Presse and Reuters. While SMB members in exile were still concerned that they and their families would face reprisals for speaking out, they believed the time was right to do so, as they have continued to do (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7).

The SMB has worked closely with security services in Europe to keep its members in exile safe from reprisals from the Syrian regime. In the 1980s, the regime carried out a number of assassinations of SMB members and opponents (SHRC, 2003b). Salah Al-Bitar, Baath party founder-turned-enemy was killed in Paris (Koven, 1980). A week later, former military judge Abdul-Wahab Al-Bakry was killed in Jordan. He had interrogated some of the protagonists of the coup in 1962, among them Hafiz Al-Assad. In 1981, Banan Al-Tantawi, the wife of former SMB leader Issam Al-Attar, was shot and killed in her flat in Aachen, Germany. Also in 1981, journalist Riyadh Taha and Muhamoud Wadda, a student in Yugoslavia and opponent of the regime, were killed. In 1982, SMB member Nizar Ahmad Al-Sabagh was killed in Madrid.

While the Syrian regime successfully assassinated many of its opponents in exile, co-operation between the SMB and European security services helped prevent many other assassination attempts. Despite this, SMB members in exile faced an ever-present threat. The SMB's European center was in Frankfurt, Germany, and was well known to the German security service and frequently visited by the media. It acted as a focal point for SMB activity in Europe, and allowed the SMB to spread their brand of moderate

[10] Given the time lapse, the interview itself could not be obtained. The information mentioned here was given by an anynomous interviewee in Turkey in 2015

political Islam across Europe. They encouraged Arab Muslims living in Europe to seek integration with their new communities.

4.5 The SMB post-2011 and the Demise of the Egyptian MB: Lessons Learnt from the Egyptian Situation

The future of the SMB has been uncertain since the 2011 uprising. It is not surprising if he organization is frequently linked in the media to the Egyptian MB, with the assumption that the Egyptian MB represents the ideas and aims of all Muslim Brotherhoods worldwide. The SMB itself has risen to greater prominence since 2011, but many question whether the organization will be able to play a significant role in Syria's future. Academics, people in the media, Syrian intellectuals, Syrian fighters and those in Syrian civil society are often unsure whether the SMB can or should do so.

The SMB has learned much from the Egyptian revolution, and the disaster that followed it for the Egyptian MB. However, while there are some similarities between the two groups and their situations, there are many differences. This study initially set out to compare the two, but it quickly became apparent that the differences are too great for a meaningful comparison. Both the SMB and the Egyptian MB hold similar beliefs, but there are many differences in their circumstances. After the 2011 revolution in Egypt, seeing the damage done to the MB there, the SMB asked other opposition parties in Syria to join it in opposing Assad (see Chapters 6 and 7). At the same time, they have sought to spread their ideas further among the Syrian people.

This study analyzes why the Syrian MB and the Egyptian MB are different, and why it is not possible to compare the two post-2011. While there are some similarities, these are not enough to effectively answer the question 'did the SMB learn its lesson from the Egyptian MB's experiences?' Governments in the Middle East, including those in Egypt, UAE, and Saudi Arabia, continue to attempt to pain Muslim Brotherhoods as terrorist organizations (Wittes and McCants, 2017). This does give us reason to ask whether the SMB has learned lessons from Egypt. The analysis in this study will look at the two revolutions in Syria and Egypt, look to identify their focal points and identify what the ideological positions of the MB and SMB were at those points.

In 1952, the Egyptian MB's Mohamad Nagib supported the overthrow of King Farouq and the coming to power of Nasser. However, months of repression at the hands of the Nasser government followed, with members of the MB imprisoned and tortured, and the organization being made illegal. After the uprising in 2011, Mubarak was removed from power and replaced by Morsi following elections. Morsi was a senior MB figure. Morsi himself was then removed in a military coup a year later, led by his own former Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, General Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi. Thousands of MB members were then imprisoned, including its elderly leaders. Death sentences were handed out at will by military tribunals, including to former President Morsi. Many MB members and sympathizers disappeared, and can be assumed to have been captured and tortured.

In Syria, the SMB has not been active for over three decades. The Assad regime is still in power, and it is unknown what will happen next or whether the regime will fall. If it does fall, we do not know how the rebel fighters, including foreign fighters, currently in Syria will react to or treat the SMB. Members of the SMB are very much aware of the potential dangers they may face in a post-Assad Syria, given what happened to their counterparts in Egypt. Zuhair Salem, SMB spokesman, reflects that "it is always wise to learn lessons from other countries" and acknowledges that Egypt "could be considered as a close country to Syria in numerous ways" (Salem, London, 10.10.2014).

Other Syrians of varied backgrounds, when interviewed also state that they can see some similarities between the Egyptian and Syrian situations. They include Ismael (an economist), Hanoun (a school supervisor), Sabbagh (CEO of a humanitarian organization), and Abu Ammar (a leading member of the revolutionary council in rebel-held Aleppo) (personal communication with; Abu Ammar, 2015; Hannoun, Gaziantep, 2014; Sabbagh,Gaziantep, 2014). These interviewees understand and support the idea that the SMB should look more closely at the challenges the Egyptian MB faced and seek to avoid the failure and destruction they experienced. Their concerns reflect those of many other Syrians, including both men and women, and people of all religions, such as Christian intellectual, Khassis. He suggests that the SMB should look to identify solutions to potential problems before they face potential elections, so that they can go into the electoral process without fear (Khassis, personal communication, Gaziantep,

2014). SMB leaders will need to know how to perform a political comeback if they are to play a role in shaping Syria's future.

SMB leaders are still seen as being knowledgeable and capable, able to play a role in Syrian politics. They have, their members believe, earned the right to take part in Syria's future by having played such a vital role in its past (Salem, London, 10.10.2014). As well as their role in the struggle against the Baath party, they gained significant experience in day-to-day Syrian politics in the pre-Baath era. However, Syria's situation is ever-changing, and there is no guarantee that the SMB will have a political future in the country. Syrian intellectual Dr. Adel Rihawi, not a member of the SMB but an interested observer, especially since the 2011 uprising, is skeptical of the SMB's future potential, saying "however, the SMB is intending to take part at the ballot boxes the leaders should be aware that coming to power and be part of the future governance does mean to know in advance the parties which could lobbying against a movement in order to fail"(Rihawi, Killis, 2015) . Arwa Sa'a Aldaher holds a similar opinion, stating that "the SMB should learn their lessons anyhow, if provided they will do they best not to make political faults, and even if they are democratically elected, they still will have a lot of opponents" (Aldaher, Killis, 2016)

The Egyptian MB failed because its leaders were untested and inexperienced. The country was at a point in time where it needed strong, experienced leaders who would be able to unite its various factions. The MB was simply not equipped to do that in Egypt. Political activist Obeida Fares suggests that older SMB leaders should begin to give way to younger members, who are unfettered by the country's past. He believes that the SMB should look to reshape itself "adapting of new and contemporary decision-making tools, such as based on academic political research and knowledge in international relations, instead on the present focus on brotherhood and supportive aid activism"(Fares, personal communication, Istanbul, 2014). This perspective is shared by the Islamic scholar Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. He recommends that changes "should be undertaken with a view to making use of the capabilities afforded by our contemporary age and possessed and used by others" (Al-Qaradawi, 1992, p. 133)These suggestions could only be enacted if the SMB is willing to change its current decision-making process (as discussed in 5.2.3). The SMB will need to be able to choose people able to align the SMB with the Syrian

people during challenging times and then help forge a path for the organization in Syria's future civil society.

One UK-educated female member of the SMB's advisory board puts forward a possible compromise. She suggests that "the Egyptian situation provides a great lesson for the SMB". The SMB, she believes, will need to be able to share the political stage with others if it is to make a contribution to a developing new Syrian state. She points out that "democracy is still in its initial stages in the Arab world". She emphasizes that there are "still existing threats to attempting to prevent democracy" (Al-Soufi, personal communication, london, 2014)

The military coup in 2013 in Egypt proved that even after the introduction of democracy, old corruption in the state was not weeded out, military repression was not ended and exploitation of the people continued as before. Democratic elections were not enough to cement democracy in Egypt.

The SMB itself, while expressing deep regret at the fate of the Egyptian president Morsi, believes that the situation in Syria is significantly different to that in Egypt (personal communication with; Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Salem, London, 2014; Waleed, London, 2014). The SMB leaders have been outside of Syria for some time, and they believe that it is therefore unlikely that they would face the kind of backlash that Morsi did in Egypt (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014).

When interviewed, they tended to focus primarily on the differences between Syrian and Egyptian socio-political structures and history. They also compare the Egyptian MB's actions before and after the Egyptian revolution of 2011 with those of the SMB. They refer to the SMB's political vision, which has included democracy and participation since 2004 (see Chapter 4 and appendix). It seems clear to the SMB that they are on a different path to the Egyptian MB, and that it is impossible to make realistic predictions about the SMB's future by looking at the experiences of the Egyptian MB. They may have once shared an ideology, but that does not mean they share a future.

The Egyptian MB has faced, since 2011, a "wave of repression" that "is more severe than anything the Brotherhood has experienced at least since the era of the president Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s"(Brown and Dunne, 2015). SMB leaders frequently point this out. They also argue that there are significant differences in the geopolitical context, the social fabric of the two countries and the status of the Brotherhood in each country prior to 2011.

Notwithstanding the above, the SMB leaders believe that it is important for them to consider modifying their outlook and behavior in the light of the Egyptian experience (personal communication with : Al-Shaikh, Istanbul, 2014 and Waleed, London, 2014). This is in line with the thoughts of Egyptian-born Islamic political thinker, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, who states in his book *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, that there is "no harm in re-examining political strategies in the light of local, regional and international changes and developments" (Al-Qaradawi, 1992, p. 132).

Al-Qaradawi's statement assumes a relatively stable environment. But in a conflict or revolution, change can happen fast and develop unexpectedly. The SMB will likely be tested in some way, and it may be similar to the challenges faced by the MB in Egypt after 2011. There are some critical voices that doubt that the SMB in its current form will be able to meet those challenges effectively. The SMB may, they believe, face a similar fate to the Egyptian MB. Some of those voices are from younger members; others are from long-term older members and supporters (personal communication with; Al-Shami, Gaziantep, 2014 and Toma, Gaziantep, 2014).

The older generation of SMB members will need to work to unify the SMB, making the necessary changes to the organization that will help close the gap between its older and younger members. There are some clear age-based differences in perspective, which has the potential to cause disagreement in the movement, as analyzed in 5.2.2. There are currently doubts about the capability of the SMB, with critics believing that current SMB leaders share the problematic attitudes of the MB leaders in Egypt, and that they will therefore suffer the same fate. This may happen "for example, by excluding women and youth" from the decision-making process (Al-Shami, personal communication, Gaziantep, 2014).

Yaseer Wafai expressed doubts about the SMB leaders' ability to learn from the Egyptian situation and change their attitudes accordingly. He says: "SMB as an organization will not learn much from the Egyptian situation" (Wafai, Gaziantep, 2014). He recognizes that many believe that the SMB and Egyptian MB's differences are great enough for this not to be a problem. But, he continues:

> "The SMB was banned from any kind of activities in Syria for decades. This fact, makes some SMB members believe that any way, the lack of presence in the past will let the organization not gain majority of votes in future, because it is predictable that the SMB will suffer of a fundamentally insufficient base in their home country, other than it has been in the Egyptian case" (Wafai, personal communication, Gaziantep, 2014)

These critics make important points, although it is apparent that they are assuming that the SMB leaders will fail before they have had the opportunity to demonstrate their competence in a post Assad era. However, the future of any social movement is dependent on its leadership and their ability to respond to change and criticism. It may be the case that the SMB leaders have already begun to consider the points made by their critics. Mahmoud Othman says: "[o]f course they (the SMB leaders) learned, and one of those lessons is in his opinion is that you see the SMB adopting is that they do not sit in the frontlines of the opposition alliance, while, as he noticed, remaining very active"(Othman, Istanbul, 2014).

Syrian people hold a diverse range of views about the country's current situation and the ability of the SMB and other groups to create future change. But that future is currently entirely unpredictable and will be difficult to manage, even if the SMB leaders are currently working hard to take into account criticism and working on supporting people still in Syria. Syria's cities are in ruins and 250,000 people have died (see UN and Human rights organizations report in Chapter 6). Millions have fled or are fleeing, infrastructure (including schools, hospitals and marketplaces) is destroyed, and the fighting continues to worsen as those involved in the conflict seek out ever more damaging, high-technology weapons (see Chapter 6). *Daesh* is gaining power and wealth by selling seized Syrian oil. Young people have been attracted to the conflict and, after

witnessing violence, perpetuate it themselves. Various untrained rebel brigades still exist without any cohesive leadership or direction.

The SMB is recognized as an advocate of humanitarian relief, but it is also an active ally of the exiled opposition alliance. It is possible that the SMB has played some part in the conflict on the ground. It is unclear whether the SMB has its own brigades, and if they do, whether they have been able to put significant resources into funding them. If the SMB becomes further involved in the conflict now, it may risk its reputation among Syrians. For this reason, it may choose to operate only in the political sphere.

The next section will explore the SMB's role in the conflict in Syria by evaluating the responses gathered at interviews conducted during multiple extensive stays in Turkey and reflections given during meetings close to the Syrian border in Killis and Gaziantep (Turkey 2013-2016).

4.6 Concluding Remarks

Since the establishment of the MB in Egypt and the SMB in Syria, both organizations have played an important role in their respective domestic politics. Both have experienced power and loss of power. Both initially gained popularity among intellectuals, but then developed along different lines. The SMB has tended to be a more elite organization than the Egyptian MB, which gained greater traction across all social classes. It is notable that both the MB and the SMB have survived for over 80 years. They have in that time faced considerable stress, including being classified as terrorists and their members served with death sentences. Despite their similarities, there are considerable differences in the way the MB and SMB have evolved, shaped by historical events and their geo-political environments.

The SMB's political activity was at its peak in the late 1940s to mid 1950s. At that time, and later, the organization has faced a number of difficulties and uncertainties. In 1947, they boycotted the Syrian parliamentary elections, which allowed leftist and communist parties to grow their support bases. This contributed to the Baathists and Al-Assad

coming to power. In retrospect, this was a high price to pay for their lack of participation. This meant that, already weakened, they struggled to fight the Baath Party in the 1960s. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the SMB focus has tended to be on its social and educational work. Even so, they suffered greatly during the violence that occurred in Syria between 1979 and 1982, with thousands of members being killed, tortured and detained in Hama and Aleppo. As the leadership of the SMB went into exile in other Arab countries and in Europe, they maintained contact with each other and those left in Syria.

In 2011, the youth of Syria revolted as part of the Arab Spring, and the SMB regained some of its presence in the country. They gained a foothold in the majority of the rebel-held regions. However, 30 years and three generations passed before this happened. During this time, the SMB lost much of its political strength and social recognition. How well will the SMB handle the challenges they are likely to face in a post-Assad Syria? The next chapter provides an analysis of empirical data and information about the SMB and its members' links to their Syrian family, friends and intellectual groups. It will show how the SMB has evolved in exile to become a socio-political actor.

Chapter 5: The SMB's Organizational Internal Discussions and Responses to the Syrian Crisis

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 outlined the organization of the SMB, which was constructed upon the ideology that they shared with their Egyptian counterparts, the MB. The influence of Syria's political environment on the SMB led to it having different experiences to its 'mother organization' in Egypt. This overview elucidates how withstanding the peaks and troughs of socio-political life helped the SMB to unite, and how the clashes between it and the Assad regime led to the repression of the SMB for half a century. Additionally, it explains the exile of SMB members to Europe (this will be discussed later in Chapters 5 and 6), and how this shaped the organization's political views. Lastly, the previous chapter showed that the SMB do not compare their situation with the pitiful situation of the MB in Egypt following the coup d'état, as they continuously aim to form alliances with opposing political parties in Syria, both before and after the 2011 uprising.

This chapter aims to discuss the domestic response of the SMB to the Syrian crisis following the 2011 uprising, as well as the SMB's rise from an idle, exiled, and unrecognised political party to a reinvigorated political force in Syria. The ambitions of the SMB's leader will be discussed, including his desire to enter the political arena in Syria – whilst remaining in exile – as a direct participant of an opposition political party during the Syrian revolution.

It will be argued that the life-experiences and individual challenges faced by the SMB members during their time in exile helped equip them and their future generations with political astuteness, reinforcing their knowledge base whilst preserving the SMB's institutional ideologies. It will also be argued that this knowledge allowed the SMB to recognize the challenges of the Syrian crisis and provide ad-hoc relief to the Syrian people in need.

This chapter will explain how the SMB members provided this humanitarian relief to the Syrian people. It will also explain how affiliates of the SMB contributed to Syrian politics through local councils, providing essential administrative and social services to Syrians in the rebel-held northern and southern regions of Syria. This chapter will then argue that despite these organized efforts, the SMB struggled to satisfy the rising expectancies of the Syrian people. An in-depth analysis will serve to show how the large-scale and far-reaching challenges faced by the SMB hindered their attempts to effect change and demonstrate their socio-political skills throughout this unique and rare opportunity for change.

The chapter will elucidate the reasons why, on one hand, the SMB was disregarded due to the Syrian Ba'athist party's political machinery, and on the other, why SMB members were rewarded for their pre-existing relationships within Syria. The Syrian people's perceptions of the SMB will also be examined, as will the SMB's hierarchical practises. These issues will all be discussed in light of the Syrian crisis and within the context of the region's politically unstable state. It will also explain how these challenges influenced the SMB's leadership's decisions, leading them to remove themselves from the public political stage. Reform-orientated SMB members' demand for hierarchical change has placed increasing pressure on the SMB; they want the organization's hierarchy to accommodate the changing dynamics in Syria as a result of its evolving political climate.

This chapter will explore the SMB's recent reintegration with Syrian society despite the potentially undermining multifaceted challenges surrounding the organization. It will be explained that the SMB members' decisions to build bridges revitalised their social and humanitarian commitments to the war-harmed Syrians. The leadership of the SMB acknowledged these personal initiatives, which were independent of the SMB's organizational constraints. SMB members have been free to initiate or join NGOs that are compatible with the organization's ideology.

These humanitarian initiatives have been viewed positively by the SMB's leadership as they are deemed to garner public support for the SMB's socio-political efforts. However, interviews with former Syrian Ba'athists in Turkey bring to light another significant

challenge for the SMB. The interviews suggest that many intellectuals who studied in Syria before emigrating have been influenced by Ba'athist perceptions of the SMB. This chapter will explain how the SMB is countering this to gain the trust of critically-thinking Syrians. These empirical findings will be analyzed in light of the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 3. This will be used to explain how social movements, in general, and the Islamic movements, in particular, reacted to their surrounding political environments, recognizing opportunities and seeking to overcome these challenges. This chapter will begin by focussing on the organizational responses of the SMB to the Syrian crisis post-2011 (Section 5.2). It will expound upon the challenges faced by the SMB's leadership from critics of the organization's internal structure who are calling for reform. It will be explained that the SMB's strict organizational structure, as founded by Al-Sabai, was not a priority of the SMB before 2011, primarily because the organization was facing an existential threat following the 1982 Hama massacres that resulted in the exile of SMB members.

On-going interviews and discussions with members of the organization have made clear the SMB's hierarchical structure following the 2011 Syrian uprising. This chapter will analyze the arguments and discussions between the SMB leaders, and those between the leaders and the second and third generation members in exile. The chapter will also refer to the "Meluccian challenge", analyzing the movement without assuming its inception from a point of unity; rather it will be recognised that "a social movement is not a homogenous body" (Melucci, 1996).

Section 5.3 will shed light on the internal structure of the SMB before 2011 in order to clarify any significant changes post-2011 (which will be discussed in section 5.4). Subsection 5.3.1 will examine the SMB's humanitarian outreach and social service activities following the Syrian uprising. It will discuss whether the organization managed to reconnect with the Syrian people through its socio-political ideologies. The analysis in this subsection will be conducted using information that has been gathered through extensive interviews with active SMB members living in exile, and through interviews with both male and female intellectuals (unaffiliated with the SMB) who left Syria long after the beginning of the 2011 Syrian crisis.

Section 5.5 will illustrate the proposal of the 'fast-track option', which embraces more flexible facets of modern management concepts by comparing the internal statutes both before and after the uprising. This was suggested as an alternative to the existing hierarchical structure of the SMB. After analysing the structural prerequisites of the SMB as a hierarchical Islamic social movement, this study will examine whether the SMB's socio-political position would be strengthened if the organization decided to join the growing number of NGOs in Turkey. Whether such a decision could make those viewing the SMB as a 'clandestine Islamist movement' view it as an internationally recognized organization will also be discussed.

5.2 Organizational Discussions Surrounding the Syrian Uprising

The Syrian uprising offered a unique opportunity for the SMB to return to the political scene. This came following the repression of the group and the exile of its members by Hafez Al-Assad in Syria. Chapter 4 discussed how the SMB entered the Syrian political scene during the 1950s and 1960s. Even following their exile in the 80s, the SMB remained politically active, opposing the Assad regime and considering itself as being part of the multi-ethnic multi-faith Syrian society. This provided the SMB with socio-political legitimacy. It also allowed them to initiate and become part of the numerous opposition alliances that appeared post-2011. Despite this, however, the SMB's influence on the ground in Syria remained limited.

SMB members can see that the lack of young flexible leadership is preventing the SMB from significantly influencing Syrian politics following the uprising. The analysis showed that generally young people who joined the SMB as part of their commitment to the revolution are concerned that the SMB leadership is still primarily dominated by a team of elderly figures. This is seen as being a result of the organization's internal structure and membership system, particularly the practise of not allowing common SMB members to attain leadership positions until they have been 'tested' for many years and passed through many stages of the hierarchical system.

This study discusses the benefits and drawbacks of the current structure of the SMB. It analyzes whether or not the SMB's internal structure allows it to mobilize and recruit members of the Syrian society with similar ideological beliefs. These beliefs may be pre-existing or a result of the Syrian crisis. On the one hand, the SMB leaders' willingness to reconcile with the Syrian people following the result of their initial efforts is in question. On the other hand, the expectations of some Syrian people have been raised too high, as they consider the SMB to be a political alternative to the existing Assad regime.

Analyzing the SMB's internal structure both before and after 2011 serves to elucidate the SMB leadership's efforts to bridge gaps between the organization, the Syrian people, and other political actors in Syria. It leads to the question of whether the SMB should eventually modernize its decision-making processes, taking into consideration the alternatives. The SMB will initially consider the 'fast-track' option, which comprises of a contemporary, lean management structure, because this structure is preferred by the reform-orientated SMB members. The option of shifting from being an Islamic movement to a recognised, Islamic socio-political NGO could be viewed as a far-reaching step, but one that can increase the organization's 'action radius' long-term. This coincides with the SMB's desire to revive the organization as an Islamic grassroots movement and a key socio-political actor in Syria.

5.3 The SMB's Internal Statutes pre-2011

Though the MB has traditionally been viewed as an international movement, it is clear upon examining its history that each MB movement became country-specific, with national programmes and aims (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014). This has allowed the initiators to recruit members due to national contexts and goals. Regarding Syria, the SMB has been, as mentioned by(Teitelbaum, 2011a) , a small elitist organization. However, the current socio-political programmes of the organization have been strongly influenced by *Ulama* (religious scholars), such as the Egyptian born Sheikh Yousef Al-Qaradawi (in Qatar) and the Syrian Mahmoud Al-Mira (in Saudi Arabia).

In fact, many of the former and current SMB leaders were *Ulama* themselves, such as Mustafa Al-Sibai, Abdul-Fatah Abu Ghouddah, and Muonir Al-Ghaddban (see Chapter 4 and Appendix 6). This influenced the SMB's statutes, as the members consulted Islamic

legal guidelines before adopting specific programmes. All of the organization's internal practises are compliant with Islamic law(Teitelbaum, 2011a). Resultantly, a significant feature of the SMB's organisation is that all members of its leadership need to have in-depth religious knowledge. This has been the case since the foundation of the SMB in 1948 by the charismatic Al-Sibai (Pierret, 2013, p. 179).

Al-Sibai acknowledged that after World War II, the French colonialists had left Syria in not only a state of economic chaos, but in significant political turmoil, especially for the Sunni civil society of Syria. The alarm and confusion were caused by a new group of secular militias who were primarily supported by the up-and-coming Alawite minority. This resulted from the arrangement of Syrian borders by the French mandate in 1920, following the fall of the Ottoman Empire. To Al-Sibai, it became clear that the French occupation had amalgamated an ethnically and religiously diverse population, with the resulting turbulence continuing into modern day Syria.

Since the SMB was founded it, possessed a strict hierarchical ladder similar to the one belonging to the EMB. They believed that this would provide them with a solid base from which they could educate the people with a demanding, yet moderate (*wasatiah*), Islamic programme (see 1.3.4 and 4.2). This ladder effectively means that members of the organization need to prove the strength of their character before they can reach the higher leadership positions. These proofs include: a willingness to gain religious knowledge, financial contributions to worthy causes, and efforts to increase one's social engagement. Despite minor local adaptations, the SMB's structure, recruitment systems, and training methods remain largely identical to those of the EMB, which set high character targets to attain before leadership positions were given (Krämer, 2009; Mitchell, 1993; Pargeter, 2013) .

Al-Banna began the *Usra* (family) system. The *Usra* is the smallest unit within the larger MB structure. Anybody wanting to join the MB needed to first join an *Usra* through which they underwent spiritual education designed to cover communal matters and self-reflections with *Tarbiah* (education). The *Usra* was limited to active MB members only. Hassan Al-Banna emphasised that the MB's *Dawa* (preaching) needed to be through education, *Tarbiah*, and *Jihad Al-Nefs* (self-assessment and communal duties). These

three aspects are meant to represent the basic pillars of comprehensive and all-encompassing *Dawa*.

The SMB adopted similar methods whilst aiming to promote a 'Syrian concept'. Their *Dawa* was carried out primarily through weekly study circles, *Usar Al-Takween*, and *Usar Al-A'mal*. The study circles ensured that members received essential Islamic knowledge, something which is considered to be a cornerstone of the SMB's ideology. *Usar Al-Takween* (the smallest unit in the preparatory stage) was established to provide the necessary *Tarbiah*. *Usar Al-A'mal* (the working groups) was established to promote justice, *Dawa*, and *Jihad Al-Nefs*.

This proved an effective strategy for the SMB, who did not make any significant changes to this structure for a number of years. However, this leadership recruitment and training system was no longer sustainable in the early 1980s. Hafiz Al-Assad outlawed the SMB and its leadership was forced into exile. The *Usra* circles could no longer be formed or held due to the political repression. Whilst in exile, members of the SMB carried out unofficial SMB-esque *Dawa* activities. They tried hard to integrate in their new host countries and avoid breaking any laws. Following the 2011 uprising, the SMB leadership considered these environmental settings to be the reason why a generation (or two) of Syrian youths identified ideologically with the SMB, but were not officially a part of it through *Baya*.

Whatever the reason, following the 2011 uprising the SMB's efforts to revitalize itself were hindered by its strict internal organizational structures. The circle of leaders consisted of passionate, ambitious, and moderate SMB members, as they had all passed through the rigorous years-long programs, and had proven their engagement. These individuals were able to make strategic and organizational changes to the SMB. Only privileged members who reached the level of *Al-Raqeeb* were allowed to vote and choose the consultation board members. The reality of the post-crisis Syrian situation affected the SMB's ability to evolve and adapt to times and challenges. A broad and critical look at the SMB's internal structure will serve to elucidate any significant changes to it resulting from the 2011 uprising.

5.4 The SMB's Internal Statutes post-2011

Regarding MB's general organization, (Masoud, 2013)mentions that the "storied organizational effectiveness of the SMB stems in large part from a member recruitment process designed to select only the most highly skilled, committed cadres". However, following the 2011 Syrian uprising, questions arose regarding the efficiency of the SMB's internal structure. As will be shown later, younger interviewee respondents (SMB affiliates or members), who came together after residing in Arab and Western countries, suggested that a new organizational structure would pave the way for a revival and propagation of the SMB's mission. This view is echoed by other activists as well who have been supporting Syrians in Turkey, something they view as unprecedented and representative of the dire situation of the Syrians.

The fate of the SMB as a Syrian socio-political organization is not solely dependent upon the escalating developments on the ground in Syria. As Chapter 6 will show, the political performance of the SMB's leadership on the international stage, along with their ability to win support from regional and international stakeholders, will also affect the outcome of the organization. The Syrian crisis required quick responses and coordinated action, and this was acknowledged by the SMB, whose structure was based on individual responsibilities, diplomatic knowledge, political experience, and charismatic leadership. Therefore, the SMB was, at the time of the crisis, represented by capable individuals (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014). However, because the SMB structure had not undergone any major changes since its inception by Al-Sibai, only those members with longstanding memberships were able to vote or run for leadership positions. Therefore, only these individuals were involved in decision making.

Resultantly, younger members who had joined post-2011, as well as other SMB affiliates, felt frustrated as they were unable to benefit the organization significantly with their fresh understanding of the local dynamics in Syria. Despite their novel approaches to the Syrian crisis, these new members were barred from running for leadership positions as they had not undergone the years-long programs and had not had time to show sufficient engagement with the organization. This made it almost impossible to integrate these new members quickly into the organization's decision-making centres.

Young members of the SMB frequently mentioned these criticisms (Sermini, Gaziantep, 2014; Toma, Gaziantep, 2014). To some extent, these opinions were also shared by more senior members of the organization, such as Al-Bayanouni. According to Al-Bayanouni: "it seems that there is a necessity of modernizing and easing the SMB organization's decision-making process" (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014). Nevertheless, he equally mentioned that the SMB is an Islamic movement that is open to all active Muslims who share their goals and visions with the organization.

This primary criterion for an affiliate or member of the SMB is a broad one. Internal statutes describe this 'primary stage', in which the prospective 'brother' or 'sister' becomes trained and aware of the Islamic practises and ideologies of the group through study circles. The individual is required to study selected verses of the Quran, which mostly deal with respectful behaviour. This criterion, though seemingly simple and easy to accomplish, can lead to a slowing of the recruitment process. In the post-uprising Syrian environment, not every individual felt that attending weekly study circles was a priority at the time. People struggling to fulfil their basic daily needs found it difficult to attend these circles every week, despite their desire to join a socio-political Islamic movement.

Interviews in Turkey showed that the Syrian people were more concerned with managing their daily tasks than attending study circles. This observation reflects the statements of (Singerman, 2004), who said "social movements emerge out of local contexts," and that the "political environment is key to an understanding of an Islamist movement's agenda and trajectory" (Singerman, 2004:144). This explains the manner of Al-Sibai's inception of the SMB in the 1940s. Post-2011, however, the political situation had changed, as SMB members operating from outside of Syria no longer had any significant influence within the country. Nevertheless, SMB members, even after 30 years of exile, considered themselves as being a part of the Syrian community with strong emotional attachments to the country. These members shared the grievances of the Syrians in Syria and in refugee camps across the world.

The SMB considered all Syrians to be potential members, but in return, many Syrians argued that there was no need to regulate membership through religious activities (e.g.

memorising parts of the Quran); they felt that their connection with god as their creator was sufficient evidence of their commitment. SMB membership progression also demanded an extensive level of evidence regarding community support commitments. To reach the stage of 'The Supporter' (*Al-Nassir*), a candidate needed to be "an active supporter of the SMB and believe in its ideology. The supporter can take active roles in the SMB's social activities" (Ikhwan web, 2007) .

The Syrian crisis posed the question of how the SMB's leadership would appoint active duties to their supporters. The SMB had proven that its networking was functionable, even whilst in exile, but the current Syrian situation was different; communication facilities were failing, and the environment was a much more dangerous one. Even if they ventured into the so-called free zones, Russian war-planes and Assad's helicopter's barrel bombs had proven anything but reassuring (McKeran, 2017). This made the organization's activities difficult for all senior members of the SMB. The junior members were often imprisoned within the warzone or within refugee camps under the control of their host countries.

A thorough look at the next stage in the SMB's recruitment process highlights why the reform-orientated SMB members are calling for changes. To be a 'Member' (*Al-Odu*) (referring to the rank and not the broader sense of the word) of the SMB, "the Brother [or sister] must be actively engaged with SMB-related social duties for at least one year. These activities should not interfere with competing prosperities and responsibilities in other organizations, yet solely committing to Islamic values. He/she must be nominated by at least two members of the SMB and has to give the oath/'*Baya*'". The question is again raised as to how a 'Supporter' could possibly fulfil such a criterion by working actively and regularly for the organization in a warzone. Measuring these activities in such an environment was also difficult, especially when considering that the dynamics on the Syrian ground were changing hourly.

The concerns of a Syrian youth (who wished to remain anonymous out of fear of the Syrian *muckabarat* (secret services), who were active at Turkish border cities) may have reached the executive members of the SMB. In his opinion, the SMB could play a much more active public role if they were to be recognized by the Syrian people as the best

organized oppositional political party. He worried that: "time is running out for the Syrian people, yet our organization's leadership is not showing keenness to cut or to adapt these kinds of time-consuming requirements, with their complicated nominating and '*Baya*' procedures to appoint supervisors."

Having analyzed just the entry levels of the SMB's organization, the strictness of the structure has already become apparent. This stringency hindered the SMB in answering the three questions that Beekum sees as essential for any organization: "Where are we going? Where could we be going? How do we get there?" (Beekum, 2006: 5). It should be mentioned that the SMB did try to show their vision of a pluralistic Syria clearly (see Appendix 5). The reality, however, is that effective management requires proactivity and adaptation to one's environment to effect change, not just theoretical roadmaps.

Now that the entry levels of the SMB's membership ladder have been explained, a summary of the more senior levels will be given. This will serve to highlight the inconsistencies within the organization's internal structure, something exacerbated by the political demands of post-2011 Syria. The next steps on the SMB's membership ladder are:

a) 'The Affiliated' (*Al-Muntasib*). This individual must have received two years of training in an SMB *Usra*. Members have to learn to, and show themselves to, sacrifice their money and time to support the wider society; they additionally have to pay an annual membership fee. '*Al-Muntasib*' provides consultation to the SMB's leading committee and he/she is recognized as being an active member of the SMB 'family'. Until 1982, this consultation stage may have proven effective, because the *Usra*'s functioned regionally.

   Post-2011, the SMB leadership understood that "the costs of political participation in the region are high, and, thus, people turn to informal networks to organize and advance their interests" (Singerman, 2004, p. 144)Post-2011, the SMB no longer functioned like a unified organization because of the uncertainties resulting from the proxy war inside Syria; there was a high level of fear of the regime. Additionally, since 2013, the extremist

group ISIS, who were terrorizing the local population, considered the SMB to be outlaws due to the more moderate nature of their organization; this was reiterated by eye-witnesses and long-term SMB members in Turkey (Interviewees, Istanbul and Gaziantep 2014, 2015).

b) 'The Operating Brother' (*Al-A'meel*). The SMB's statutes state that to attain this rank: "the member must be promoted by one of the SMB leadership. He/she must have been working for three years at least with the SMB, and have contributed from his money, effort, and time towards charity work or other humanitarian related activities, which allow him/her to act as an official representative for the SMB." These requirements reflect the observations made by Singerman and other academics that: "[T]he Islamist vision of the "good life" is "not simply" about 'religion' or 'politics', but is part of a cultural battle over the very definitions of this term" (Singerman, 2004; Wuthnow, 1991, p. 16).

The SMB demonstrated its intention to show its presence both in Syria and among the exiled Syrian community. The SMB's leader may have to consider that: "they have more commonly and successfully directed their message and organizational strategies toward changing practices and the meaning of everyday life" (Singerman, 2004, p. 150). Otherwise, the SMB's stringent recruitment and progression practises could discourage and block people who wished to join such an organization.

c) 'The Captain' (*Al-Nakib*). To attain this rank, the SMB leadership must promote the individual and he/she must have good organizational skills. At this rank level, the individual has the right to elect the leadership committee. To qualify for the role of *Al-Nakib*, he/she must be well known by the SMB's leadership. This is very difficult in practise in the Syrian warzone, even though the organization's headquarters are based in neighbouring Istanbul, Turkey. The changing circumstances and the provocative environment surrounding the Syrians mean that meetings with the SMB's leadership would entail very dangerous border crossings.

> Refugees have little opportunity to relocate from one place to another without valid travel permits. In light of this, how is it possible for the SMB leadership to test the organizational skills of the refugees? Upon hearing criticisms such as these, the SMB's leadership aim to show their openness and willingness to rectify internal issues. However they wish to proceed, they cannot be oblivious to the effects of the evolving, multi-facetted, war-torn environment within Syria.

Every individual member of the SMB will need to make decisions that they are satisfied with. Opp (2009) mentions that "persons sacrifice," that is, do what they think is best for them and not what objectively (i.e. from the viewpoint of a third omniscient person) yields the highest possible benefits." (Opp, 2009, p. 3). For potential SMB members who agree with the organization's ideologies, the lack of immediate reward or acknowledgement may steer them towards other organizations through which they can vent their frustrations. For example, the apolitical '*Sufi*' organization (who were tolerated by the Assad regime) gained a massive number of proponents with their Islamic agendas inside Syria following the exile of the SMB (Khatib, 2011; Lesch and Haas, 2016; Pierret, 2013). The group is still recruiting (mostly female) intellectuals outside Syria (Suzan, personal communication, Killis, 2016)

An individual dissuaded from joining the SMB due to its demanding criteria would seek alternatives to achieve his/her religious ambitions. The decision to join the SMB with its rigorous, years-long membership ladder is essentially a personal decision that SMB affiliates must make. Furthermore, the barriers to reaching positions of genuine influence within the SMB's hierarchy within a reasonable timeframe, and without large financial and physical sacrifices, will make potential SMB "individuals choose between the behavioural alternatives open to them by maximizing their utility"(Opp, 2009, p. 3). If the potential affiliates are willing to bear burdens to demonstrate their goodwill towards the organization, the organization must respond by showing its goodwill towards the individuals by providing management posts as rewards for these candidates.

The membership requirements apply equally to men and women; the SMB's leadership boasts that their organization's upper management positions are open to all candidates from the 'Sisterhood section' too. However, anonymous female interviewees in Turkey (2014, 2015) still perceive gender inequality. The SMB leadership claim that they are aiming for women to represent at least 20% of the general membership and at least 10% of the executive board (*Majliss Al-Shoura*). However, these intentions are difficult to translate into figures, because there are no reliable statistics available on the subject. SMB leader generally agree that they need to actively promote greater female participation in the SMB executive council board. This step could serve to revive the existing female section; the greater participation of women would not be something new for the organization, rather, it would be a return to their state pre-exile (personal communication with: Al-Bayanouni, London, 2015; Salem, London, 2014; Waleed, London, 2014)

The SMB executive board members had actively approached female members who were active pre-1980s, and had been staying in exile since then (Al-Droubi,personal communication, Vinna, 2014). The SMB's leadership stresses that it has always kept the doors open for its female members who are interested in being engaged in wide-ranging social activities, including human relief work, which the SMB had been actively promoting post-2011(Al-Bayanouni, personal communication, London, 2015) .They also stressed that it was not easy recruiting elderly female members who were willing to appear on public podiums and work independently for noble causes.

A deeper analysis identified two primary reasons for this condition. The first reason is the traditional, culturally conservative upbringing of these elderly women. These upbringings have not promoted female engagement in public affairs as much (personal communication with, Salem, London, 2014 and female interviewees, Turkey, 2016). The second reason is the fact that many elderly Syrian women had never been provided with free speech or power under the Ba'ath party - this was held predominantly by the male members.

Due to the rules and regulations of the repressive Syrian government, female activists were not allowed to partake in any religious gatherings or organizational activities other

than those that were solely religious in nature. These well-known circles and their '*annsat*' (female leaders) were recognized by the state's secret service as being apolitical. History has proven that the hands of the *muckabarat* did not respect the female wing of the SMB. The SMB have mentioned that a group of their socially active female members was infiltrated by the *muckabarat*, leading to imprisonment and torture of the females in the regime's cells, traumatizing Syrian women and preventing their participation in socio-political activities (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Y. Al-Najjar, Gaziantep, 2015; Salem, London, 2014). Many females who belonged to the SMB, or showed any kind of political engagement, were detained and questioned, put under house arrest, or prevented from leaving the country (Anonymous interviewee, Turkey, 2014).

Due to these security concerns, the SMB has been somewhat reluctant to fully publicly promote their female members. They feel that these women are safer in exile, and that if their activities are made too public, they may be tracked and harassed by the Syrian Secret Service; Banan Al-Tantawi's assassination in Aachen, Germany serves as a stark reminder of this very real danger (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Al-Najjar, Gaziantep, 2015; Lefèvre, 2013; Salem, London, 2014).

Nevertheless, the SMB leaders acknowledge the potential benefits resulting from female integration into the organization, especially in its higher ranks. Dr. Mohamad Waleed, who has recently been elected as a guide for the SMB, emphasized the fact that SMB leaders have continuously encouraged female participation. He states that: "They (SMB leaders) have been open for members equal to both genders to progress with feasible ideas and concepts regarding their vision for a modern future in Syria. In particular, the present leadership is investing in women's empowerment, through the above-mentioned factors" (Waleed, London, 2014). Female participation, especially in political decision-making, is viewed as being essential by the SMB's leaders.

The SMB has pushed for women with leadership qualities to be involved in designing, improving, and implementing programs for the SMB (Waleed, London 2014). Zuhair Salem mentions that there are some social traditions that prevent Syrian women from advancing in political roles. As a member of the executive board, he has personally worked for many years to overcome such constraints. He states that he: "used to visit our

sisters and their gatherings and I tried encourage all to take steps towards different possible SMB activities." However, he mentions that the discussions often took place within a self-limiting frame of thought that limited the action radius to "social and charity work" (Salem, personal communication, London, 2014).

Salem emphasizes the SMB's historic determination increase the possibilities for Syrian women. There was much work done on this front in the past. However, post-2011, the environment has changed drastically. This begs the question whether increasing female participation still a top priority for the SMB. The SMB's leadership has again demonstrated its appreciation for novel ideas for aid programs that have been thought of by Syrian women. The SMB have acted upon these ideas to bring aid to the Syrian ground and to Syrian refugees. The SMB has acknowledged the need to open new pathways of aid, especially for the many women who have faced tremendous life-changing hardship in the evolving and dramatic Syrian warzone environment (personal communication with: Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Salem, London, 2014; Waleed, London, 2014).

Syria's urban women have traditionally worked in the educational, medical, or nursing sectors. Over recent years, this has changed as more females have entered fields such as engineering, humanities, and computer sciences. Additionally, the daughters of MB members had been encouraged to pursue higher education in Western universities or newly established universities in the Arab Gulf states. The SMB was therefore met with a new workforce of educated and confident women in 2011. The families of these women worked hard to endure the circumstances and educate their daughters whilst keeping them politically aware.

Interviewees suggested that young women with university degrees and/or professional women who had been raised within SMB (or their affiliates) families were invited by high-ranking SMB members to bring in ideas to support the SMB's vision for the future of Syria (see appendices). The fact that there still is the need for a 'female section' shows that the movement still has some way to go in furthering the influence of its female members. The leadership has chosen to avoid reforming the female section at this time due to the risks of internal disputes. Though the results of such reformations may prove

beneficial, the SMB's leadership has made other 'more pressing' concerns its priorities. The SMB are traditionally thought of as being a pragmatic organization. The question then arises whether they could use the fact that they currently have no official political presence in Syria to their advantage, carrying out internal reform before they become more politically involved.

Encouraging internal segments of the SMB's membership to speak out and voice their concerns would not weaken the organization. Rather, it would strengthen it by relieving the frustrations of its members. In the long-term, the SMB can benefit from this as a social movement and it can become a relied-upon political actor that responds to the contemporary concerns of its membership. The SMB's leadership and its *Majlees Al-Shura* (advisory council to the executive internal decision-making board) have repeatedly shown their clear preference to adhere to the organization's historic practises as a grassroots organization; perhaps a risky move given the current concerns.

In the opinion of the SMB's leaders, the organization has consistently been meeting its members' expectations, both young and old. This includes meeting the expectations of the members calling for reform. It was made very clear through the interviews with the leading members of the SMB, who highlighted the fact they were able to not only keep the organization alive, but to keep it functioning, making apparent their political vision despite being exiled for decades. The leaders are used to handling issues whilst dealing with time and space constraints and poor conditions, making them well-equipped to handle the challenges of post-crisis Syria (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014). However, this reliance on 'experience' can also be viewed as a rather easily discreditable attempt to delegitimize the sharing of power.

The organization has survived with this 'Old Guard' as its officially elected leaders. However, this experience whilst living for decades in foreign lands does not necessarily justify the keeping of the Old Guard and the refusal to accept newer, younger members as leaders. The SMB's leadership has been questioned on many occasions over the past 60 years. Differences within grassroot movements have long been acknowledged by social movement theorists. Masoud remarks regarding the SMB's position on the Old Guard post-2011, he states that: "However, it may equally be argued that the

movement's emphasis on obedience to authority gives its top leadership greater room to manoeuvre – ideologically and operationally – than organizations whose leaders must hew closely to the opinions of the rank and file" (Masoud 2013, 493) .

Nevertheless, the SMB leadership acknowledges the need for structural reorganization and for the reorientation of its far-reaching aims. In order to implement major internal changes, they need to consider external factors that the SMB cannot influence. These external factors are the result of the nature of the proxy war in Syria, and the multidimensional international consequences resulting from the crisis, including military interventions and refugee-related problems.

It may prove worthwhile for SMB leaders to reflect on significant changes in their frame of thinking, as the organization is now aiming to attain national and international recognition. There are some signs of a change of mind from the elder members. Though the leaders are showing moments of goodwill at present, it is questionable whether such gestures would be adequate to attract a significant number of female members to join the SMB's leadership ranks.

Campbell states that women's groups in the USA "…were more successful when they framed their demands in ways that convinced people that granting women the right to vote would reinforce rather than undermine women's traditional identity and gender roles" (McCammon et al., 2001). Taking this into consideration, as well as the unprecedented challenges in modern day Syria, emphasizing gender equality in an Islamic movement could provide the SMB leaders with an advantage over their rivals, allowing them to gain credibility from the Syrian people.

This is a key step for the SMB; educated and committed women are wondering when the doors for exiled and displaced women, and for women residing in rebel-held areas, will open. Such women are: "willing to contribute positively to different kinds and forms of social engagement programmes in general, or programmes provided in particular for children and women in need would be open without barriers of hierarchical structures" (Suzan, personal communication, Killis, 2016) The SMB may, at a later time (following the fall of the Assad regime), rely on the votes and support of Syria's women.

These programs are in line with Syrian traditions and culture, identifying women as the primary carers of children and the primary maintainers of family life. For most Syrian women, participation in any program would place increased physical (e.g. sharing family, household, and activity-related duties), psychological (e.g. warzone-related issues), and financial (e.g. logistic, travel, and childcare expenses) burden on them. Indeed, it has always been a challenge for Syria's female intellectuals to join the SMB and alter their living circumstances.

Nevertheless, the SMB leaders seem to be considering to make the enrolment paths for both men and women easier (Waleed, London, 2014). Either a shorter 'fast-track' option should be made available, or significant changes to the recruitment and progression process in-line with the demands of reform-orientated SMB members should be made. If the SMB is looking forward to drastically changing its outlook through the revolution whilst remaining an Islamic organization with socio-political intentions, it must seriously reflect on its current context and the changes it needs to make to adapt to it. These alternative strategies, which will be analyzed in section 5.5, have been proposed by concerned members of the organization who feel that the SMB is at breaking point; they see these changes as being essential for the long-term survival of the organization and its socio-political ideology. Although time is not in their favour, the SMB leaders still have the opportunity to make these changes and adapt to their new environment.

5.5 The Modest 'Fast Track' Option versus a Reflective Change Option

In light of the above, reform-orientated members of the SMB have long insisted that the leadership demonstrate greater levels of flexibility. Syria is undergoing difficult political, humanitarian, and social challenges, and so many believe that reforms must be carried out to overhaul the SMB's organizational structure. The aforementioned changes, such as the simplification of the entry process, the opening of decision-making positions, and the adjustment (or even removal) of the 'sensitive' female section of the organization, could be bold initial steps towards reform.

However, according to the young reform-orientated members, these changes would still be insufficient in equipping the SMB to deal with the current situation. They feel that

there is an urgent need for broader changes to make the SMB sustainable in this new environment. Reform-orientated second and third generation SMB members in exile have clearly voiced these concerns. It became clear that although the leadership acknowledged the need for change, they eventually struggled to introduce new ideas.

In the face of Syria's emerging challenges, the essential task ahead of the SMB leaders was to enhance their image as a distinguished Syrian Islamic socio-political movement that can function as an effective opposition to the current regime. A number of influential active members recognized the need for the organization to evaluate the diversity of its internal sectors. One of these young SMB activists, who has been active in support and relief work for Syrian refugees, stated that he hopes this critical approach would lead to a sensitive and transparent outcome, bringing the 'extreme poles' within the organization closer together. He recognized that although the disagreements within the organization were disagreements regarding its structure and not its ideology, they were still both time and resource consuming disagreements (male interviewee, Istanbul, 2015). However, the SMB may have reached a boiling point, something which could also hinder ideological progress. Interviews with SMB members have shown that they aim to test reform agendas before welcoming and implementing them, so long as the agendas are based on real concerns and constructive criticisms. These testing times have served as a testing ground for the organization.

Promoting diversity and accepting criticisms are healthy for organizations in general, and this phenomenon is known as the 'Melucian Challenge'. Melucci mentions that an organization is not a homogenous body, but rather, it contains – for its betterment – strongly oppositing forces with considerable demands on its leadership (Melucci, 1996). In response to these challenges, the SMB leaders need to reflect on their situation. The Syrian crisis has posed an unprecedented political demand on the SMB and the Syrian population; the leaders are tasked with keeping the organization alive, undivided, and strong.

The SMB's executive board eventually evaluated itself in the face of increasing pressure, and it did well to broaden its scope of action. To meet the demands imposed upon an ideologically Islamic movement during the crisis, the leaders launched organizational

platforms. Members of the SMB who joined the organisation because they were searching for a noble cause to financially and intellectually invest in did not hesitate when investing in these humanitarian activities. This was widely understood as being a well-defined and convincing effort to demonstrate the organization's unity to the Syrians.

The organization's reputation serves to benefit from these humanitarian activities, but they are still in need for transparent structural reform to provide more appropriate access to its members (such as when electing leaders). This change should also serve to improve the SMB's image in the eyes of the media and academia who, historically, have viewed the SMB as being a clandestine organization (Sayigh and Lefèvre, 2013). Furthermore, an enhanced, openly democratic internal structure could help defend against the oft-levelled criticisms against the organization regarding its public transparency. This could help unveil some of the inner workings of the SMB, showing it to be a truly ideologically moderate Islamic organization.

SMB leaders have managed to keep the organization alive over the past few decades. Now, they must work to adopt policies to ensure their survival in post-crisis Syria. First and foremost, the leadership need to 'open their minds', inviting the criticism of reform-oriented members who are calling for change within the SMB. These changes do not need to oppose the SMB's fundamental ambitions to provide socio-political support to the Syrian population. It would ease the path for mobilization and recruitment inside Syria, something which the SMB is in urgent need of.

Campbell (2006) mentions that: "[F]raming involves the strategic creation and manipulation of shared understandings and interpretations of the world, its problems, and viable courses of action."(Campbell, 2005, pp. 41–68). He highlighted the importance of adopting new understandings to gain ideological grounds. Although (Campbell 2006) example is regarding a very dissimilar social movement, it still underlines an important challenge hampering the SMB post-2011: "[F]or instance, Verta Taylor and Nancy Whitter (1992) showed how the lesbian feminist movement struggled mightily to define and frame its identity, and how it ended up with several identities depending on how

different groups defined their boundaries and consciousness." (Taylor and Whittier, 1992).

This suggests that adjustments to the SMB to turn it into a modern, efficient, and professional Islamic social movement have become a necessity for the organization. The executive board needs to improve a decades-old internal structure with the intention of opening up the organization to competent new members who will eventually take part in decision-making on the organization's executive board. According to those calling for reform, more flexibility in the years-long stages of progression will encourage participation in socio-political activities. As mentioned by a younger member of the SMB, a lean management style would positively affect the work of both new recruits and of long-standing members who have been less active in recent years due to the hierarchical structure of the organization (Sermini, Gaziantep, 2014; Toma, Gaziantep, 2014).

These changes would attract new members, especially educated Syrian females. One such change – organized by the young female SMB members in exile – to promote female participation proved to be less effective in reality. The fact is that programs designed by SMB women for female empowerment were widely appreciated by the SMB's leaders post-2014, but they were not very effective, as the women have proven unfamiliar with making important decisions for the organization. This is partly due to many factors related to the Syrian crisis, including security concerns due to families being displaced, and logistical problems surrounding living and travel expenses inside and outside of Syria. Additionally, the culturally traditional duties of many Syrian women made the demands of the roles unreasonable.

One interview with a Syrian intellectual demonstrates how others have perceived the SMB as being 'too traditional' despite their attempts at adopting a contemporary outlook. She disagrees, and recalls that during a casual meeting after the 2011 Syrian uprising, she learnt about the SMB's interests in organizing educational activities: "I felt comfortable to adopt the ideology, which seemed, to me, quite contemporary while moderate". With this impression, she decided to progress to the next step towards an SMB membership. She mentions that the SMB could benefit from her "formal and well-

structured educational proposal" (female interviewee, personal communication, Gaziantep, 2015). The analysis showed that newfound, informal local councils in rebel-held regions struggled with the sheer number of pupils they received who had not previously any education. This was due to the disastrous situation in war-torn Syria, which robbed these children of their childhood (see the UN reports and Human Rights Organization's assessments found in Chapter 6). Eventually, this intellectual did not join the SMB due to its 'static' internal ladder.

Having been brought up in a family with moderate, mainstream Islamic views, the young activist felt ideologically bonded to the SMB. She serves as a good example of a female activist who has concerns regarding the SMB's activities and decision-making processes. However, other comments by her highlight how the SMB does not utilise its potential members fully during this critical time; she states that:

> "I was very keen on joining the SMB. However, now knowing that I would have to go through all these years of training until I can have an influence in decision-making has made me lose interest in joining the SMB as a formal member. Nevertheless, I remain in informal contact with the SMB's leadership and will bring my ideas forward, if they would be interested in them. I still believe that if I would have been given the chance to obtain liabilities within the organization, I possibly could have had a large impact on the SMB's organizational educational outlook" (female interviewee, personal communication, Gaziantep, 2015).

At an initial glance, it seems that similar criticisms have been levelled against the organization by other young members and affiliates. However, these interviews have shown that members of the old guard and leadership have also been open to adopting these fast-track options. These criticisms, which are based on individual perceptions and evaluations of the organization, have affected the group's unity. Reform-orientated SMB members are demanding changes to allow new entrants easy access to positions of responsibility within the executive board of the SMB, effectively bypassing the organization's hierarchical ladder. In their opinion, such changes would validate the SMB's organizational structure, making it more palatable to the Syrian public. They claim that these changes need not mean that the fundamental positions of authority and rules within the group be changed, rather, they would just open space for the progression for new recruits.

The SMB may benefit from analyzing the EMB's actions following the assassination of its leader, Hassan Al-Banna. This event, along with the existing challenges facing the EMB, required a rapid amendment of the EMB's leadership recruitment process. Barbara Zollner (2009) showed in her research on the EMB that the organization parted from its hierarchical structure significantly once Hassan Al-Hudaiby was nominated to be the leader. In hindsight, this was a well-reasoned decision as Al-Hudaiby was already a well-respected judge in Egypt who had the required experience to lead the EMB in the 1950s (Zollner, 2009).

The Egyptian advisory board acknowledged that the ideal candidate "had to be recruited externally", and so the decision was made. "[A]s part of the strategy for public rehabilitation, the ideal nominee had to be publicly recognized and well connected to the political power" (Zollner, 2009, p. 19). The SMB may adopt such a strategy to appease the demands of the members calling for a reform of the organization's decision-making process and to provide room for a new, well-known, and experienced leader. However, this strategy may just offer theoretical reassurance with no empirical rectification of the problems at hand, and no reassurance of the survival of the SMB. The analysis in the research shows that unpredictability of the Syrian crisis makes the SMB's success or failure with each strategy difficult to predict. The daily anguish experienced by the Syrian people has taken a heavy toll on them; the SMB, despite these changes, may not be recognized and lauded.

As the strain of the situation in Syria has grown, so too has the strain within the SMB itself. The tension has led to many debates occurring within the organization. All sides of the debates share the passion, anger, sadness, and grief of their countrymen. The international crimes of the Assad regime and its Iranian and Russian allies, as well as the terrorist actions of *Daesh*, have placed significant and unprecedented stress on the region. The SMB went through devastating events, such as the 1982 Hama massacre. Its leaders now need to be able to use that experience to deal with the larger events in present-day Syria; unusual times demand unusual approaches. Long-term SMB members refer to history, tradition, and culture to overcome these challenges. They argue that new

entrants need to prove their strength and character during tough times before holding senior positions of authority.

This means that the new members need to have internalized the ideologies of the group, and they need to have attained religious knowledge and leadership experience. They also need to have undergone the prerequisite self-imposed training before being appointed to positions of authority by the board (Al-Bayanouni, personal communication, London, 2015). However, proponents of these high expectations should take into consideration the repressive environment of present day Syria. SMB affiliates need to personally feel that it is worth joining the organization and undergoing all the tests to reach the positions of authority. Nevertheless, they should first recognize that it is their collective actions that matter to the organization and not individual ranks, as mentioned in Opp's analysis of social movements (Opp, 2009).

Demanding years of active duty in the organization before consideration for leadership roles is not a stance that is appreciative of the warzone environment in Syria. People are constantly having to flee from one region to another. Syrian families that are unwilling to leave the country are searching for shelter in other regions, often facing inhumane conditions. Other exhausted Syrians have taken paths, the financial and emotional costs of which they are unaware. Often, their lives are at risk even after reaching the supposedly 'safer' regions of Europe. Due to these dire circumstances, it can be assumed that the SMB would gain credibility through their affiliates by giving new members leadership opportunities and a chance to revitalize the organization.

That being said, no MB organization has successfully managed to do this. Additionally, there is no published research available describing this phenomenon in Islamic organizations and describing what the end result would look like. The SMB, therefore, has the opportunity of showing its willingness to adopt contemporary outlooks and make the necessary changes, proving untrue the analysts who suggest that Islamic movements inherently resist change.

If the SMB's leaders seriously consider the requests of the reformists, it would show that they have taken the environment of the conflict into consideration and have adapted

accordingly. Opening the door for recruitment to affiliates and other competent and interested individuals would serve as a gesture of 'goodwill' from the SMB leadership. This would improve the SMB's reputation as a grassroots social movement, helping support its integration into Syria's political system. Currently, it seems as if the SMB is not able to utilize all of the available opportunities to increase its membership. Nevertheless, the interviews demonstrated that there is still a lot of unexplored potential to 'gain land' among Syrians in exile, making the organization more accessible to new and old members who wish to take part in decision-making. In the eyes of these members, the change will have a positive impact on mobilization and recruitment, benefitting the organization as a whole.

The SMB's internal structure has provided stability in the past. Periodic meetings of the executive board have been useful as the environment and conditions are discussed in them. It must be remembered that it was the SMB's leadership that kept the organization alive over the past few decades, despite the harshness of their environment. They developed strong networks between people and across a number of countries. Diani and McAdam consider this to be part of the inherent "nature of a social movement" (Diani and McAdam, 2003, p. 1) .

This may have been the case under the relatively 'stable' situation in Syria between 1982 and 2011. However, post-2011 Syria demands a different organization and management strategy. This new strategy can still be based on the deep-rooted networks of the old strategy that kept the SMB afloat for so many years. The SMB just need to ensure that this network does not maintain its old hierarchical structures that are preventing many new members and affiliates from joining in with the decision-making. According to the leaders of the SMB, the organization's intention has always been to improve the standards of community life in Syria. Pierret mentions, when defining social movements: "Social movements are sustained and intentional efforts to foster or retard social changes primarily outside the normal institutional channels encouraged by authorities: George Ritzer and J Michael Ryan (eds.), *The Concise Encyclopedia of Sociology* (Chisterester and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011)" (Pierret, 2013, p. 565). However, these efforts are viewed as being insufficient in the eyes of young SMB members who feel neglected and marginalized by the leaders when it comes to decision-making.

The exclusion of the wider members of the SMB network from decision-making was not a massive issue during the organization's time in exile; major decisions were made only infrequently. The SMB's activities during this time were predominantly limited to social and religious gatherings and circles. This was a result of the host states' politically tense environments. The SMB's leaders took somewhat apolitical stances in order to minimize their being viewed as potential threats to the host states. Contrastingly, the pressures placed on the SMB post-2011 require faster, and more, decisions to be made. In this situation, the lack of representation of the SMB's social fabric has been shown to have some detrimental effects on the organization.

In his highly acknowledged analysis of social movements, Charles Tilly observed that the leaders of these movements should react in accordance to existing, or upcoming, circumstances by recognizing: "that political opportunities have common properties over a wide variety of circumstances…" and understanding that "the explanations themselves involve specification of how and why those elements – mobilizing structure, political opportunities, and so on – behave and interact as they do" (Tilly, 2004, p. x) . The interviews showed that, despite the youth's perceptions of the executive board members, the executive members are increasingly recognizing the presence and potential of the next generation. They understand that political integration is only plausible for the SMB if they work as a united organization comprised of political activists from each generation (see above interviews with Al-Bayanouni, Waleed, Salem, and others).

In 2014, the SMB aimed to move towards lean management by appointing Dr. Mohamad Waleed as its new *Murakeb Al-Am*. This choice was not agreed upon unanimously within the SMB. It was thought that this move would involve more youth activists. The British educated doctor had been an experienced member of the SMB's executive board member for many years, and he was one of the foremost initiators of the *Wa'ad* party (see Chapter 6). Despite being a man in his sixties, Waleed has widely been thought of as tending towards relatively liberal views. Dr. Waleed is keen to open new paths and create new chances to form innovative ideas (Waleed, London, 2014)

It is unsurprising that these messages have been met with great hope, as ordinary members of the organization have mentioned in formal interviews during their time in social gatherings in Turkey. There is widespread belief that the old leadership is intending to gradually step aside and allow for internal reforms. Conversely, the interviews also highlighted criticisms of the changes. Members noted that major reforms had not been planned in the immediate future, and had been put aside to take place at a later point in time. They felt that the gestures of 'goodwill' were insufficient to satisfy the expectations of the reformers. These moves partly reconciled between the reformers and the leaders of the organization. However, it soon became obvious that change was needed to ensure long-lasting reconciliation between the two groups. Such a solution could involve bringing certain skilled members up to work at senior levels within the organization. In return, these individuals could be made to show evidence of being able to recognize challenges and design solutions.

All members of the organization prefer to invest their potentials in tackling socio-political issues, not in wasting time with fruitless arguments. The leadership may have been of the opinion that in this fast-moving environment, it may be better for the youth to implement any fast-paced ideas on an individual basis rather than through the SMB. This decision from the leadership was perhaps made to maintain the current members and recruit additional members both inside and outside of Syria. However, it will not necessarily lead to any alterations in the SMB.

Opening external alternatives without reforming the SMB's internal system may be an effective means for the leadership to calm tempers for the time being. Nevertheless, the calls for reform have not halted; the leadership is still under pressure to take action and act to fill the well-known gaps inside the organization. This pragmatic, yet temporary, solution is in line with the historical actions of the SMB. The SMB members have traditionally been able to mobilize and maintain the loyalty of the youth by including students and young professionals in social activities and political forums (Esposito, 1998; Lefèvre, 2013; Rihawi, Killis, 2015). The leadership is able to stay connected to the youth despite the still-present need for modifications due to the parental upbringing of the SMB members with a [generally] moderate Islamic ideology(Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Salem, London, 2014; Waleed, London, 2014).

The dynamics of the on-going crisis in Syria have pushed younger SMB members to make use of social networking. Some members have individually designed webpages and blogs, highlighting their views by sharing their personal opinions, suggestions, and messages. These members feel that the webpages and blogs would function beneficially as online platforms. The online content conforms to the SMB's ideologies, however, unlike the SMB's official publications; these blogs are fed with up-to-date news articles and are open to more 'hard-line' discussions.

SMB activists have proven their competencies on political platforms by initiating and participating in numerous conferences and events. These have been organized by them in order to assemble the Syrian opposition in exile(Al-Droubi,Vinna, 2014) . Second and third generation SMB activists in exile have invited – whilst unofficially representing the SMB – representatives of various Syrian oppositional political groups to take part in discussions in Brussels, Istanbul, Antakya, and Gaziantep (Rafael Lefèvre, 2013; Lund, 2013). These SMB members have been working to unify the opposition groups in exile. Meetings between youth of similar ages who had been raised in Syria has led to a greater understanding of the need to meet the demands of these youth, allowing them to play greater roles in effecting change.

It is worth mentioning that there are more reasons than one for these occurrences. Not all young SMB members are officially a part of the organization. This is due to the historic repression of the Assad regime that prevented them officially joining the organization through *ba'ya*[11]. The fate of the MB following the military coup in Egypt, and the detention of the freely elected president Mohammed Morsi, have led the SMB to develop deep concerns. General Al-Sisi has blacklisted the MB as being a terrorist organization. This decision was emulated by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, who both added the MB to their long lists of terrorist organizations.

This was considered and discussed by the younger SMB members. There were debates between those who wanted to be linked to the SMB and those who did not. The terrifying events abroad has led to some youth distancing themselves from officially

[11] This is process similar to swearing in or pledging allegiance to an entity, in this case the SMB.

being identified as SMB members. Instead, many second and third generation SMB younger members contribute independently by establishing NGOs in the humanitarian sector. These individuals have proven their resolve to take up the demanding and increasing workloads, building confidence and trust amongst the Syrians living inside and outside of the country. The leaders offer assurances that they understand that these groups are not an ideological departure from the organization, but they are other means of helping the cause. Through these NGOs, young members are able to carry out activities that they would not be able to carry out through the SMB, with its strict regulations and policies.

Currently, it was recognized that SMB leaders are developing a type of openness and flexibility towards innovations involving new ideas and the introduction of soft recruiting policies aimed at educating youth inside and outside of Syria. These programs, which include a broad range of socio-political activities, aim to help vulnerable Syrian people who have been dislocated by the crisis and have not been officially integrated into the SMB. The SMB's executive bureau stresses that the organization has consistently shown their willingness and capability to work with young and active individuals.

Other actions realized through individual efforts also appear to be efficient. Although they have had to overcome the rising financial demands, and muster the willpower to persevere, the second and third SMB generations have been highly motivated to take part in supporting the Syrian people. This is highlighted by their determination to take part in integrating the oppositional groups within Syria. They are aiming to academically empower the population and bring about a modern, democratic Syria. The SMB sincerely believe that the Syrian people will be able to work together for a brighter future following the collapse of the Assad regime. This generation of SMB members hope to use their Western education and professional experiences to reconstruct their homeland, whenever the chance arises. However, they also admit that it is still too early to forecast or anticipate decisions regarding rebuilding Syria after the fall of the Assad regime.

Given the current confusion in Syria, the youth's sincere intentions, and their genuine concerns, it is time for the Old Guard to give the youth greater means to effect changes with. The way the SMB leaders respond to the youth will significantly impact the

organization and their image. If they are sincere in their attempts to revive the organization, they would integrate the youth more as a response. In post-2011 Syria, this means the SMB need to take on the suggestions of the youth who have been brought up in different parts of the world and learnt new skills. If the ideas of the capable youth are not taken on board, and they leave, it would weaken the SMB as an organization. A lack of opportunities for these youth would definitely be a waste of talent, both now, and in the future. The prerequisites to holding leadership positions are limited and do not include many of the activities carried out by these young people. Their organization of conferences, meetings, and recruiting programs do not just require intellect, but also physical and emotional strength and commitment.

The youth section is not the only section of the organization that needs renewal. As previously mentioned, the female section also needs to be revamped. SMB members have proudly mentioned that their female section has been constantly growing throughout its history inside Syria. They recall that the SMB has historically been evolving and attracting women from the middle-classes. Years on, and the female section is still underrepresented in the decision-making processes and leadership levels. The extensive interviews did not elucidate a clear reason for this phenomenon. According to some respondents, the SMB's leadership have emphasised that all activities and positions are officially open to all members and both genders. They mention repeatedly that the SMB leaders have invited, encouraged, and welcomed interested women by highlighting the necessity of women's activity for the SMB's evolution. Having understood the personal barriers faced by the female SMB activists, the leaders have realized that they need to be given more space within the higher positions of the organization (personal communication with: Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Al-Droubi,Vinna, 2014; Salem, London, 2014; Waleed, London, 2014).

According to the interviewees, the female section of the SMB has historically been thought of as an important part of the organization (Salem, London, 2014; Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Al-Bayanouni, London, 2015). However, this analysis has shown that, again, due to the hierarchical ladder, it has been difficult for female members to reach the upper levels of the organization. Only a handful of female members have made it to the upper ranks, but they are still not in the uppermost positions; often, they

deal with women's issues. This is due to the specific situation of the SMB activists who are living as asylum seekers in changing cultural environments. The burden on childrearing traditionally rests with women. Most female SMB members have to limit their activism to giving Quran lessons to girls within secure circles (Al-Soufi, london, 2014).

To solve this dilemma, members have suggested appointing female relatives of male activists to positions of authority within the SMB's affiliated NGOs. In these NGOs, they could support human rights and spark change. Politically interested women have, therefore, been invited by SMB leaders to join the newly founded *Wa'ad* party to establish a gender inclusive program, increasing political awareness in a free and pluralistic Syria.

This pragmatic decision had the backing of the SMB and was in line with their ambition to increase the education and empowerment of women in their organization's factions, as well as in general public life. This is a testing ground for the SMB's internal structure. So far, no female members from any of the generations seem to have developed much socio-political leadership experience. When this occurs, and women attain high positions of leadership, the SMB may be recognized as being a modern Islamic social movement in Syria.

The SMB have stepped forward and used the crisis and its challenges as an opportunity to shed light on the diversity within their structure. Reformists, who are generally from the younger generations and SMB leaders have both focused on their primary role as an Islamic social movement. For the time being, these groups have acknowledged that their priorities lie in bringing relief to the war-damaged Syrian population. It may be the ideal time for the SMB's leaders to consider taking major steps towards changing the organization's outlook. (Campbell 2005) mentioned that " forces for change must be mobilized through framing" (Campbell, 2005, p. 54) For the SMB, this means considering a new official outlook, from being an Islamic social movement, to being an Islamic non-profit NGO. This change does not need to compromise the SMB's Islamic ideology. An SMB NGO will consist of already existing, newly founded, affiliated sub-

NGOs, which were founded post-2011 and already offer a broad range of humanitarian support to the homeless Syrian people.

This change could be rewarded, endorsed, and accredited by the Syrian population. Some SMB members state that the current organization reflects an improvement of the SMB's state as a socio-political actor. In their opinion, the SMB may have come a step closer to raising political awareness and activism in Syria, something which post-2011 Syrians are keen on achieving, especially since the doors of political activism have been kept closed by the different post-colonialist Syrian regimes. However, this is based on individual perceptions that have been gauged by observing periodically held council polls within Syrian communities in rebel-held regions. These polls testify that public opinion of the SMB has changed. Both unofficial (i.e. known affiliates) and official SMB representatives have succeeded in gaining communal posts.

From 2011 to 2016, over 1,100 Syrian-crisis-related NGOs have been founded. They are primarily in Turkey, but also in Jordan and the Western states such as Germany and the United Kingdom (see also statistics from Visions for Syrians NGO mapping 2016). By joining together the NGOs of socio-politically engaged Syrians, the SMB will achieve what Campbell (2005) described as being an important factor for a movement: "…involve the strategic creation and manipulation of shared understandings and interpretations of the world, its problems, and viable courses of action." (Campbell, 2005, p. 49) F As a movement with decades-long socio-political experience, the SMB are able to adopt modified NGO outlooks, which could be based on its original Islamic outlook.

SMB leaders would have to tackle certain misconceptions about their organization that are present in the minds of many of their opponents. The leaders of the organization are nearing retirement, and although the SMB may not be in a position of strength at this moment, its leadership has managed to keep it alive and active throughout all the challenges it has faced. However, the future of the organization will be determined by the actions of the second and third generation SMB members, both male and female. The future decision-makers will either maintain the organization the way it is now, or they will rebrand and modernize the movement, changing people's perceptions of it.

Eventually, the executive board of the SMB will decide which path the organization will take to integrate itself within the Syrian society. They could either remain within their comfort zone as a *Dawa* organization, or develop as an NGO, pushing their members to participate in socio-political activities, perhaps even becoming a serious political party. These choices will be analyzed in the next sub-chapter, which takes into consideration (Campbell, 2005) analysis: "what happens when a practice arrives at an organization or movement's doorstep, ready and waiting for adoption?"(Campbell, 2005, p. 54).

5.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter discussed the SMB's internal structure and the debates surrounding it following the Syrian crisis. The analysis was carried out using in-depth interviews, which were conducted with SMB members and potential members, including SMB executives. The interviews have shown that the Syrian crisis, with its disastrous consequences for the Syrian people, has placed enormous stress on the SMB's leadership. They have had to recognize change quickly, and respond accordingly. They have responded through publications, statements, internal changes, and other means.

However, the outcomes are inadequate according to many younger SMB members who voice concerns that the leadership is not able to handle the numerous imminent challenges of post-crisis Syria. These criticisms have pitted the younger SMB members against the older members who fill much of the organization's executive board. These differences are not just due to differing views regarding the organization's hierarchical structure (though this is the primary concern); they are also due to differences between the youth and the elderly in recognizing challenges, handling opportunities, and solving problems. The second and third generation SMB members feel that the hierarchical ladder needs reforming and modernization. They feel that this would ease the pressure on the SMB and serve as a decisive response to the Syrian crisis.

The SMB re-emerged at a crucial time. It had long been operating from outside of its homeland in unstable, foreign conditions. The disagreements within the organization are based on how it should anticipate problems, enhance strategic management, and define

its objectives. Currently, these are exclusively decided upon by the decision-making board. In the opinion of the reformers, the older SMB members, whilst still in exile, are incapable of representing the organization as a socio-political force in Syria. Therefore, the reformers are asking for new structures and leadership strategies to tackle the current challenges and provide a roadmap for the SMB's future.

Chapter 6: Discursive and Behavioural Responses to the Syrian Uprising: Domestic Level

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on internal discussions within the SMB. It presented and analyzed core discussions over the SMB's existing hierarchy as well as the post-2011 requirements to reach the upper echelons of the movement. The senior leadership of the SMB is currently composed of elderly members. This is due to the decades-long rigid hierarchical structure that exists within the movement. The previous chapter also discussed the senior leadership's postponement of solving several internal issues accentuated by the Syrian crisis.

This chapter will further explore and analyze this postponement by the SMB's senior leadership and its appropriateness in the status quo. Section 6.2 will explore the setting aside of disagreements between SMB members to unite in providing humanitarian support to the Syrian people facing a refugee crisis. This section will also shed light on the responses by SMB members to a nationwide emergency that commenced on March 15th 2011. These responses have all revolved around similar ideological concerns removed of any organizational differences. This section will reveal how SMB members' strong beliefs in their foremost duties (detailed in Chapter 5) have been the most important uniting factor. This section will also demonstrate the public service provided by several Brothers investing in and developing various health, education, and nutrition projects. These Brothers have continued to establish or join charities, relief groups and NGOs within resistance-held areas of Syria.

Section 6.3 focuses on the assertion that the SMB is united with the common Syrian people in their vision of a democratically ruled Syria. This assertion is based on the fact that SMB members are deeply rooted within the Syrian intelligentsia (see Chapter 4). Many senior teaching and administrative positions within faculties of *Sharia* (Islamic law) at Syrian universities are held by Brothers. Section 6.3 will also analyze the SMB's

democracy and rights discourse, with reference to its members' wide-ranging sociopolitical activities.

The SMB's outlook and vision of a future Syria guides Section 6.4. This section analyzes the founding of the *Wa'ad* Party (Justice and Constitution National Party - *Al-Hizb Al-Watani Li Al-'Adala Wa Al-Dustoor'*). It shows how politically engaged members of the SMB founded the party while in exile. Empirical data gathered through numerous interviews will be presented alongside an analysis of the party's conventions. This analysis will incorporate the *Wa'ad* Party's reputed association to the SMB, the outlook of the founding members of the party, and their vision of a post-Assad Syria.

Section 6.5 will elucidate the SMB's dissuasion of enforcing fighting on Syrian ground. With the backdrop of the 1982 Hama massacre, leaders from the movement are concerned about the involvement of their youth members in, or sponsoring of, fighting brigades. The SMB leaders draw a strict line between the organization's sociopolitical activities and any militant activity some of their members might have become engage in.

Section 6.6 concludes that, despite the challenges of war dynamics and deep-rooted anti-SMB prejudice, the SMB is privileged in being considered the most capable oppositional group in Syria. Many of the distressed Syrian population would even argue that the SMB qualifies to politically confront the regime. This section will show that these controversial opinions are built upon the SMB's evolution as a social and humanitarian actor since the start of the revolution. The humanitarian attention that Brothers have shown towards their fellow Syrians has been recognized as a revival of the SMB after three decades of silence.

The conclusion of this chapter highlights the SMB's efforts of distinguishing themselves as a politically competent party; it is Islam-centred, yet open to all Syrians. These efforts will be related back to the SMB's emphasis of separating the ideological commitments of its members from the organization's domestic political engagement of all Syrians. Finally, the conclusion will consider concerns within the SMB about its tackling of the challenging dynamics of the on-going revolution. The roadmaps being considered for the

organization include either sticking to traditional and well-probed configurations, or exploring novel and unfamiliar procedures.

Instead of spending time solving problems within the organization, SMB members focused on supporting their fellow Syrians through social engagement. Both the senior leadership and individual members of the SMB were involved in these activities. The SMB has always identified itself as a grassroots Syrian movement. Similarly, its members have always considered themselves (an integral) part of Syrian civil society. The ideological commitments of the Brothers drove projects such as schools and orphanages for children as well as health centres in resistance-held regions. This well-received engagement revived the SMB's influence in Syrian society after a silence of thirty years under the rule of Hafez and Bashar Al-Assad.

Like other Syrian activists, the Brothers founded a number of NGOs in response to on-going crises in the country. These NGOs serve to provide necessary materials such as food and clothing in the extreme weather conditions of the region. Shelters are also built for refugees fleeing with their families from areas destroyed by the proxy war. In addition, reports have confirmed that the SMB has established education programs to supplement the educational sector. Education has always been an important focus of the organization since its founding by Al-Sibai (see Chapters 4 and 5).

The approaches that the Brotherhood has taken in confronting issues raised by the Syrian revolution has aroused interest in their acceptance by Syrians. However, this still remains difficult to measure. The generation of Syrians educated by the Ba'athist system may still believe that the SMB is to blame for the 1982 Hama massacre. In essence, the Assad regime was successful in eliminating the SMB from daily Syrian life. It is therefore no surprise that the Brotherhood has sought to strengthen and rebuild its connection to a broad part of the Syrian population, especially in opposition strongholds of the country. The SMB hopes to convert the positive reception it has garnered into a process towards a democratically governed state. Its leaders have stated that the organization is finding its position again and evolving as a widely accepted Islamic grassroots movement (personal communication with: Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Salem, London, 2014; Waleed, London, 2014).

Senior SMB members initiated the reintroduction of the SMB to the Syrian people at a key time in Syria's history. Ali Sadr El-Din Al-Bayanouni, who led the SMB for two terms, returned to resistance-held areas of Syria in 2011. Several other members of the SMB from all levels of the hierarchy followed suit, with some taking along their families. The aim of these visits was for members to reconnect with the societies they were emotionally attached to while calling on 'their people' to reconnect with the SMB (male and female interviewees, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Killis, 2014, 2015, 2016).

The organization's leaders saw re-establishment of the SMB's status through the eyes of the Syrian people as a priority. The executive bureau recognized that the public appearance of well-known senior leadership would support the SMB's efforts of integration and acceptance into Syrian society. At the very least, they hoped to reconcile with a significant proportion of the Syrian people in a post-Assad era. The Assad regime's negative stereotyping of the Brotherhood in school textbooks and the media led to a resentment and scepticism of the organization. Two different school administrators previously involved in the *Ba'athist* educational system recall the details before fleeing to Turkey (see Annex IV). The SMB's leadership is aware of the education that the younger generation of Syrians has received from the Assad regime; an education that blames the SMB for any suffering in the aftermath of the 1982 Hama massacre together with the punishment, torture, and murder of the older generation. Over the decades, the relational gap has widened between the Brothers who fled the regime and the rest of the population who stayed behind.

A further challenge that the organization recognized post-2011 was the need to gain the trust of refugees and the rural population. The SMB has previously attracted highly educated intellectuals (Teitelbaum, 2011a) and has had to speak in the language of the middle- and lower-class. However, refugees and rural inhabitants questioned the SMB's real intentions behind striving for a united Syrian nation. Would Alawites, Christians, Kurds, and Turkmens be treated equally? It is well-known that the rural Syrian population has faced an incredibly difficult time under both Assad governments. Inequality has resulted in low income, insufficient health and education services, and a poor power supply in rural areas (Blank, 2015).

This challenge was tackled by offering humanitarian support for the daily needs of the rural population, supplemented by political platforms within newly founded regional administrations (expounded upon in subsections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2). Bonding is a mechanism widely used by social movements because "communitarian ties operate at a minimum to strengthen the identity and solidarity among movement activists and sympathizers" (Diani and McAdam, 2003, p. 9). Understanding this communitarian bonding will require a deeper investigation into how the SMB has overcome concerns by the Syrian people. It is also important to understand how the Brothers have been able to build a relationship based on trust with their people. The next section will explore and analyze the SMB's numerous social service activities that aimed to reconnect the movement with the people post-2011.

Finally, this chapter will draw comparisons between the SMB as a Middle Eastern Islamic social movement and the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) in the USA. This comparison will be guided by Diane Singerman's analysis. It will explain how religion plays a vital role in recruitment, mobilization, and framing of the grassroots of a movement. As with the CRM, the SMB has struggled to integrate within its environment of suspicion. By highlighting ideological similarities between the two movements, the analysis will seek to understand the SMB leadership's strong emphasis on moderate Islam and democracy within a pluralistic Syrian state. It will analyze the challenges faced by the SMB in an unstable post-colonial environment idealised by pan-Arabism.

6.2 The SMB's Humanitarian Outreach and Social Service Activities

SMB members in exile have integrated into different sociopolitical environments (see Chapter 4). Due to the circumstances of the countries they reside in, these members have prioritized their personal lifestyles in accordance with their duties towards the SMB. Personally addressing the needs of the underprivileged in society is termed *Jihad al-Nafs* and is deeply embedded in the Brotherhood's ideology (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Othman, Istanbul, 2014; Salem, London, 2014). Exile has not severed the ties the Syrian Brothers have with their relatives and associates living under the Assad regime. This study has repeatedly demonstrated that these ties have existed for decades (Al-

Bayanouni, London, 2014; Y. Al-Najjar, Gaziantep, 2015; Al-Omar, Gaziantep, 2014). The leaders of the SMB have always seen themselves and their family members as Syrians who will be a part of the Syrian community again once the *Ba'ath* Party's regime has ended.

Since the start of the uprising in 2011, the Syrian people have faced immense life-threatening challenges on a daily basis. Individuals either remained in their communities living under extremely difficult conditions, or left to seek refuge elsewhere. In either case, active members of the SMB worked towards a better future by allaying the anxiety of persecution and hostility experienced by members and their families. They recognized the importance of social projects and charity work to a population struggling to survive. The demand for shelter and healthcare rapidly increased during the ensuing proxy war. SMB members, affiliated relief groups, and other individuals supported these projects with the aim of comforting the tremendous amount of worried and impoverished families. These families have taken the difficult decision to remain in Syria despite the incessant threats from barrel bombs dropped from warplanes by Assad and his allies. Invading Shi'a brigades and Islamist terrorist groups have compounded these threats.

The SMB's decision to officially advertise their activities publicly was needed in order for them to garner support. Initially, the Brothers decided not to go public with their planned programs. The rapid rise in demand for services shifted this view in favour of a grassroots movement approach. Programs were initiated by solitary members but would not be carried out under the organization's name.

It is worth noting that junior SMB members have worked outside of the SMB's formal organizational structures. These members view the senior leadership as slow and inefficient in deciding the organization's humanitarian vision. Acting in smaller and more aligned groups, these young SMB members have responded more rapidly to the humanitarian demands of refugees in resistance-held regions. The power of networking through social media brought together like-minded SMB members to establish NGOs. Most of these NGOs are registered and headquartered in Turkey, although a few can also be found in Jordan. Within their NGOs, junior SMB members independently dictated

logistical decisions in response to demand. The analysis here reveals that these decisions were very often in line with the SMB's approach, yet not dictated by it.

Molded by their SMB-influenced upbringing, these younger members interpreted the SMB's ideals and effectively stood out from other activists from different social backgrounds. Ali Sadr El-Din Al-Bayanouni, a life-long executive member and two-time leader of the SMB, acknowledged this: "Ultimately, although those numerous human relief and educational aid NGOs are often affiliated with the SMB, they are not linked to the SMB" (Al-Bayanouni, personal communication, London, 2015). Thus, the organization does not present itself as the initiator of these newly founded platforms. However, analyses gathered at informal private gatherings, educational meetings, and professional seminars in Turkey indicate a connection to SMB activists. At the very least, these individuals subscribe to the Brotherhood's ideology of moderate Islam. Crucially, these NGOs and their members do not wish to be associated with the SMB. Understandably so, as there has been an increase in prejudice against Muslim Brotherhood organizations worldwide after the Egyptian coup d'état of 2013.

Members of these NGOs present their projects as simply an expression of humanitarian solidarity; a commitment to the idea of a common humanity. In this way, they do not seek to expose themselves to any risky scenarios. Nevertheless, the opinion of activists within the SMB is that these pilot projects have been initiated by SMB members and their wider circle of affiliates (personal communication with: Al-Droubi,Vinna, 2014; Rihawi, Killis, 2015; Waleed, London, 2014). Eventually, this incognito group of activists reconciled their commitments to both the Brotherhood's ideology and the support of Syrian civil society.

Much attention has been directed to aid programmes working to relieve the refugee crisis. According to several international human rights organizations (See Chapter 7) people in besieged towns as well as 'liberated' rural areas face tremendous hardships (PAX, The Syria institute, 2017). The Syrian people have unified in order to provide medical, educational, and moral support to refugees. Ad hoc relief efforts by the SMB have evolved throughout the revolution. Since 2011, these efforts have developed into more structured relief organizations. However, their scope of activity is limited due to

several challenges. Primarily, a dependency on private donors has resulted in a lack of funds. Private donors include members of the SMB and their close friends (Al-Bayanouni,personal communication, London, 2015). However, the rising demand for humanitarian relief has stretched the financial capability of many donors. The outcome of relief organizations' efforts remains insufficient. Contributions have barely covered the basic needs of refugee families (anonymous interviewees, 2015).

Some observes have questioned the wealth and resources of SMB members. In the 30 years of their asylum, some Brothers have acquired wealth in business ventures they have set up (Lefèvre, 2013).The leadership of the SMB does not believe it should publicly announce funding sources for its projects. The justification used follows the Islamic guidelines on *Sadaqa* (charity/aid). Anonymity is desired in any charity given. The *Hadith* often quoted by Brothers states: "The left hand should not know what the right hand gives in charity" (Ahadith, 2017). However, this approach leaves the Brotherhood open to accusations of a lack of transparency. Leaders of the SMB are aware that they are accountable for how donations are used.

Nevertheless, the SMB stresses that Islamic-based charity is accepted by the Syrian people. This is because the leaders for these charity projects are a part of the Syrian community itself (male and female interviewees, Gaziantep 2015, Killis 2016). Activities that the SMB has undertaken since 2011 correspond with Stephan Rosiny's writings on the Brotherhood's proactive attitude. Since the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hassan Al-Banna, members have become more activist than theorist in their attitude (Rosiny, 2013). SMB members have been able to provide logistical, medical, and educational support through their connections with ministries of the Syrian Interim Government (See Chapter 7).

Plans for functioning institutions in resistance-held regions are being drawn up by the interim government's ministries(Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Y. Al-Najjar, Gaziantep, 2015; Othman, Istanbul, 2014). An example of the impactful projects that the SMB have pursued includes a small food production plant in a resistance-held zone of northern Syria. Basic foodstuffs such as bread, cheese, and vegetables are produced and distributed here. Unfortunately, the maintenance of this plant is not without its

challenges. Output remains limited. The little that is produced is destroyed by the Assad regime and its allies (see Chapter 7). Nevertheless, the community served by this production plant reports that it is crucial in providing the community with physical and mental support. The plant is a source of both nutrition and hope to people in this region.

For decades under *Ba'athist* rule, education of the rural population has been demoted in favour of that of urban children (Al-Shami, Gaziantep, 2014; Yousef, Gaziantep, 2014). The 2011 revolution laid bare this inequality. SMB members quickly sought to rectify this by providing educational programs at refugee camps located at borders of neighbouring countries. Rural children rapidly populated these camps. NGOs founded by SMB members set up basic mixed-gender schools and educated boys and girls in a variety of courses. Trained supervisors and experienced teachers from the SMB led educational projects that taught basic subjects (Arabic, English, natural sciences, etc.). Arts and sports were also taught, with the latter sometimes carried out indoors in provisional tents or outdoors at field locations. Schools were located in opposition-held IDP camps both inside Syria and refugee camps in the neighbouring countries Jordan and Turkey. Numerous traumatized pupils and educational volunteers flocked to these schools. The highly motivated founders of these schools have succeeded in establishing curricula for elementary, secondary, and even university education. However, an unstable and irregular donor base has resulted in financial issues.

In spite of this, donations have allowed for provisional day-to-day support of the children in need. Yet SMB activists struggle to balance their commitments towards their homeland alongside commitments towards their families and relatives. Furthermore, the SMB has had to withstand comparisons drawn between its work and that of well-funded international aid organizations under the UN/OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). Similarly, it has had to vie with other faith-based aid organizations such as the Christian Aid Mission (headquartered in the USA). Its regional director Stephen Van Valkenburg has proudly stated that his organization "currently supports 16 Christian organisations active within Syria" (Middle East Eye, 2016). In contrast to the SMB, global organizations are well-funded and experienced in the logistics of delivering relief to war zones. The Christian Aid Mission is reported to be

working "with Christian aid groups in over 100 countries, as well as funding 'indigenous missionaries' in 'mission field' locations" (Middle East Eye, 16 September 2016).

In addition to humanitarian relief, the SMB has broadened its political activities since the start of the 2011 revolution. Regaining the trust of Syrian society and gaining legitimacy as a credible political actor have been the main political aims of the organization. This revival in the SMB comes after decades of one-party regulations implemented by both *Ba'athist* Assad regimes (see Chapter 4). The SMB's activities have been concentrated in resistance-held regions, mostly in northern and southern Syria. The next section will analyse the SMB's efforts in gaining political territories in these regions and Syria in general using their democratic vision (see Appendix III).

6.3 The SMB's Democracy and Rights Discourse

The previous section focused on the SMB's humanitarian response to the Syrian revolution. Despite members' differences with regards to logistics and execution, the Brothers were united in their goal of aiding the impoverished Syrian people. The SMB insists that these activities were carried out for purely humanitarian reasons. Notably, there has been a positive reception to the organization from refugees within Turkey and resistance-held regions. As part of an Islamic socio-political grassroots movement, Brothers have strengthened their integrity with their compatriots. The SMB's humanitarian efforts have therefore opened the way for the organization to bond on a political level with the Syrian people.

The strict Assad regime had outlawed the SMB for decades. This section draws attention to the SMB's political evolution after its resurgence post-2011. The SMB had to strategize ways of presenting their demands for a democracy and rights discourse. This included reintroducing the SMB's vision of a future Syria to the Syrian people. Consequently, there have been multiple academic and political debates on the applicability of Islamic *Sharia*-based concepts with 'modern democratic values' (see Chapter 7 and Appendix VI). On a domestic level, however, analysis points to the SMB executive board's personal contacts with the Syrian population in aiding this resurgence.

Brothers were able to outline their organization's concepts and policies to a population disillusioned by the *Ba'athist*'s secular policies and strict regime.

This section outlines how the SMB put forth its vision for a pluralistic Syria. It also shows how Brothers reconciled their politically democratic goals with their identities as activists in a decades-old Islamic movement. The Brothers have individually strived to rebuild connections disrupted by both Assad regimes, father Hafez and son Bashar. Furthermore, this section highlights Syrians' perceptions of the SMB's political engagement. These perceptions have been shaped by information from the ruling governments and the SMB since its inception. The SMB's primary goal is to emphasize its democracy and rights discourse within resistance-held regions. It is mobilizing its politically active members to operate in areas where political and administrational institutions have collapsed. However, the success of this approach is difficult to measure. No historical benchmark of an Islamic movement's successes exists with which to compare the SMB's accomplishments.

The *Wasatia* (Islamic centrist) path followed by the SMB has gained popularity in Sunni-majority cities such as Aleppo and Idlib. This has been a refreshing change from the cruelty experienced by Syrians at the hands of ISIS terrorists calling for a *Khilafa* (Islamic State) (Tran and Weaver, 2014). The SMB has repeatedly stated that their ideology of *Wasatia* is compatible with democracy. Through this ideology, the SMB aims to occupy the political vacuum opened by the revolution. While the SMB is hopeful in advancing itself into a position of influence, it still faces the effects of the *Ba'athist* regimes' accusations. Admittedly, the regimes have indeed succeeded in sowing suspicion of the SMB among Syrians. On the other hand, many Syrians are outraged at the current regime's repressive policies.

When researching Muslim politics, it is essential to consider each country and its Islamic movement separately (Esposito et al., 2015). Syria presents an opportunity to utilize Esposito's distinctive research approach. The SMB has evolved throughout its history when faced with difficult circumstances. It now faces questions about its democracy and rights discourse. This section will approach these questions by scrutinizing the narrative surrounding the SMB's recent history. This will include individual experiences of

members under the strict Assad regime, in exile, and during the rise of the SMB from 'the ashes of Hama'(Lefèvre, 2013).

Approaching the issue this way may be criticized as focusing more on individual members rather than the organization's outlook. However, this approach – guided by interviews conducted with members over three years – will provide valuable and insightful information from members across the organization's hierarchy. A trustful relationship had to be built with interviewees, most of whom regularly received depressing news about the situation back in Syria.

It is interesting to note that the ideology that Brothers hold may not be fully compatible with that of the countries they have sought asylum in. However, the academic Gudrun Kraemer states that it would be unjustified "to deny to contemporary Muslims any capability towards integration within a legal institutional governed state, as has been done in publications by Orientalists and recognized political journals" (Kramer, 2011, p. 41). In fact, the SMB's records verify that its leadership practiced great personal integrity in the countries where they were welcomed. Brothers who sought refuge across the Arab and Western world have done their best to integrate into their environments. Notably, Brothers who sought asylum in Western democracies were only allowed to do so after delineating the SMB to state intelligence services as a nonviolent moderate Islamic movement (Peter and Ortega, 2014).

Although seeking asylum has been arduous for SMB members, they have experienced hospitality in countries that have provided it. SMB leaders have had to face several challenges since fleeing Syria in the 1980s (Lefèvre, 2013; Pierret, 2013). One example of this is the constant harassment by the *Mokhabarat* of the Assad regime. Threats of assassination and intimidation followed the SMB's leaders even outside Syria's borders. Raphael Lefèvre writes how "the message sent to them (the Brothers) by the Syrian *Mokhabarat* was very clear: no protection, even from abroad, would ever shield them and their families from the wrath of the regime where it finds out that opposition activities were being carried out or planned" (Lefèvre, 2013).

Brothers in exile have always believed in the Brotherhood's ideology, first constructed over 80 years ago (see Chapter 4). The senior leadership repeatedly highlight their decades-long struggle in managing the SMB from foreign countries (personal communication with: Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Salem, London, 2014). The struggle was to keep a movement founded on Islamic values alive - a struggle to portray the SMB as a moderate Islamic movement to the critical eye of academics (Kramer, 2011; Lefèvre, 2013; Lund, 2013; Teitelbaum, 2011). Gudrun Kraemer, a recognized researcher on Hassan Al-Banna (see Chapter 4), argues that moderation is embedded in the organization's Islamic ideology. Kraemer recognizes that moderation guides the "moral dimensions of the individual's, the community's, and society's commitment to manifest social equality, which is anticipated by commitment and education" (Kramer, 2011, p. 37) .

The SMB draw inspiration for their moderation from the Qur'anic virtue of *Wasatia* – practicing a middle, refined path. *Wasatia* guides both the relationship between mankind and God as well as relationships between individuals. The SMB thus labels itself in Arabic as al *Haraka Islamia Wasatia* – a moderate Islamic movement. *Wasatia* in the SMB is supplemented by the concept of *Muruna* (flexibility). The SMB's flexibility to adapt to dynamic political climates is part of a wider "qualification of political Islam" (Kramer, 2011, p. 40). A well-known Islamic scholar with roots in the Muslim Brotherhood is the Egyptian scholar Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. Al-Qaradawi recognizes the importance of *Muruna* by writing: "The Islamic Movement...will not live, prosper and grow without the minds of studios, creative renewers and thinkers, and will not wither, shrink and become 'sterilized'" (Al-Qaradawi, 1999, p. 132).

Opponents have viewed *Muruna* as a tool used by the SMB to profit from political opportunities. The SMB argues that this flexibility allows it to adapt to the ever-shifting political dynamics of Syria. An example of this can be seen in the early 1980s. SMB leaders attempted to negotiate a ceasefire with the *Ba'ath* regime by sending Ghazan Najjar for discussions. This attempt backfired when Najjar, a highly respected member of the Engineers Union of Syria, was violently removed from his home on 31 March 1980. Najjar was then imprisoned for 12 years without trial (Al-Najjar, personal communication, Gaziantep, 2015). This harrowing experience proved enough for the

SMB. Any attempts at reconciliation with the regime would be met with a forceful reply. The SMB soon postponed any plans to stand as an oppositional political force to the regime. In the opinion of international political analysts, the Assad regime has not yet shown any intention of reforming the current political system nor is it signalling the end of its strict regime (Khatib, 2011; Lefèvre, 2013; Pierret, 2013).

Things changed with the arrival of the 'Arab Spring' in March 2011. The people of Syria raised their collective voices demanding reforms. Crucially, the SMB seized this opportunity to present their vision of a democratic Syria to their people. However, there are still questions to be answered. How will the SMB participate in a pluralistic Syria while their leaders have been in exile for decades? Some may argue that exile will end when Syria becomes democratic. Is the SMB's Islamic ideology compatible with democratic governance popularized by Western governments? The perception of some Western scholars, such as Samuel Huntington, is that *Islamic Civilisation* clashes with modern democracy (Huntington, 1997). If it is compatible, how does the SMB conceptualize dealing with controversial issues of ethnic minorities and women's rights? How representative of the Syrian people is the SMB as a social movement rooted in Islam?

Several different thoughts exist with regards to the SMB's presence in the political arena of a future Syria. These thoughts are shaped by various experiences and observations. Syrian civil society, in addition to academic researchers in the West, continues to provide different definitions of Islamism. The variety of opinions is reflected in Barbara Zollner's writings: "The first that comes to mind is the observation that Islamic movements are, by definition, seen as fundamentalist, radical, anti-democratic and anti-Western"(Zollner, 2009, p. 9). This analysis remarkably differs from Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, who states that he "would not imagine that the Islamic Movement could support anything other than political freedom and democracy" (Al-Qaradawi, 2000: 187). He also points out that Islamic principles are compatible with social governance of modern society:

> "The tools and guarantees created by democracy are as close as can ever be to the realization of the political principles brought to this world by Islam...It is only in democracy and political

> freedom that the power of parliament is evident and that people's deputies can withdraw confidence from any government that breaches the constitution. It is only in such an environment that the strength of free press, free parliament, opposition and the masses is most felt" (Al-Qaradawi, 2000: 188).

Al-Qaradawi is well-recognized by both Islamic movements like the SMB as well as Western academics for his thoughts regarding *Sharia* and its compatibility with modern democratic values.

The Brothers recognize that they have to use more than just abstract political terminology to win the support of Syrians. As a long-standing Islamic social movement, the SMB has had to explicitly state its promises of political engagement in a future Syria. One of their main priorities is to invest in a productive economy that builds projects for the Syrian people. Promisingly, the wide-ranging humanitarian activities by the SMB have influenced a positive outlook on its members and leadership (see Section 5.3.1). Regardless, the Brothers have had to constantly justify their plans in resistance-held areas after the decades-long smear campaign by the *Ba'ath* Party (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Al-Droubi,Vinna, 2014; Al-Rifai,Gaziantep, 2015; Othman, Istanbul, 2014). The SMB has committed to being a potential political force in Syria. In 2012, it published its 'National Covenant after a Syrian opposition summit held in Cairo. This publication reiterated and highlighted details of their 'National Honour Charter' and 'Political Project' (Ikwanweb, 2005; Lefèvre, 2013)

The SMB has been present in Syrian politics since the early history of modern Syria. Throughout the decades, its leaders have reiterated the organization's political legitimacy to the Syrian people (see Chapter 4). Yet this has not been without its challenges. The SMB faced a difficult time in the Syrian parliament soon after its inception in the late 1940s (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Al-Rawi, 2015; Rafael Lefèvre, 2013; Salem, London, 2014; Teitelbaum, 2011). Its members have appreciated the rules of politics nonetheless. Teitelbaum's claims that its members' integration in Syrian politics made the SMB "not an irredentist fanatic Muslim political force, but one that played the political game more or less according to the rules" (Teitelbaum, 2011). Teitelbaum recognizes that:

> "SMB members are very much a part of the political mainstream – and certainly not a fanatical, violent Muslim political force…the Brotherhood held several seats in parliament, including ministerial posts. The leadership was concerned with the issues that affected all politically involved Syrians" (Teitelbaum, 2011: 136).

Although many Western academics differ from Teitelbaum's analysis, it can still be considered a notable observation on the SMB's authenticity.

Since the start of the revolution, the Syrian people have been eager for change. They looked for credible and intellectual political actors to represent them in a future Syria. The SMB stood up to be recognized. Understanding the relevance of this is crucial in the post-colonial environment that the SMB finds itself in. On the SMB's potential in the future of Syrian politics, Joshua Teitelbaum writes:

> "The leadership of the Syrian *Ikhwan* [Brotherhood] was highly educated; most had university educations and several had advanced degrees, notably in the field of law. It is significant that among the leaders were those who, in addition to expertise in *Shari'a* law, were schooled in secular law as well. This allowed, perhaps, for a greater openness to other ideas and issues that were not 'Islamic' as such" (Teitelbaum, 2011: 137).

The 'openness' mentioned here has not disappeared since the SMB's exile. Its leaders are now more educated than ever. Their emphasis on the importance of supporting the education of the future generation of Syrians has not withered. Indeed, before leaving Syria, they were recognized by their communities for their commitment to education through their relief organizations (Najjar, Gaziantep, 2014; Al-Bayanouni, London ,2014; Salem, London,2014). Post-2011, the new generation of SMB members have shown themselves to be well-versed in international relations and diplomacy. John Esposito reflects on the modern transformation of the organization's members:

> "[T]heir intellects have been fast in the reading and interpreting of available information and they have been goal-oriented…they develop program materials to foster modern, Islamic oriented youth, run social centres, and where political conditions permit, engage in politics*"* (Esposito, 1998, p. 319).

Looking back in history and at modern times, the senior leadership of the SMB have been a fundamental pillar in the survival of the Muslim Brotherhood. Critics may argue that this is to be expected from leaders of any organization. However, the SMB's leaders have faced immense challenges. The rapidly changing dynamics of Syrian politics post-2011 meant that they have had to react rapidly as well. The need to demonstrate their goodwill to their own communities added an extra challenge. Through all this, the SMB understood its importance in providing the Syrian people with a political alternative.

The SMB has stayed true to its ideology. Scholars allied with the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, have legitimized strategic changes within the organization. This included forging alliances and adapting to dynamic political situations, which Al-Qaradawi argues is important for the survival of the *Ummah*: "Being rigid in sticking to a rigid pattern in organization, a rigid pattern in the methods of *Tharbiyah* [Islamic education], a rigid pattern in the means of *Da'wah* [Islamic proselytism], a rigid pattern in the stages by which the objective will be attained and a rigid pattern in certain political ideas, to the extent that anyone who tries to change, add or amend these procedures, means and methods finds himself facing zealous refusals, even accusations and defamations" (Al-Qaradawi, 2000: 132-133*)*.

Many Syrians hoped Bashar Al-Assad would give them dignity, freedom of speech, and justice. This never materialized. In the months leading up to the 2011 uprising, a group of the SMB's executive board members discussed their organization's future. Members reflected on their ideologically-driven duties and commitments towards their Syrian compatriots demanding a change (Al-Droubi, Vienna, personal communication, 2014). The primary objective of the SMB has been to meet the Syrian people's expectations of an Islamic social movement. Al-Bayanouni, a senior member within the SMB, questions the extent of his organization's utilization of political 'tools' to deliver on its promises: "What kind of communication has the SMB adhered so far to the values of freedom, democracy, pluralism and social justice, as these values are the foundation upon which the modern state is established?" (Al-Bayanouni, London, personal communication, 2014). The values he mentions are crucial in the building of a state, something not seen in the modern Arab world. Al-Qaradawi stresses what the political profile of an Islamic

movement should look like: “The Movement should always stand by political freedom, as represented by a true, not false, democracy” (Al-Qaradawi, 2000: 186).

Al-Bayanouni highlights that the SMB’s all-encompassing ideology is capable of winning the hearts and minds of the Syrian people, both Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014). The academic Line Khatib presents an example of the extent of the influence of the SMB’s moderate Islamic ideology: “For instance, in September 1979, around 500 primary and secondary school teachers and dozens of university professors who were suspected of teaching pro-Muslim Brotherhood ideas in their classes were dismissed from their jobs” (Khatib, 2011, p. 83). The strict regime has even assassinated some SMB members for propagating these ideas. Al-Bayanouni asserts that, unlike the Assad regime, the SMB is committed to institutional values present in Syria. Line Khatib lists the failures of the regime being “the wave of corruption that had invaded the country, the inefficiency of the bureaucratic apparatus, the economic crisis, the absence of individual freedoms, the lack of justice in the justice system and the lack of a democratic life” (Khatib, 2011, p. 83).

Looking further into Syria’s future, the SMB faces questions about its *Niyya* (intention) in cooperating with others in a pluralistic state. The SMB has outlined its *Niyya* in its statements and pamphlets (Ikwanweb, 2005). Yet, post-2011, it has been difficult to fully detail the organization’s intentions. Like other oppositional groups, the SMB has not had the opportunity to ‘test drive’ Syria’s political battleground. However, its leaders know the time is right to assert that “the true intention of the SMB is to oblige to their commitment both at the internal level and in dealing with partner institutions in the opposition’s coalition, the National Council and the Interim Government” (Al-Bayanouni, London, personal communication, 2014). By publicly presenting their impactful vision, the SMB knows it will have to face new challenges. The Syrian people have not experienced radical institutional changes since the Assad regime took power. On this point, it is crucial for the SMB to remember that “the state unleashed a number of significant repressive measures against the institutions of the dissenting Islamic establishment*”* (Khatib, 2011: 83).

With its *Niyya* and willingness to prove its commitment to pluralism, the SMB's executive board called a meeting at the start of the 2011 revolution. This meeting was attended by groups across the spectrum of the Syrian opposition (Ikwanweb, 2005). Various intellectuals and members of ethnic groups, some of whom were living in exile, assembled in Turkey to see what the SMB could offer. Academics who blamed the SMB for starting the revolution were surprised to see this positive response in the SMB's call for a united front (Hassan, 2011; Al-Droubi, Vienna, 2014). Whether these groups trusted the SMB or not, their attendance gave credence to its organizational capabilities (see Chapter 7). This meeting marked the first step towards establishing the SMB as an influential leader of the Syrian opposition. Consequently, the SMB was able to begin setting the agenda of the Syrian opposition. Individual opposition members also grew increasingly comfortable with the Islamic democratic vision outlined by the SMB in this first meeting.

However, the meeting was not without its criticism. Certain secularist, liberal, and ethnic groups from the opposition raised objections. These groups considered the SMB's Islamic-infused vision incompatible with their concept of a secularly governed Syria. Conversely, leaders of the SMB view the secular governance imposed by the *Ba'ath* Party for decades (see Chapter 4) as incongruous in a nation where more than 90% of the population is Muslim.

In response to these critics, SMB leaders point to their National Honour Charter – first published in 2001 – which clearly states a commitment to a future Syria being "a civil modern state with a civil constitution" (Rubin, 2010a) . Similarly, they point to their 2004 published manifesto (Ikwanweb, 2005), which details the SMB's openness and equality towards secularists and ethnic minorities in the population. SMB leaders claim that "[T]his encompasses a democratic pluralistic deliberative country in which people choose who governs and represents them through the ballot box in an impartial, free, and transparent election" (personal communication with: Al-Bayanouni, London 2014; Al-Bayanouni, London, 2015; Othman, 2015; Al-Droubi, Vienna, 2014).

The memorandum titled 'The Vision of a Future Syria' has been described as "the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's most important statement regarding their evolution and their

vision of Syria's evolution". Leaders of the SMB repeatedly refer to this all-encompassing manifesto (personal communication with: Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Salem, London, 2014). They believe that it is still relevant post-2011. The manifesto respects not only Sunni Muslim communities but also the Christian, Druze, and even the Alawite populations of Syria. Leaders of the SMB have repeatedly defended their unchanged vision of a pluralistically democratic Syria. In response to criticisms of the compatibility of Islam and democracy, the SMB has continued to reaffirm its belief in that its ideology permits it to work towards and in a pluralistic democracy (personal communication with Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Waleed, London, 2014; Salem, London, 2014). The older generation of exiled SMB members, with their focus on their higher education, can play an influential role in a pluralistic Syria. Their education contributes significantly to what Goodwin and Jasper describe as "a movement's ability to create, interpret, and use mobilizing structures and political opportunities" (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004, p. 26).

Another criticism levelled at the SMB is Islamism's focus on private life. Critics see this intrusion as a decidedly anti-liberal, if not totalitarian, practice. In response, the SMB's senior leadership believes that this should not be seen in a negative light. The SMB's ideology "embraces both public and private life" (Rosiny, 2013). It is because of this that the SMB was successful in building social services in Syria prior to 1982.

Moreover, the SMB's leadership stress that its position of moderate Islam protects against religious extremism of the Syrian people. Moderate Islam acts as a regulator of civic life to prevent a repetition of the acts carried out by terrorists abusing Islamic concepts to fulfil their murderous desires (Al-Bayanouni, London, personal communication, 2015). Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, an expert on the study of the Muslim Brotherhood across the Arab world, warns political analysts not to paint Islamic activism with a broad brush: "[T]he portrayal of the mainstream Islamist actors as single-mindedly bent on seizing power to achieve a set of fixed goals is a gross oversimplification – indeed a caricature – that cannot survive close empirical scrutiny" (Wickham, 2013, p. 10).

The SMB point to another aspect of post-2011 demonstrations that exhibits an Islamic influence on Syrian society. During the early days of the revolution, religious vocabulary at anti-regime demonstrations was very rarely used. Soon enough, slogans used by Syrian youth became infused with Islamic themes. Mosques were used as launch pads for protests. Some even called for divine support in reforming the autocratic regime. The SMB views this as an opportunity to represent these youth in a future Syria. Zubair Salem, a former spokesman for the SMB, recalls the cooperation between different groups of Syrians during the uprising. Demands for reforms extended beyond mosques and Islamic beliefs. However, he points out that, after weeks of demonstrations:

> "It has to be recognized that the revolution of the Syrian people was later carried by Islamic slogans, which reflects the Sunni Muslim majority of Syrian citizens. Non-Muslim communities (Christians and Alawites) joined the young and frustrated people of Syria, who initiated protests usually after gathering at the Islamic Friday prayers in the mosques. Their mottos were Islamic, chanting and asking for the help of Allah, their only supporter – '*Mafy gheirak ya Allah"*' (Salem, London, personal communication, 2014).

This observation is corroborated by many Syrians who fled in the aftermath of the uprising. An anonymous Syrian intellectual narrates how her father was executed in the early 1980s by Syrian *Mokhabarat*. She and her siblings grew up orphaned. The reason given for the execution was 'evidence' of her father's 'closeness' to the SMB's ideology. Like thousands under the Assad regime, the *Ba'athists* denied her and her siblings any involvement in social engagement. She narrates how her entire neighbourhood in the city of Al-Bab had "been waiting for the unpredictable opportunity to peacefully demonstrate their belief in something mightier (i.e. God/Allah) other than what the Ba'athist traitors have tried to convince us in" (female interviewee, Gaziantep 2016). When the Syrian youth rose up on March 2011, "[i]t did not make any difference if people had been religious or secular, Christians or Muslims, male or female: we all just wanted to be the one strong body gathered against the brutality done in the name of secularism by the Syrian government" (female interviewee, Gaziantep 2016).

Three major Syrian cities – Aleppo, Hama, and Homs – have experienced incessant attacks since the start of the revolution. Despite the extremely difficult circumstances of

their surroundings, the citizens of Aleppo joined the uprising relatively late. This was because they feared the presence of the *Mokhabarat* in the city. Moreover, the merchants and manufacturers of Aleppo feared significant ramifications on the economy of the city; Aleppo is Syria's main trade and industrial city. Its inhabitants are well-educated and economically stable. This places Aleppo in an important location in the Syrian conflict. Several well-known political analysts claim that the fight for Aleppo will be the ultimate turning point for the freedom of the Syrian people (Landis and Lund, 2016).

The SMB has maintained solid connections with the citizens of Aleppo, not least because many of its leaders' hail from the city (see Chapter 4). This historic relationship will support the SMB in mobilizing its members to revive the organization's perception in the city, even amongst merchants. Benjamin Smith's observation during the Iranian revolution can be applied to Aleppo. Smith notes how Iranian 'bazaaris' – merchants in bazaars – shared the same humiliating experiences under the strict regime there. The shared fate of these 'bazaaris' "is the strongest communal bond between 'bazaaris' of varying religious and class backgrounds…the mobilization of the bazaar highlights the importance of informal networks as mobilization resources in authoritarian settings" (Smith, 2004: 186). Smith explains the importance of tight-knit connections between these bazaaris in making "a strong community identity possible even in the face of serious ideological and cultural divides within the community itself" (Smith, 2004: 186). Bazaaris in Aleppo eventually united against the regime, starting within their small and interconnected communities.

The second of the major Syrian cities, Hama, has also fallen victim to the regime's military campaigns (see Chapter 4). Line Khatib sheds light on the SMB's success in Hama post-2011: "The destruction of Hama and the general ruthlessness of Al-Assad's response had a chastening effect on Syria's estimated 30,000 Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers. Nonetheless, the government' killing of many innocent civilians during the course of the Hama confrontation served to crystallize Syrians' discontent with the regime, while also helping to spark an increased willingness to integrate the Muslim Brotherhood's vision of the social order" (Khatib, 2011: 81).

The third city, Homs, has suffered brutal attacks. Homs is the birthplace of many of the SMB's leaders. Thus, the SMB has maintained the city as a stronghold and has managed to mobilize its networks there during the revolution. Regardless, the SMB's leaders understand the strains these connections will come under once the regime is reformed. Because of this, they have reiterated their call of equality and dignity in a future Syria. They still refer back to the organization's moderate Islamic identity. In investigating the SMB's political activities in the past, Joshua Teitelbaum recognizes that "the Brotherhood elections campaign was characterized by an intensive and effective use of the mosque apparatus" (Teitelbaum, 2011: 137).

The SMB has never forgotten its Islamic identity when establishing its presence in Syria (Rafael Lefèvre, 2013; Lund, 2013; Rubin, 2010) . The academic Diane Singerman highlights that the challenge Islamic movements face is the political context in which they operate. The SMB remains committed to religion in the unstable environment of Syria. To understand this, Singerman points out that "[a] comparative lens explains the similarities between movements across time and space, and also suggests their distinctiveness" (Singerman, 2004, p. 143). The SMB is not a historical exception, and a comparative lens can be added to this topic to explain its socio-political challenges.

Set more than 50 years ago, the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) in the USA will be used to draw similarities to the SMB. It is important to note several differences between the two movements. The SMB was founded in a different era. Its activities have been carried out in a different political environment. Its leaders have been in exile for three decades. Most importantly, its members are from a different ethnic and religious background to those of the CRM. However, both movements have followed the same political evolution and have publicly displayed their religious outlook. The CRM's evolution followed its leaders' religious beliefs and visions (Jones, 2014). Martin Luther King, a leader of the CRM, held a doctoral degree in theology and was an active Christian Baptist minister. He prayed in public while reminding the repressed African-American population of God as their ultimate leader (King, 1964). Aldon Morris explains King's deliberate use of Christian rhetoric: "[I]f King had chosen to adopt an aggressive militant tactic that includes the use of violence, the masses and their churches would not have supported it" (Morris, 2004: 241).

The SMB's utilization of Islamic rhetoric is similar to King's, who "as a Baptist minister with a doctorate in theology…actually believed that those 'themes' were true or valuable for their own sake" (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004, p. 25). King's religious-based ideology united the African-American people who had faced grief and suffering throughout their history. King's 'dream' emphasized his people's dignity and self-determination. He insisted on reform through peaceful protest. Similarly, the leadership of the SMB "like that of other Islamic movements, saw their movement as all-encompassing, not just as a religious association. Islam, they believed, applied to all areas of life, and the appeal of the Brotherhood could therefore be an all-encompassing one" (Teitelbaum, 2011: 5). John Esposito adds, "Islam has remained a principle of social cohesion and identity. Its continued presence among the majority of Muslims explains the continued appeal to and acceptance by many Muslims of Islamic politics" (Esposito, 1998, p. 221). The SMB's leaders have always affirmed their personal Islamic beliefs even through difficult political times (Al-Bayanouni, London, personal communication,.2014). This has kept the organization steady even after the 2011 revolution.

Looking back to the USA, the CRM organized the March on Washington in 1963. This march called for the human rights of the African-American people. It would not have been possible in this 'classical phase' (Jones, 2014) of the movement without its members' fundamental beliefs. No matter where a movement is located and the political climate surrounding it, its success relies on the experience of its leaders. The SMB is going through a critical phase in its evolution. It will need its younger, more charismatic members to relay the organization's message to the Syrian people. The interplay between the old and the new generation was seen in the CRM: "King delivered the finale at the Lincoln Memorial, but the tone for the day was set in an opening address by A. Philip Randolph, the seventy-four-year-old trade unionist, who was official leader of the March on Washington" (Jones, 2014).

The analysis of the SMB in this chapter thus far has focused mainly on its social engagement and politics by the SMB's male executives. However, it is important not to forget the significant role Syrian women have had in the challenging environment since the revolution. The dynamics of the Syrian conflict have affected both male and female

members of the SMB. The SMB labels its female members' section as the 'Syrian Sisterhood'. This section was launched at a very early stage in the SMB's history, with the organization proudly welcoming both male and female members. Since it was founded in 1948, the SMB has included their female members in their study circles and social engagement programs. This came to a halt after the Hama massacre of 1982 (see Chapter 4). Post-2011, this female section was revived, with Raphael Lefèvre remarking that "interestingly, though, women are becoming an important part of the Muslim Brotherhood" (Lefèvre, 2013). By 2013, six women were elected to the SMB's 30-member *Majlis Al-Shura* (consultative board). The SMB's leaders have underlined their passion of integrating, supporting, and educating Syrian women. They are aware of the importance of female activists in solving problems created by the Syrian revolution (Al-Shami, Gaziantep 2015; Al-Daher, Gaziantep 2015; Al-Bayanouni, London 10.10.2014; Waleed, London 2014).

Several questions are still to be answered: is this inclusion a veiled show of lifting the SMB's profile with the Syrian people? Will an increased female presence successfully rebut the criticisms levelled by Western academics about Islamism's stigma towards women? How will Syrian women's perceptions of the SMB as a socio-political movement change? Will the SMB gain support from these women in a future, more democratic Syria? In this study, interviews were conducted with several Syrian women to determine their perception of the SMB in a pluralistic future Syria. Section 6.2 of this study detailed the SMB's connection to their communities and the wider Syrian population. In general, the analysis showed a positive perception by Syrian intellectuals of the potential of the SMB in mobilizing the Syrian people. Here, a case will be presented of a Syrian woman's perception of the movement and its ideology towards women.

Mariam (name changed for anonymity) is a Syrian intellectual in her fifties. She has been active in the SMB's various sociopolitical programs. While exiled in Turkey, Mariam took the initiative to start her own female circles and aid groups. By 2016, she had gathered more than 300 members from her various initiatives. In line with the SMB's moderate Islamic ideology, these members were not demanded to pledge an allegiance (*bay'a*). In Mariam's opinion, her interest in the SMB was shaped by her

environment and the appreciation of the SMB within her family. Her Sunni family had been a part of the modern Syrian environment; no *hijab* (Islamic veiling), attending mixed gender schools, etc. Although her late father had not been a member of the SMB, he was interested in their publications and statements before the 1980s. Mariam recalls how, living in the Alawite-majority city of Lattakia, her SMB-affiliated neighbour would explain the SMB's ideology and vision to her father. The unique ideology interested her father and subsequently the whole family. However, living under the autocratic regime of the *Ba'ath* Party made her father apprehensive about joining the controversial movement.

Now exiled in Turkey, Mariam confesses that she feels safe far away from Assad's *Mokhabarat*. She and her family are still concerned about the Brothers back in her neighbourhood. Her family has stayed in contact with SMB members who have integrated into the country's educational system. This comes after the SMB's elimination from the public sphere in the 1980s (Mariam, Killis 2015). Mariam's story contributes to the claim that the Brothers have integrated within the Syrian bourgeoisie and the educated upper middle class (see Chapter 4). The political scientist Thomas Pierret adds: "Indeed, despite the departure of the historical leaders of the Muslim Brothers in the 1960s, active members of the movement continued to teach in the faculty until the late 1970s, and several of the deans who headed the institution until the 1980s had known sympathies with the Brothers" (Pierret, 2013: 39).

In conclusion, this section has illustrated the SMB's potential of being seen as an alternative and credible political force. It has emphasized that the SMB's success in a future Syria depends on its tight-knit family connections by individual SMB members. The SMB as a social movement has utilized social bonding and engagement to further its cause. Even after the *Ba'ath* regime's attempted removal of the SMB from the political and public sphere, its ideology continues to resound with the Syrian people. Having experienced disappointing and difficult times under the secular *Ba'athists*, many Syrians see the SMB as a legitimate political alternative. They hope to see a future in which a pluralistically governed Syria provides them a chance to exercise their democratic rights. Unfortunately, there seems to be no sign of the conflict in Syria ending.

The next section of this chapter will examine the significance of some SMB members' founding of the *Wa'ad* Party. The party was formed my members in exile to include a coalition of intellectuals and political activists. While members of this party come from different ideological and religious backgrounds, they have used moderate Islam as a reference to guide the party's actions. The next section will probe into why the SMB's leadership did not object to their members forming this political party independent of the SMB (Al-Bayanouni, London 10.10.2014). Furthermore, it will scrutinize whether this new party will ever see a pluralistic Syria in which Syrians can elect them as their representatives.

6.4 The SMB and the Foundation of '*Wa'ad*' Party: 'The National Party for Justice and the Constitution' *(Hesb al Adala wa al Dustour)*

In July 2012, Israeli news agency Ynetnews ran a story about the establishment of a new political party by the SMB, stating: "Syria's Muslim Brotherhood, a key opponent of President Bashar Assad's regime, announced plans Friday to launch an Islamist political party, saying it was ready for the post-Assad era". In 2013, the Carnegie Endowment ran a similar story (Lefèvre, 2013), as did several Arabic news websites, including the Noon Post (Noon Post, 2014). The content of these stories has been disputed by leading members of the SMB, including Ali Sadr eldin Al Bayanuoni, and executive members of the newly established political party, such as Dr. Mohammad Waleed. Both stated that the media had misrepresented them. The new party, they said, was not run by the SMB, although it had been established by SMB members. They emphasized the inclusive nature of the party, open to Syrians of any religious or ethnic background (Waleed, London, personal communication, 2014).

In Syria, public political action had traditionally often led to serious conflict with the authorities. But by 2011, the SMB no longer feared reprisals from the Syrian state intelligence, or *Mokhabarat* (Lefèvre, 2013). They were prepared to take on the risk inherent in establishing a new party while in exile, which put them firmly back into the center of Syrian politics. They risked negative reactions from the Syrian public and put themselves in some danger. They were willing to do so to support their belief in a democratic and pluralistic Syria.

The party was named the *Wa'ad* Party. *Wa'ad* can be literally translated as 'promise', but it is also an acronym for 'The National Party for Justice and the Constitution'. 30% of the party's founding members were also members of the SMB. These members emphasized their commitment to Syria as a nation, rather than their religious or ideological beliefs (Wafaai, Gaziantep, 24.8.2014). The *Wa'ad* Party's founding statement committed it to transitional justice, pluralism and separation of powers. As a result, it attracted many liberal Syrians. It was not an overtly Islamic party. Its elected head, Nabil Kassis, was Christian. "Based on its official documents, it would be hard to tell that the *Wa'ad* Party was Islamist at all" (Kerr and Larkin, 2015, p. 166)

Despite this apparent pluralism, the party was subject to considerable criticism from Syrian activists, both those in exile and those still in the country. It also received criticism from some within the SMB, including from speaker Suhair Salem, who stated that the party was "stillborn". He believed that the *Wa'ad* Party was likely to be ineffective, because: "Any party that will be established outside of Syria, will be only a number of people without a base" (Salem, London, personal communication, 2014). Syrian academics have repeatedly expressed public skepticism about the timing of the party's establishment, its location outside Syria and its relationship with the SMB (Sayigh and Lefèvre, 2013).

This chapter provides an analysis of the reasons for the party's formation, its location in exile, and its stated aims. It will look at the social and political backgrounds of the party's members and their motivations for joining it, especially in the light of the opinions of prominent Syrian observers. In 2012, some members of the SMB, working as individuals rather than on behalf of that organization, founded a Syrian political party in Istanbul. The city had been the location of the SMB's headquarters ever since the 2011 uprising. They hoped that the party would be able to contribute to the establishment of democracy in a future, post-conflict, Syria (Wafaai, personal communication, 2015).

It was then 2013, and the Syrian crisis was in its second year. At the time, some felt it had already reached its peak. The *Wa'ad* Party's founding committee had begun to work towards its vision of a democratic Syria, inviting members of all of Syria's communities

to be part of this work. These communities had lived alongside each other for decades with little serious conflict (Hashemi and Postel, 2017; Khatib, 2011; Lesch and Haas, 2016; Pierret, 2013) . They included Alawites, Kurds and Christians (personal communication with: Wafaai, Gaziantep ,2014; Waleed, London, 2014; Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014).

The *Wa'ad* Party's founders intended the party to be a mainstream national political party, not a political wing of the SMB. (Hanoun, Gaziantep 2014; al Bayanouni, London 2014; Al-Soufi London 2014. Waleed London, 2014; et al). The party had some commitment to Islamism, but this was not a barrier to it gaining support from Syrians of other religions. Nabil Kassis, founding member and later deputy leader, was Christian. He stated that his support for the party was based on its commitment to a civil state. He has repeatedly denied that the *Wa'ad* Party is the political arm of the SMB, as many continue to claim (SOHR, 2014) and emphasizes that the party's stated aims and values correspond with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Kassis, Gaziantep, personal communication, 2014).

The party's founding members brought with them considerable experience of democratic and pluralist political systems outside Syria and of political movements elsewhere. Nabil Kassis studied and lived in Algeria, where he ran a publishing company and became part of the growing democracy movement there. He returned to Syria, but soon left for Canada, seeking freedom of expression. In Canada, he established another publishing company and made short documentaries for *Shabakkat Sham Alakbaria* (Damascene News Network), a news agency for Syrians living outside the country. Syrian intellectuals such as Kassis have long tended to engage in Syrian politics from outside Syria. Kassis became part of several anti-Bashar Assad groups while in Canada, and was active in them until he left to help found the *Wa'ad* Party. He explained:

> "The establishment of this party came as a practical result of a deep change in the political approach of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. This alteration started in 2006 by the release of the new political program of the Muslim Brotherhood, manifestly adopting the concept of peaceful transition of power and the concept of citizenship" (see Appendix 6) (Kassis, Ghaziantep, 2014).

Kasssis' statement and those of other powerful figures in the *Wa'ad* Party has gone some way to changing the critical opinion many Syrians hold of the SMB. Since 2011, Syrians have increasingly come to see the SMB as a well-organized opposition group that could become a vital part of a future Syrian democracy.

Despite this, there are some who still perceive the SMB to be a more conservative organization, including some within it. This is not uncommon in Islamic movements. Masoud states: "Splits within the movement between liberals and conservatives, between those focused on political work and those who believe in the primacy of *Da'wa* (preaching), between young and old, can be expected to remain salient, and to be joined by new ones generated by the push and pull of democratic politics" (Masoud, 2013: 496). Syrian activist Obaida Fares carried out an analysis of the SMB and the likely future of the *Wa'ad* Party. His view was that the party was at high risk of failing because of its lack of experience and poor public perception of it. He suggested that SMB members should resign before entering the party, in order to avoid public confusion over their loyalties. He also proposed that the SMB should limit itself to social engagement rather than political activity, drawing a clear line between it and the *Wa'ad* Party to avoid competition between the two (Fares,Istanbul, personal communication, 2014).

By contrast, SMB leader of 14 years and lawyer Al-Bayanouni believes that individual SMB members should make their own decision on whether to resign membership if they join the *Wa'ad* Party, or to remain active in both organizations. The *Wa'ad* Party's leadership stated that there was no conflict of interest, with the party operating entirely separately from the SMB. The party, they said, welcomed Syrians of all ethnic and religious backgrounds (Al-Bayanouni, London, .2014 and other respondents). It is inaccurate to view the *Wa'ad* Party as an offshoot of the SMB, as many Syrians do. SMB members have long been active in Syrian professional syndicates (see Chapter 4). Officially, 30% of *Wa'ad* Party members are also SMB members, but the real figure may be much higher, indicating a strong degree of shared aims and values. At the same time, the two organizations have different purposes, and it is not reasonable to ask SMB members not to also engage in politics via the *Wa'ad* Party if they choose. Some argue that the establishment of the *Wa'ad* Party has been vital to the development of political

activity in the SMB, which in turn has helped encourage young people to participate in the movement (Al-Baker, Gaziantep, 2014).

Essam Abou Mousa, Director of the Al Ezza Institute for Political Research and Analysis, considers the establishment of the *Wa'ad* Party a positive step, but argues that the party must communicate its goals and structure more effectively to the Syrian public in order to gain their trust (Abou Mousa, Istanbul 4.1.2015). Transparency is important, especially as the SMB has often been accused of working secretively. To an extent, this is understandable, given the conflict in Syria and the need for SMB members both within the country and in exile to hide their membership of the organization (see Chapter 4). However, the *Wa'ad* Party must gain the trust of the Syrian people in order to legitimize the party. This is unlikely to happen unless the party can operate with transparency and show that its link to the SMB is not problematic.

The *Wa'ad* Party is most likely to succeed politically if it can offer a clear set of aims and values that will attract new active members and donors. Mohammed Iman, Syrian author, political analyst and activist, endorsed the establishment of a political party by the SMB. He is a life-long SMB member, and describes the setting up of the *Wa'ad* Party as "this important initiative". During the 2011 uprising, Imam, then in exile, decided to return to Syria. He has since become heavily involved in Syrian politics, and has encouraged unity among Syria's democratic opposition groups. He favors consultation with regional councils in rebel-held areas, and argues that the SMB should have acted on this some time ago. The SMB, he states, is not only a religious movement but a political organization that must demonstrate openness, acceptance and the promotion of well-being (Imam, Killis, personal communication, 2015).

Syrian opposition activist and SMB sympathizer Maha Mohammed argues that it is vital that the *Wa'ad* Party demonstrates its independence from the SMB. She supports the party's foundation, and believes that "decisions made by the SMB should under no circumstances influence the decisions of *Wa'ad,* neither concerning the politics, nor the organizational structure or any other matter" (Mohamed, Killis, personal communication, 2015).

Not everyone in the SMB welcomed the foundation of the *Wa'ad* Party, including some of the SMB's leaders. Some of them have been vocal critics of the *Wa'ad* Party. Zuhair Salem, SMB spokesman and founder of the Arab Orient Centre for Strategic and Civilization Studies in London, voiced concerns about the timing of the *Wa'ad* Party's foundation. He believes that Syria's instability will hinder the party's success, and that its founding members should have recognized this. He acknowledges that some kind of political organization is needed, but that its foundation should have been delayed until Syria became more stable.

Greater stability would have meant that the party could have communicated more effectively with the Syrian people, broadening its membership and engaging activists more readily. He believes that the party should only have been established once Syrians in exile (including members of the SMB) were able to re-enter their homeland freely. He states, "Any party that has been established in exile will be just a group of key personalities, yet with no fundamental base" (Salem, London, personal communication, 2014). Salem is an influential figure, and his contribution to the debate within the SMB has been significant. This appears to confirm Peter and Ortega's statement that "the debates inside these groups demonstrate their awareness of what is objectively at stake when they enter the field of party politics, namely a commitment to participate in a process which exerts considerable constraints on their program, activities and legitimacy" (Peter and Ortega, 2014, p. 4).

Debate about the establishment of the *Wa'ad* Party was not confined to the SMB. Many Syrians interviewed, as we will see below, felt that a political party established in exile could not function properly. This is not unreasonable, given that political parties generally function within state structures. However, the current environment in Syria makes the establishment of an inclusive party there impossible. There is a considerable lack of practical political knowledge in the country, as a result of decades in which Syrians have been excluded from active politics. This is a huge challenge for the *Wa'ad* Party, and one that it must address in order to succeed.

Mohamad Sarmini, consultant to the Interim Syrian Government's Prime Minister, spoke when interviewed about the "unfortunate founding strategy" of the *Wa'ad* Party. He

believed that the foundation "could not be regarded as substantial, as there was no public invitation to attend the party's launching process". He criticized the party's founders for moving to declare its foundation too quickly, without proper research, and leading to "unnecessary" debates about its legal status in Turkey. He argued that the party should have sought expert advice before its foundation. The SMB adopted the model used by new parties in other Arab countries, including Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan. However, Sarmini argued that this model failed in Syria because the country lacked the political stability found elsewhere. There would be, he said "a substantial lack of support by an entire civil society as long as the party will remain in exile" (Sarmini, Gaziantep, personal communication,2014).

Mohammed Ameen Haffar also argued that the timing of the *Wa'ad* Party's foundation was wrong, given the political situation in Syria. He explained:

> "Perhaps the current situation does not encourage the creation of a political party, this is because the Syrian people are going through extraordinary situations in every aspect; there is no security or stability and the number of refugees and internally displaced are beyond imagination. People are concerned with how to escape this disaster, where should they live, how to survive, and where to educate their children. There are priorities before creating a political party, therefore I see that the development of the party will be slow given the current situation".

Haffar did acknowledge that the party had national appeal, stating that:

> "An element that will increase the acceptance of this party is that it is not exclusively for the SMB; only one third are members of the SMB; on the other hand, non-Muslims are accepted to become members too. All that factors make the party being accepted largely on both internal and external levels"(Haffar, Gaziantep, 2014).

Kerr and Larkin's analysis of the *Wa'ad* Party noted that that "the party's political program is a model of liberal-even secular-values that effectively relegates Islam to the status of a cultural asset and a bond with other Arab and Islamic states" (Kerr and Larkin, 2015, p. 166). This analysis could provide the basis of further study of the *Wa'ad*

Party. It is not clear how much influence, or not, the SMB has had over the *Wa'ad* Party's inaugural program.

Critics of the party have tended to focus not on its program or policies, but on the timing of its creation. Many prominent Syrians in exile have voiced such criticism, including Yassin Najjar, who was Minister of Communications, Transport, and Industry in the Interim Syrian Government in 2014. He specified that:

> "It has not been to the preferences of the Syrians in a war-torn zone, to appreciate a newly founded party. Divergent, such a distinct project may add more to the confused state of the Syrian population. Because, the younger generation, which were brought up inside Syria will not be able to recall links to the names of the advisory board members at the *Wa'ad* Party, who are unknown to them." (Najjar, Gaziantep, personal communication, 2015)

He wonders whether the party will be able to establish itself effectively in Syria while it lacks charismatic local leadership. Najjar, now in his late 40s, was brought up in Syria in a family that was generally critical of Syrian government propaganda. He became politically aware in his early twenties, becoming part of charity organizations and social-political networks. In 2007, he supported the Damascus Declaration (*Alam Damask* Movement). While in Damascus he met the liberally minded Professor Bourhan Ghaliouny, who went into exile in France when the environment in Syria became hostile to intellectuals.

Well-known social activist and former head of the Syria and Aleppo Engineers' syndicate, Mohammad Najjar remained in Syria under the Baathist regime. He was frequently questioned by the secret service regarding possible connections to the SMB, and eventually detained for twelve years without trial. His view of the *Wa'ad* Party is built on his experiences with the Syrian regime and his work with the Syrian people. He expressed concern that "the party will be facing a problematic attempt in mobilizing new members and associates for a future Syria, if the people are still experiencing a brutal conflict throughout the revolution" (Najjar,Gaziantep, personal communication, 2015)

This echoes Masoud's thoughts regarding Egypt "that the future Muslim Brotherhood electoral performance will remain highly sensitive to contextual factors, and the

movements' continued dominion is by no means assured" (Masoud, 2013: 496). The same is likely to be true of Syria. It is impossible to predict how people will react to the circumstances Syria will find itself in once Assad's regime has been dismantled. Syrians may well seek new political representation, but they may also want the SMB to provide social activism. This puts pressure on the SMB. The organization is viewed as the most credible opposition political force in Syria by analysts and its leaders are aware that as a result they are the subject of considerable media attention. Their potentially significant role in the peace-building process has been discussed since 2011, and the *Wa'ad* Party is often touted as being the political wing of the SMB, ready to step into the Syrian political scene as needed.

As it stands, the SMB is not equipped to enter mainstream Syrian politics (as discussed in subsection 5.2.2). Any political party seen as part of the SMB will attract considerable criticism, as happened in Egypt (see 5.3.4). As it is based outside Syria, the SMB's ability to deal with criticism is limited. As a result, many have questioned whether the SMB should have chosen the timing and location of the launch of the *Wa'ad* Party more carefully. Given the current situation in Syria, they argue, it would have been more sensible to delay the founding of the party until the country has become more stable and the conflict has been resolved.

It is clear that there is much that the *Wa'ad* Party can be criticized for. Regardless, it is an independent Syrian political party with a commitment to democracy, freedom and justice. Saad Wafai, one of the party's co-founders, states that "the overall approach for founding the party has been positive". The party was founded on the collective effort of the SMB, Islamic oriented members and Nationalists, working together. Wafai stresses that the party must represent all Syrians and act as a political platform for young Syrians who are likely to want to play an active role in the country's political life, post-Assad (Wafai, personal communication, 2014).

Wafai is politically motivated by the desire for change in Syria, particularly in the context of the country's colonial history. The British/French Skyes-Picot Agreement of 1916 and the French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon of 1922 provide a colonial legacy that has continued to influence politics in the region and support the existence of

repressive governments. Wafai is experienced with politics on the ground in Syria, working to help provide healthcare in Syria's regions and as head of the Security Council in Aleppo during the 2011 uprising. He has travelled and worked extensively in the country and that experience has given him confidence that the *Wa'ad* Party is able to connect with ordinary Syrians (Wafai, personal communication, 2014).

Other members of the SMB have, like Wafai, come out in support of the *Wa'ad* Party and are positive that it can increase political diversity and help create change. Abdul Razak Diarbakkerli, long-term, senior SMB member said of the party:

> "The political party is a good idea, as it provides an evolvement in the relationship between the SMB, the community and the wider political movement. It is therefore presenting a new vision for contemporary democracy. It is important to note that the party denounces its link with the SMB, and the founders express that they neither are a part nor a political wing of the SMB. Although, the fact that many of the members of the party belong to the SMB, make it in the eyes of the media seem like being a political wing of the SMB. Taking into account the range of factors and challenges that have been raised due to the rapidly changing dynamics on the ground, the Brother's choice could be recognized as a political evolution of the organization as a social movement" (Diarbakkerli, Gaziantep, personal communication, 2014)

Another senior figure, former acting leader of the SMB Al-Bayanouni, summarized the differences and similarities between the SMB and the *Wa'ad* Party: "the invention of founding a political party has been done in complete independence from the SMB". (Al-Bayanouni, London, personal communication, 2014)

The SMB's constitution refers to twenty points of Hassan Al-Banna's manifesto (see Chapter 4), which provide the ideological base of the SMB. However, the *Wa'ad* Party constitution is different. One commonality between the two organizations' constitutions however is their reference to moderate Islam. The Brotherhood's organization is a *Jameah Islamaih* or Islamic social movement, focused on *Da'wa* (preaching), education and social welfare; the *Wa'ad* Party focuses on civil rights.

Al-Bayanouni went on to say that the SMB had a long-held intention to move into mainstream politics. The SMB in 2006 already had plans to start political party, which would have been based on the SMB's 2004 presented memorandum of "The Vision of a Future Syria" (see Chapter 4) However, the main ambition of *Wa'ad* Party has been "to support the rebuilding the Syrian community and its unity which the repressive regime managed to destroy over the decades" (Al Bayanouni, London, personal communication, 2014).

This clearly-stated intention of the SMB to play a part in the creation of a democratic Syrian state bears our Esposito's statement that "modernists advocated an adaption of Islam of changing conditions of modern society. This process would result not simply in the reaffirmation of the past but in new laws and attitudes religious, legal, educational, and social reforms" (Esposito, 1998, p. 55).

Women have played an active role in the establishment of the *Wa'ad* Party, further demonstrating the party's commitment to pluralism and the modernization of Syrian society. Syrian women in general are not as politically engaged as Syrian men, partly dictated by tradition and upbringing, and partly because the regime discouraged them from being so. However, the *Wa'ad* Party has encouraged and recognized the contributions of women in political debate and activism. Research by the Badael Foundation has found that there are female Syrian intellectuals who are keen to be involved in politics, but prevented from doing so under Assad (Badael Foundation, 2016). Because the *Wa'ad* Party was established outside the country, it has been able to attract educated Syrian women who, free of the restrictions of the regime, are able to play an active part in politics and peace-building. By 2015, the *Wa'ad* Party had more than 40 female members, out of a total of 500. This is considered a significant proportion in the Syrian context (Kassib, Gaziantep, personal communication, 2015)

One such female member is Khitam Al-Soufi. An educated woman with a Master's degree from a Russell Group university in the UK, Al-Soufi and her husband have spent several decades in political activism, despite being in exile because of their membership of the SMB. On the foundation of the *Wa'ad* Party, she says:

> "The situation in Syria requires the likes of this national party, which represents moderate Islam and aims to include all segments of the Syrian population regardless of its ethnic or religious backgrounds. The party also calls for a pluralistic state and political engagement. The creation of this party also helps eliminate the one-party situation that rule Syria for the past 50 years which created tyranny and destroyed political engagement, noting that democracy and freedom were about to start their first steps after the end of the French colonization era" (Al-Soufi, London, personal communication, 2014).

Al Soufi, like party Secretary General Saad Wafai, sees Syria's colonial history and particularly the French Mandate as bearing responsibility for the country's difficulties since. While the French left Syria decades ago, their legacy was rule by the Alawite minority, something that continues to affect Syrian politics today.

Middle East expert David W. Lesch says of the Alawite community's role:

> "At the time of Syrian independence from the French, in 1946, the Alawites found themselves well positioned in the military. By gaining more power over the years, the February 1966 intra-Baath coup brought Hafiz Al-Assad to a senior position in the new regime" (Lesch, 2013, p. 3).

On whether a party with an Islamic reference can cater for non-Muslim, Al-Khattib comments that:

> "Some people think that Islam is only for Muslims, and that Islam is not able to regulate and manage a State that hosts a number of ethnicities, races and religions, and that it is unable to provide justice to all the latter. Those people forget the Quranic Verse 'And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds' (worlds, not just for Muslims)" (Al-Khattib, Gaziantep, personal communication , 2016)

As discussed in Chapter 4, the SMB is recognized and known as an Islamic organization with an ideology based on the vision of Al-Banna, though adapted to the Syrian context. The SMB's membership is made up of politically moderate but committed, practicing Sunni Muslims. As an example, Waffai states that: "You would rarely find a smoker within the SMB, as smoking has always been considered to be inadequate for a Muslim's life" (Waffai Gaziantep 2016). By contrast, the *Wa'ad* Party accepts Syrians of all religious and ethnic backgrounds, including the non-religious. It does not exclude

members on the basis of their personal life or behavior, provided they do not break common international law. In theory, anyone can hold a leadership role in the *Wa'ad* Party, although some Western critics voice doubts that women are able to do so in practice.

It seems clear that the membership of the *Wa'ad* Party is broad and distinct from that of the SMB. As Waffai explains: "You might meet certain Muslim party members that don't pray any of the five obligated prayers or fast the holy month of Ramadan, and you might find non-Muslims too, because there is no difference in the membership between any of them based on religion" (Wafai, Gaziantep, personal communication, 2016)

The breadth of membership found in the *Wa'ad* Party would not be appropriate in the SMB, but this does not mean that the links between the two organizations are likely to weaken. The *Wa'ad* Party provides the SMB with a means of reaching and engaging with Syrians who would not be eligible for SMB membership. Al Khattib explains:

> "We are not letting go of the SMB. The SMB wants to work and collaborate with all the segments of the nation, but it cannot include them to its ranks because the SMB requires practicing Islam as requirement. The SMB does work within the SNC (Syrian National Council and *Itilaf* (Syrian National Coalition) with other segments of society, but it wants to do so through a political party to have a political impact." (Al-Khattib, Gaziantep, personal communication , 2016)

The *Wa'ad* Party gives the SMB a means of being fully involved with future state-building, spreading goodwill while maintaining its own particular membership requirements. The SMB has always had a remit that goes beyond the purely religious, as explained by Al-Bayaouni: "The Brotherhood organization has been clearly established more than 80 years ago as a preaching organization, yet comprising humanitarian relief, preaching education, and socio-political activities*"* (Al-Bayaouni, London, 2014).

Despite the clear differences between the *Wa'ad* Party and the SMB, many in the media and academia see the two organizations as one. Some believe that the *Wa'ad* Party is effectively the SMB in all but name. This is understandable, given the *Wa'ad* Party was established by members of the SMB. However, it is a view that does not take account of

the differences in membership and aims between the two organizations. This study has sought to examine and define those differences. The *Wa'ad* Party's founders have used and adapted the approaches taken by established parties in democratic countries to create a party that has broad appeal. The *Wa'ad* Party appeals to Syrians of all ethnicities and religious backgrounds, brought together by a desire to create a sustainable, peaceful future for their country. It is committed to pluralism, and therefore its members are not involved in any kind of religious preaching.

By contrast, the SMB's membership is comprised of committed Muslims and it includes religious preaching among its aims. The *Wa'ad* Party focuses on increasing political awareness and the creation of a democratic state. However, some critics have pointed out that it has also committed to the use of *Sharia* law as state jurisprudence, and that this may be inconsistent with its other aims. Syrian intellectuals tend to believe that: "creating parties that are working in the Syrian political framework is positive, as it enriches the political process in currently and in the future". However, they express doubt about "the Islamic reference integrated within of the party state" (Younis,Gaziantep, 2015).

There is a clear feeling among some commentators that it is impossible for *Sharia* and democracy to function alongside each other and that any attempt to ensure that it can is overly ambitious and likely to fail. However, this view is formed with a lack of understanding of how the SMB interpret *Sharia* and without reference to other situations in which religion and democracy have functioned alongside each other.

Western politics offers examples of how concessions can be made towards religion alongside a commitment to democratic values. On July 27th 2016, Hillary Clinton accepted her nomination as the US Democratic party presidential candidate, at the party's National Convention in Philadelphia. The final speaker at the convention was Rev. Dr. William Shillady, Executive Director of the United Methodist City Society in New York. He asked those at the convention to "pray for "Sister Hillary" and "Brother Tim" (the Vice President nominee Tim Kaine) (Luo, 2017). Another example comes from Bavaria, Germany. There, there is a governing coalition between the regional Bavarian Christlich Soziale Union and the nationwide Christlich Demokratische Union

(CDU/CSU), both parties with a clearly stated religious base. The CDU's constitution sets out its commitment to the maintenance of Christianity in Germany. The party defines the country as a "Christian nation" with "Christian roots". It states that Germany has "Christian public signs" that should conform to 'Christian values'.

These statements have a clear parallel in the religious base of the *Wa'ad* Party, and they demonstrate that it is possible to have a party that functions effectively in secular civil society while maintaining some religious values. The Syrian population is over 80% Muslim and Syria is recognized as a Muslim country, so it does not seem unreasonable for a political party there to have a stated commitment to Islam.

While many outside the organization have focused on the religious element of the *Wa'ad* Party, some in the SMB have criticized the party for distancing itself too far from the religious ideology of the SMB. Mohamad Al-Khattib states that:

> "They say that ideologies are on the rise, contrary to common belief, especially the Islamic ideologies given the recent election results in a number of countries. These people also say that some Islamic oriented members have joined forces with seculars to get western support. These members have lost public support from their followers, while also they will not be getting the support of the west. They lost both. A question has also been probed; will the SMB ask its members to vote for a party that is semi secular? This contradiction, these members claim, will lead the SMB to lose its credibility amongst its members" (Al-Khattib, Gaziantep, personal communication, 2016).

SMB members and co-founders of the *Wa'ad* Party are compelled to spend time offering clarity on their aims to external and internal critics, while also having to meet a number of other challenges. The party faces a fundamental barrier to progress in its lack of reliable funding. Members do not pay a subscription fee, which opens up membership to all Syrians. However, it means that the party is reliant on donations from members and supporters and its budget is limited and sometimes unpredictable. Without a solid financial base, it is difficult for the party to make future plans. It is difficult for it to rent office space and other facilities, to pay speakers' fees and meet general running costs. The commitment of the party's members and leaders to their vision for Syria's future has

gone some way to ensuring that they continue to work towards their goal, despite facing significant financial and other challenges.

The *Wa'ad* Party has made some changes to its structures in order to allow it to operate effectively from Turkey. The party's headquarters is in Gaziantep, and some members have moved themselves and their families to live close by. Many have worked to establish themselves professionally in Turkey, learning Turkish and gaining Turkish qualifications as needed. The commitment of these members is clear, but this does not mean that the party will necessarily be a success. The party's founders have faced criticism for their concentration on the future needs of Syrian democracy, rather than on the immediate basic needs of the Syrian people.

> "The founders should have taken into their consideration those actual disturbances of the Syrian people, which should have had been in their only focus. At a time were people are suffering from hunger, having no shelter and children are not able to receive proper education, future politics have to be postponed" (Haffar, ,2015).

Syria's current situation provides the SMB with an opportunity to create a new political base for themselves, in line with their religious beliefs. Gudrun Kraemer comments: "Like other social political actors, Islamists learn from experience, they interact with others to articulate their ideas, drawing on earlier as well as contemporary intellectual trends, and their design their strategies accordingly" (Kraemer, 2010: 92).

This is in line with the views of Dr. Mohamad Waleed, one of the *Wa'ad* Party's 105 founding members. This group of people came together via networking and private invitation to form the party. Waleed stresses that the party's membership is governed via a quota system, which specifies that one third of its members will be from the SMB, one third others with an Islamic outlook, and one third from a liberal, nationalist background. It is not clear how the latter two groups are defined.

On the founding of the party in 2012, Waleed says:

> "The Syrian revolution has put an end to the political monopoly of Baath's ruling party. Syria as a plural ethnic and religious

> society, political pluralism should prevail in future Syria. This is why the *Wa'ad* Party was launched. Our goal is to participate in building a modern democratic state in Syria, where citizenship with equal rights and responsibilities prevail" (Waleed, London, personal communication, 2014).

Dr. Waleed, a UK educated doctor, was living and working in Saudi Arabia when he was elected first head of the party. In December 2014, he became the SMB's *Murakeb Al Am* (Controller General). His deputy Al-Khoury, a Christian intellectual and member of the party's executive office, replaced him.

This change in leadership appears to prove that the SMB were not committed to controlling or dominating the *Wa'ad* Party. It demonstrates their openness to integration and the party's role in Syrian society post-Assad. It may be that the SMB's leaders recognized and acknowledged mistakes made by their counterparts in other Islamic countries before, during and after the Arab Spring.

The founders of the *Wa'ad* Party hope for a free, pluralistic Syria, in contrast to the clan-based regime of Assad, which confiscated much of their property illegally. Dr. Adel Rihawi (Killis, 22.8.2014) refers to his personal experience. He points out that the founding of the party could be a vital step towards a pluralist, democratic state. He was born in Lattakia to a wealthy, educated family. He witnessed how that region had become a stronghold of the Alawite sect and Assad's supporters. He had no connections to the SMB and had not engaged in Syrian politics for decades. However, he had experienced the repressive Baathist regime, and their land reforms, with some of his family's property being confiscated. This naturally had a considerable impact on the family, its income and lifestyle. His father moved to Damascus but was not able to successfully re-establish himself, and suffered from depression until his death. Many former wealthy Syrians have had similar experiences under the Baathist regime (Rihawi, Killis, 2015).

This is just one example of Syrian people's experiences at the hands of the Baathists that damaged the social contract in Syria. Many educated Syrians found themselves victims of the regime, and also found themselves without a strong opposition to support after the SMB left the country in the 1980s. The founding of the *Wa'ad* Party provides some hope

for these people and has helped increase momentum towards the establishment of democracy in Syria (see Chapter 7). For Sunni Muslim Syrians living in coastal areas, the Assad regime was particularly damaging. The Lattakia region was an Alawite stronghold from the early 1970s onwards, when Assad took over. The regime and its Russian allies took over marine and airbases in Tartous and destroyed schools, homes, hospitals and marketplaces in rebel-held regions. Dr Rihawi's family fled Syria, fearing attack by snipers, or *Shabbiha* (ghosts). They "added to the ugliness of the crackdown", according to David W. Lesch, Professor of Middle Eastern History and consultant to US and European international organizations (Lesch, 2012, p. 177)

Many Syrian Sunni Muslims sought refuge and a new life in Turkey, but are still keen to return to Syria when the time is right. This desire to return adds to the appeal of the SMB and the *Wa'ad* Party (see Chapter 5). The SMB's work in domestic, regional and international politics (see Chapter 7) helps further increase the organization's appeal to Syrians keen to rebuild their homeland. As Rihawi states: "when the Assad clan will have to made space for pluralistic governance with competing parties, like *Wa'ad*". The *Wa'ad* Party has in, his view been, founded by likeminded people. This is a common view among Syrian intellectuals, who see the party as fulfilling its promise to integrate all factions of Syrian society.

There have been those both within and outside the SMB who criticize the timing and location of the founding of the *Wa'ad* Party. They argue that there are too many challenges for the party to meet, and that it is unlikely that they will be able to overcome them. The party will not progress, they believe, without first resolving three major problems. First, the *Wa'ad* Party's founders will have to provide proof that they are able to operate effectively in Syria's unstable environment, despite being established in exile. Secondly, they will have to achieve solid, reliable funding. Third, they must achieve international recognition among governments and NGOs, which they have not yet done. Leaders of both the SMB and the *Wa'ad* Party hold these concerns.

The SMB and *Wa'ad* Party share the common desire to establish a strong relationship with the Syrian people. For the *Wa'ad* Party, the current conflict in Syria provides evidence that they will be able to meet political challenges in a democratic future Syria.

However, it is not yet clear whether the Syrian people will respect and accept *Wa'ad* Party's vision for parliamentary governance. The *Wa'ad* Party intends to introduce democratic, political Islam in Syria. Whether or not they succeed will either confirm or negate Alfred Stepan's analysis, (citied by Hashemi), that he: "has drawn attention to various "maps of misreading" in the history of religion– state relations in Europe. He is critical an ahistorical approach to this topic, which erroneously suggests that the development of democracy requires a hostile and rigid separation between religious and state" (Hashemi, 2013: 71). Syria is a civil society with a majority Muslim population, strong Islamic traditions and a general belief in *Sharia,* as confirmed by academics such as (Khatib, 2011; Pierret, 2013). It is in this context that the *Wa'ad* Party will either succeed or fail.

By 2016, the SMB appeared to be shifting its focus from social movement to political. This shift had been the vision of a number of prominent SMB members for several years. It has been seen as too bold a step by some, given the circumstances in Syria, but it has met with approval from Syrian intellectuals in exile. Many individuals joined the *Wa'ad* Party in the hope that it could provide the pluralistic vision they favored. The pragmatic approach of the SMB towards attracting support from a varied base is paired with their social and political vision and hopes that they will be able to play a significant role in Syria's future.

As Masoud states: "Future work on that party's experience can teach us about how parties form, behave, and change in developing democracies" (Masoud, 2013: 497). That is, the intentions of a political party in a developing democracy may be to represent the people and teach political awareness, but they may misread the behavior of others and become vulnerable to anti-democratic forces. This could happen in Syria to either a secular or Islamic party. It may be that the *Wa'ad* Party fails and is viewed by history as being the result of overexcitement among a small group of exiled activists. However, the SMB may be able to handle international and Syrian critics adeptly, ensuring that even if the *Wa'ad* Party fails, their own reputation remains intact.

Having analyzed a complex political issue in this subchapter, this research will now examine how the SMB has evolved through the Syrian revolution. The next subchapter

will ask whether the SMB as a social movement has any impact on day-to-day life in Syria against a background of severe conflict.

6.5 The SMB and the Non-State Brigades in Syria

Bashar Al-Assad's brutal response to the peaceful Syrian uprising showed clearly his refusal to accept any of their demands. The regime seemed to not fear any political consequences when using internationally prohibited weapons against its own people. This was despite the US administration warning the regime not to cross the "red line" (Bardy, 2012). The Syrian regime also ignored international reports, such as the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, which was published collaboratively by a number of Western democracies in December 2013 (Daerden, The Independent 30.9.2015). Assad's sectarian Shia allies openly subsidized his regime, providing thousands of Iranian and Lebanese 'Hezbollah' fighters (Sullivan, 2014). Russia also reinforced Assad's forces with their air force, who have reportedly broken a large number of international human rights laws, using Syria as their testing ground for impermissible weapons (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

It should be noted that this crisis began following the call for freedom of speech and dignity in Syria's small southern town of Deera, when schoolboys, aged 10-13 years, graffitied their school wall with messages of hope and resistance (Hanano, 2013). These boys were then detained, tortured, and murdered by Bashar's *Mokhabarat*. Pictures of their mutilated bodies, with their hands and feet cut off, along with those of thousands of other tortured and poisoned alleged 'terrorists' were published and made public by a number of human rights activists. Eventually, they were shared on social media, with the hashtag "Ceasar photos," raising awareness in the international community (Hanano, 2013).

Nationally, these events marked the breaking point of the Syrian youth, who did not see any other choice than to take up arms and throw themselves into this unfair fight. They wanted to fight against Assad and his inhumane regime. Inexperienced, untrained, poorly equipped, yet highly motivated and self-appointed 'commanders' formed ad-hoc neighbourhood military brigades to lead non-state fighters into battle. Thousands of

young men were ready to fight in support of the revolution. This study assessed whether the SMB, as an Islamic social movement, identified its duty to fight or aid the fighting on the ground in Syria. The SMB leaders have highlighted repeatedly their desire for a peaceful approach to the situation. However, the situation of their country folk obviously had an effect on them. Quite reasonably, many young Syrians with nothing left to lose other than their lives fought as part of rebel groups. Most of these fighters joined the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which was formed as a joint-resistance group from a large number of moderate non-state brigades.

These fighters need to be empowered and represented diplomatically by an opposition force. The exiled SMB members would make an ideal group for this purpose, as they contain amongst them a large number of Syrian intellectuals who have, first-hand, experienced the repression of the Assad regime. However, as the SMB was not part of the armed resistance, questions were raised as to how they would represent it diplomatically. Al-Bayanouni, the leader of the SMB, who himself had experienced life in one of the regime's prisons, addressed these concerns when he said that: "the SMB, who experienced decades of the regime's repressions, the Hama Massacre, with its 30,000 deaths in 1982, the oppression of human rights, and the torture of uncountable thousands of SMB members and affiliates in prisons in the famous ancient place of *Tadmour* (Palmyra) for decades, did ask the people in 2011 to stay away from weapons, fearing that this inequality could develop into a disastrous outcome for the Syrian society" (Al-Bayanouni, London, personal communication, 2014).

Interviews with SMB executives have shown that the SMB was discussing these important issues during the early stages of the uprising. However, the executive board of the SMB arrived at the unanimous decision that they should not bear arms. As explained by the leadership, the SMB actively warned the youth not to fight. Despite this, it became clear that the SMB's warnings were being drowned in the sea of anger emanating from the protests. After the Assad regime sent armed forces to attack peaceful demonstrations, the situation changed, as explained by Al-Bayanouni:

> "People have been forced to pick up arms to defend themselves. At this moment, we have not been able, as an organization (SMB), to demand from the youth not to do so. We do know,

> however, that the regime is trying to push people into responding militarily. With the revolution becoming more and more armed, the SMB has to reach out to those who we think are genuine people and who are keen on the independence and stability of our country." (Al-Bayanouni, London, personal communication, 2014)

Some SMB members posed the idea of forming an independent SMB-backed military force. Al-Bayanouni mentions that these issues were seriously discussed and debated. Eventually, the leadership decided not to take arms and to focus on peaceful solutions and unarmed resistance. This option seemed, to the SMB's leadership, completely in line with their ideology as an organization. Qatari-based Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, a contemporary, well-known Islamic thinker and member of the Egyptian MB mentioned, when describing the organization's "balanced ideology", that: "It is an ideology that reflects an intermediate, balanced attitude of an evenly balanced *Ummah* that is far from being extremist or negligent" (Al-Qaradawi, 2000:135).

The SMB strongly believes that its position is an advisory one; its leadership mention that they are a social movement, not a militaristic one. One interviewee respondent rationalized the organization's views by underlining that: "The SMB does share some goals with armed groups, such as the toppling of the dictatorship. However, the SMB disagrees with any group that wants to enforce their views with guns" (Haffar, Istanbul 3.4.2014). Thus, the SMB does not have an armed brigade. However, their support for Syrian rebels is worth acknowledging and understanding. For ordinary Syrians, and many intellectuals, it is unclear to what extent, and in what manner, the SMB support armed resistance groups in Syria. The exact level of support, and the recipients of the support are difficult to pinpoint because the support is given by individuals, and not by the SMB as an organization. Additionally, the nature of the Syrian crisis means that fighters form, leave, and change associations regularly.

Although the SMB are not officially involved in armed combat, interview analyses suggest that it is backing the NSA (an established alliance of non-state armed groups), who are fighting the regime and intending to "liberate the country from dictatorship." However, "these groups are the moderate ones that oppose and fight extremism" (Al-Baker, Gaziantep 2014; Younis, London 15.10.2014). The SMB and NSA are very

different organizations, and this is evident through the differences between the NSA's quick decision-making and the SMB's much slower and more calculated approach (Ismael, Istanbul 2014; Sabbagh, London 2014).

Al-Bayanouni has advised that SMB members and affiliates be conscious of not only the regime's fighter, but of mainstream Islamic groups who see the SMB as a competitor, leading them to not accept any intermixing with the organization (Al-Bayanouni, London, personal communication, 2014). Eye-witnesses have reported that groups such as Al-Nusra and DAESH have openly fought SMB members (Anonymous Interview, Killis, 2014). These groups have shown their hatred of SMB members and affiliates by seizing them on several occasions in Syria(Fares, Gaziantep, personal communication,2014). Some observers feel that the SMB gained influence within these groups, pulling their members away from extremist ideologies and activities (Othman, Istanbul, 2014). This is supported by other observations, such as the one made by Dr. Rasheed, a Syrian political scientist who mentioned that the SMB has built a strong relationship with most moderate brigades working to overthrow the Syrian regime (Rasheed, Gaziantep, personal communication, 2014).

The SMB occasionally supports and endorses rebel group who adhere to international law whilst fighting. To find out which groups fit this criterion, the SMB uses civilian reports that describe the activities of groups, especially the reports of civilians fleeing Syria (Diarbakkerli, Gaziantep, personal communication, 2014). Some observers claim that the SMB does not transparently admit to all of its involvements with rebel groups. They recall statements made throughout the revolution that, in their opinion, are often contradictory and confusing.

Executive SMB members such as Al-Droubi and Al-Bayanouni have repeatedly stressed that the SMB does not back any armed group, maintaining a safe distance from all groups. However, in other cases, some SMB leaders appear to have announced their willingness to support certain groups. For example, one interviewee mentioned that, in one instance, an SMB leader stated on social media that the organization was supporting a certain armed group. Therefore, some analysts have suggested that the SMB does support some groups, despite them not wanting to admit it. Despite the efforts of

analysts, such as Charles Lister, who try and map out combatants, the exact positions of the SMB are unclear due to the changing dynamics of the Syrian conflict. It seems as if there are some fighting groups with ideologies similar to those of the SMB, but they seem to be limited in their military power. In any case, the SMB is adamant that it is not intending to support any extreme groups, and that if any groups that have their backing do become extreme, they will lose the support of the SMB.

Nabil Kassis Al-Khouri mentions that the *Wa'ad* party contains rehabilitated fighters that it attracted by teaching them their democratic ideologies and solutions (Al-Khouri, Gaziantep, personal communication,2014). Syria's changing dynamics makes pinpointing an exact stance of the SMB, the *Wa'ad* party, or even the Syrian regime very difficult. However, a few points have become clear, including:

1- Armed groups with ideologies similar to those of the SMB may have close relations with their members, but they cannot be considered as being SMB-affiliated groups. Fighters from these groups may be receiving financial aid from individual SMB members, but they are not receiving funding from the SMB as an organization. The groups excluded from this aid are of two types: (1) Salafi Jihadi groups that oppose the SMB, and (2) secular or ethnicity-based groups whose ideologies are incompatible with those of the SMB.

2- The SMB had more influence over fighters before the arrival of extremist groups. However, it appears that the SMB has regained some of its influence by consulting and offering programs of support to the rebels.

3- The SMB, in effect, have constrained armed resistance groups. This reflects the SMB's humanitarian agenda. Post-2011, this meant that the SMB's position was that of a socio-political organization, and not that of a militaristic political group.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter focussed on the SMB's domestic responses to the Syrian uprising. Human rights organizations have documented the extreme challenges facing the Syrian people

during this crisis. This chapter analysed the SMB's solidarity with their fellow Syrian people, as well as their commitments and aid programs post-2011. The SMB has centralized its headquarters to Turkey in an effort to coordinate its responses to the Syrian crisis (see Chapter 7). This has allowed the SMB to gain ideological ground in Syria.

The SMB's internal networks that have been functioning for over 30 years – including throughout the SMB's time in exile – proved effective yet again. SMB members have integrated and worked with Syrian communities for humanitarian purposes. The SMB eventually officially endorsed these efforts, which were possible because of the long-lasting relationships that have existed between SMB members and the rest of the Syrian population. The increased focus on the Syrian crisis has led to an increased focus on the SMB. Analysts from across the world have assumed that, as the best-organized socio-political actor amongst the opposition forces, the SMB would be a key agenda-setter within the region. This evaluation is based on the observation that SMB members have played a significant role in organizing conferences to gather oppositional forces (see Chapter 7). However, the SMB has faced immense challenges in the volatile post-uprising environment of Syria.

Individual SMB members have shown their determination to work for a large number of social projects. They have taken on social duties to support and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian population. By establishing humanitarian NGOs, SMB members and affiliates have gained the praise and recognition of the Syrian population and global organizations, such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The SMB has not received any state funding, unlike many other international organizations carrying out humanitarian work. Despite this, the SMB have not claimed responsibility for the noble efforts of its members, these efforts have been linked with the SMB through the Syrian people personally knowing, either directly or indirectly, the aid workers and their allegiances.

Interviews with a number of Syrian teachers who had served under the regime's educational program showed that the SMB began to recruit new members in refugee communities in rebel-held regions in border cities. SMB members have stated that this

recruitment is due to the Syrians witnessing their work and the community support they offer, seeing in action the ideologies of the SMB. The success of SMB members in local council polls, whilst substantial, pales in comparison to the success in elections of their counterparts in other Arab states. The SMB's competitors rely on long-existing relationships for their support, something which is not very available to the SMB, who have been exiled for so long. To gain further support, the SMB needs to make more evident its services to the Syrian population.

The SMB is generally recognized as being a grassroots socio-political movement and so it needs to demonstrate its understanding of gender equality. SMB leaders stress that the 'Sisters' within their organization form an important pillar of it. They state that SMB leaders have repeatedly contacted potential female members, inviting them to join the organization's activities and make improvements. The female section of the SMB historically did just that. The SMB leadership has stated that, in order to increase female participation within their organization, they have made a number of attempts to increase female contribution in its decision-making processes. Currently, the outcomes of these efforts remain inadequate. SMB executives mention that more effort needs to be made to solve this issue. However, in the current political climate, this does not seem to be the organization's top priority. The humanitarian and other socio-political efforts of the SMB have served to improve its reputation amongst the Syrian population after it was labelled by the Assad regime as a group of terrorists who were acting as henchmen for Zionist and Western imperialism (Blanga, 2017) .

Shedding light on the pasts of SMB members has allowed for a better understanding of why the organization's democracy and human rights discourse is so well-respected by Syrian intellectuals. It is largely thought of as being a responsible organization that is able to bear significant responsibilities. This analysis has also shown that the SMB needs to rebuild trust amongst Syrians who feel that almost all of the organization's members left Syria after the 1982 Hama Massacre, living wealthy lives abroad whilst the rest of the Syrian population suffered at home. These perceptions have been fed by the Assad regime. SMB leaders have seen these perceptions as being unjustified and untrue, they feel the SMB members have also faced struggles outside of the country. Nevertheless, they appreciate that these views exist, and that they may affect the SMB's ability to

mediate affairs if the chance ever arises. To counter these perceptions, SMB leaders have tried to use their long-existing relationships as evidence of their connection to the Syrian people.

This research has also aimed to explore whether the SMB has been directly involved with the fighting in Syria. This is a significant issue, as the fast-changing circumstances in Syria have made identifying allegiances and levels of support difficult. The interviews with SMB members have made clear the fact that no armed group in Syria is fighting 'under the flag' of the SMB. However, there are fighters in Syria who are ideologically attracted to the SMB. These affiliates/newly-founded members have not received any official endorsement from the SMB, but they may have found shelter within the SMB's re-established communities inside Syria. These communities have been established to support the non-state fighters' families, helping them survive the crisis. Many starving Syrian families have received aid that was personally given by SMB members.

The war in Syria is often referred to as being a proxy war. Thousands of foreign, highly-trained fighters have entered the country, and are keen on fighting for economic, political, and/or ideological reasons (Bakker and Singleton, 2016). Amongst these fighters are Shia militants who are fighting to establish the "Shi'ist crescent" in the Levant (see Chapter 6). This is evidenced through the large numbers of Shia fighters who have brutally murdered Syrian civilians and destroyed their shelters across the country. They have added to the regime's bombing of houses, schools, and even hospitals, some of which were being led by international medical staff, killing hundreds of thousands of people and displacing millions more (Casey-Baker and Kutsch, 2011).

It is not just the Alawites and their allies who have been preventing any serious Sunni political organization from gaining power in the country. Al-Qaida, *Daesh*, and other similarly-minded groups have also been targeting the SMB. Generally, these groups have historically been averse to, what they consider, 'moderate Islam'. These facts may have been part of the reason that the poorly-funded, and militarily-inexperienced SMB did not enter the battlefield. Since the beginning of the crisis, and in an effort to keep casualties at a minimum, the SMB's leadership has stressed their desire to back peaceful resistance

only. After analyzing the facts, it seems that they have stuck by this, despite the claims of some critics.

SMB members have improved their reputation amongst the Syrian population. The leadership now has to decide how to move towards building a sustainable legacy as an Islamic socio-political movement in a post-Assad era. Two questions remain, the first is whether the SMB's leadership is able to repair the organization's reputation after it was damaged by the Assad regime, and the second is whether the SMB will be welcomed by the Syrian population as a representative socio-political force in the future. The next chapter will analyse the SMB's responses to, and dealings with, powerful global and regional forces.

Chapter 7: The SMB's Organizational, Discursive, and Behavioral Responses to the Syrian Crisis: Regional and International Level

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter set out and evaluated the organizational, discursive, and behavioral responses of the SMB to the Syrian uprising at a domestic level. It was established that the SMB reemerged as a socio-political Islamic movement, and that it was able to gain newfound recognition within Syria after thirty years of exile. It was also demonstrated that the Brotherhood were faced with two interconnected issues. First, an overarching public stigmatization stemming from longstanding educational programs of the Syrian regime, and second, the existence of internal friction between the traditional-minded leadership and the new generation of members more oriented towards reform.

The present chapter will examine the issues faced by the SMB at an international level. It will discuss the challenges faced by the Brotherhood in serving as an internationally-recognized opposition group. In addition, correlation will be shown to exist between the decline of the political influence of the SMB, and the level of assistance provided by the international community in general. Thus, demonstrating that the fate of the Brotherhood is closely tied to that of the Syrian people. It will be shown that the ongoing conflict cannot easily be described as a 'civil war', and that the matter involves both young and inexperienced Syrian rebels acting in self-defense, as well as regional and international political actors engaged in a proxy war.

This chapter will also assess the SMB's organizational, discursive, and behavioral responses to the Syrian crisis at a regional and international level. It will illustrate that international recognition (or lack thereof) was largely determined by regional and international acceptance of the SMB's legitimacy, despite their organization, discipline, and commitment on the ground. In particular, it will discuss how efforts by the SMB to organize a socio-political blueprint of a post-Assad Syria have been hindered by international actors. Thus, despite being heralded by certain international commenters as the best organized Syrian oppositional force (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2012a), the

SMB proved to be unable to attract a broad or significant amount international backing for its objectives. This chapter will conclude by examining why this is the case, including orientalist attitudes, questions regarding the compatibility of Islam and democracy, and reactions to the coup against the MB government in Egypt.

To begin, Section 7.2 will analyze the international dynamics affecting the SMB from the perspective of the Syrian regime and their allies fighting on Syrian soil. The political and military contributions of Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah will be evaluated alongside their historical connection with the Ba'athist regime. Similarly, the section will evaluate the geopolitical interests of these allies as they currently stand, and their incentives for supporting Assad.

Section 7.3 will review assessments of the Syrian conflict undertaken by nation states and non-governmental organizations. Attempts to prevent further escalation of the Syrian conflict by human rights organizations and pressure groups will be highlighted, followed by an evaluation of attempts made by other international actors. It will be shown that organizations and political figures who condemned the fighting and called on Assad to cease and desist nonetheless exacerbated the condition of the Syrian people. Failing to provide any concrete assistance to alleviate the situation spread confusion and uncertainty amongst the civil society.

Section 7.4 will consider the role of the SMB within political opposition bodies and their engagement with the international community. It will highlight the crucial role that the SMB played in the initial stages of the conflict by forming political opposition bodies designed to fill the anticipated vacuum left by a post-conflict transition. It will be shown that the influence of the SMB decreased due to a number of smaller, heterogeneous oppositional groups joining opposition platforms at the behest of the West. This resulted in the SMB losing their position as the key player within the opposition force. This trend will be illustrated through critical examinations of the roles that the SMB held in major opposition bodies, including the Syrian National Council (SNC), the Syrian National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (*Al-Itilaf*), and the Syrian Interim Government.

Section 7.5 will proceed to examine the SMB with respect to their relationships with regional and international actors. It will outline some of the interactions that the SMB had with states including Turkey, Russia, Iran, USA, as well as states from Europe and the Arabian Gulf. It will be shown that attempts by the SMB leadership to elicit promises of humanitarian relief and political pressure from these states were met with responses that reflected their own political interests. The experience of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and the international reaction to their rise and fall from power, will be also be examined in this section. International opinions of the SMB will be shown to have been colored by the attitudes towards ideologically based Islamic dogmas formed as a result of the Egyptian MB. The section will conclude by showing that the SMB ultimately realized that they would never be accepted by world powers as Syrian opposition leaders – not at any stage of the Syrian revolution. This realization was shortly followed by the decline of their international political influence.

7.2 The Syrian Regime and their Allies Fighting on Syrian Soil

The response by the Assad regime to the Syrian uprising is important to consider as it sets the context within which the SMB re-emerged. The severity of the regime's reaction proved to be disastrous for the Syrian population, and goes some way in explaining the role assumed by the SMB in an attempt to redress it.

Whilst the protests remained largely peaceful, the media instruments of the regime vindicated the response by referring to a so-called threat of terrorism (Medvedev, 2011). However, the harsh response from Assad's forces defied all international human rights and humanitarian norms (Rikken, 2016). Demonstrators were beat with cudgels, detained indiscriminately, and tortured regardless of age, gender, or level of participation (Black and Ali, 2011). In addition, the regime made use of helicopter squads and chemical weapons (BBC News, 2017). Utilized against urban and rural spaces alike. Residential locations were targeted with specially-designed barrel bombs throughout the uprising.

Analysts forecasted that the Syrian conflict would "mark the beginning of the end for Bashar" (Hof, 2014). Others took steps to prepare for 'the day after' anticipating the needs and requirements of the country after the conflict was resolved. However, as time went on the conflict grew in complexity; more than 470,000 civilians were killed, and

over half of the population of Syria was displaced (Human Rights Watch et al., 2017). Publications were made by think tanks relating to the Middle East in an attempt to explain the situation on the ground. Certain researchers concluded that the Assad regime did not aim to "engage in meaningful political compromise of the kind that could re-legitimize his regime internationally and domestically" (Lund, 2015).

Whilst international researchers were evaluating the results of the Syrian conflict, the SMB were focused on its origin. They argued that the conflict was borne and driven by diverse foreign interests. Mulham Al-Drouby, and Executive member of the SMB, stated that "Syria has always been a geo-historic Euro-Asian cross-point of different ethnic and religious interests" (Al-Drouby, Vienna, personal communication, 2014). The implication of this statement is that the presence of a multitude of different stakeholders all vying to achieve self-serving agendas is one of the major reasons why the conflict has not come to an end.

Identification of these stakeholders has been a gradual process. Those parties fighting alongside Assad, as well as statistical analysis of their involvement, has been determined periodically. The information unit at *Al-Omran* Centre, a think-tank based in Turkey, has gathered data in order to answer some of the questions posed by the wider international audience. In December 2016, the Centre published ten confirmed allies of the regime that had been surveilled fighting alongside Assad's forces:

1. Russian military experts handling and coordinating Russian airstrikes operated by military planes equipped with advanced technology;
2. Fighters from the Lebanese Hezbollah Shia militias, fed and equipped by the Iranian Mullahs of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC);
3. The *Fatmiyon* Brigade Militants, who are recruited and trained Afghan Shia militias, also controlled by IRGC;
4. *Al-Nujaba,* who are Hezbollah's Iraqi Shia militias, controlled by IRGC;
5. Bader Organization, who are a mix of Shia militias, controlled by IRGC;
6. The Tiger Forces, who are local Syrian Alawite militias, trained and financed by IRGC;
7. *Al-Quds* Brigade, who are locally recruited Syrian-Palestinian militias, trained and equipped by Russian military experts;

8. National Defense Forces, who are fighters assembled and located in Western Aleppo districts;
9. Parts of the Syrian Democratic Forces, and
10. Collaborating Kurdish tribes, including *Jabhat Al-Akrad* in Shekh Maqsod.

This list is comprised only of those allies fighting in Aleppo and rural areas, and demonstrates the urgency of the need for Assad to use foreign fighters and associates. These groups became his partners and partook greatly in the response to the uprising. Given the regime's strong dependence on foreign powers, it is important to understand the dynamics behind their involvement. The first part of this section will examine the relationship between Syria and Iran. In particular, it will address the Syrian Alawite minority's longstanding sectarian association with the country. It will also explain how Assad was able to attain the support of the Hezbollah group, designated by many countries, including the US, as a terrorist organization. Finally, it will discuss the array of Shia fighters from Iraq and Afghanistan and their sectarian-driven motivations to invade Syria.

The second part of this section will discuss the intervention of Russia and its military and political impact. It will show that the alliance between Russia and Syria was built upon decades of military support which has allowed Moscow to sustain a trade-off power balance to the NATO states. This discussion in turn helps to identify the international political dynamics that have existed throughout the Syrian conflict, and within which the SMB operated as an opposition force.

7.2.1 The Shia Allies: The Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah

Before the Syrian conflict became an armed struggle, Bashar Al-Assad had presented himself as part of the Sunni Muslim community by praying in public mosques, using Islamic terms in interviews, and legitimizing Sunni clerics (Khatib, 2011; Pierret, 2013). Afterwards, unable to withstand the rebels, most of whom were Sunni, and their Christian support, he utilized his previous connections with Tehran to obtain Iranian support against the rebels.

Iranian military squads, militias, and fighting groups are all fighting in Syria and have contributed to the survival of the regime (Rasmussen and Nader, 2016). It can be argued that the primary motivation for these groups is sectarianism, and their Shia beliefs. Their presence has contributed to the transformation Syrian demography, which will be discussed further below. Nonetheless, by inviting Iranian-backed military advisers and granting free license for Shia fighters to assault the Syrian civil society, Assad had effectively dismissed any social contract that he may have had with the Syrian people.

The Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, supported the uprisings of Sunni Muslims in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, as well as the Shia protests in Bahrain. These were heralded as "signs of the Islamic awakening" (Khamenei, 2012). Yet, in a seemingly contradictory manner, Iran is supporting a regime in Syria which has a constitutional secular character. In addition, in September 2011 Tehran hosted the ambitiously named "International Conference on Islamic Awakening" (Sayyas, 2012: 268). During the event, Iran considered the Brotherhood's democratic win in Egypt as a victory for the Islamic awakening (Khamenei, 2012). whilst naming the Syrian peoples' wish for freedom from tyranny as a terrorist action that ought to be fought against (Chulov and Wintour, 2016).

Iran's engagement in Syria is based on historical, and primarily sectarian, objectives that operate on three distinct levels. Firstly, in the short-term Iran sought to empower the ruling Syrian Alawite sect. This was achieved by providing high-profile military consultants to Syria, as well as high-ranked military leaders known as Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). These personnel were provided alongside well-equipped fighting battalions that engaged in battle against the Syrian rebels and civilians (Reuters, 2017). Sectarian militias, such as the Shia Hezbollah group, were also mobilized to fight as allies of the Assad regime.

Secondly, Iran sought to displace Syrian Sunni Muslim from their homes as a medium-term objective. According to witnesses and inhabitants, numerous areas in Damascus and its suburbs have been occupied by invading Iranian fighters and their families. Thus, the pre-existing wealthy and well-educated Sunni population of this ancient city has been

effectively replaced with foreign Shia families, mostly Asian and Iranian migrants (Chulov, 2017).

Thirdly, Iran sought to empower the pre-existing, yet politically weak, Shia inhabitants of Sunni-ruled monarchies (such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain) and Sunni-governed states (such as Yemen, wherein the *Houthi* Shia rebels are publically supported by Iran) (Saul et al., 2017). This was sought after as a long-term objective. Iran and Saudi Arabia have been engaged for some time in a political power struggle for religious predominance over the region. Similarly, Iran has demonstrated its intention to 'stabilize' the Shia government in Iraq by undermining state institutions and Sunni civil society. Iranian militias made use of, and at times contributed to, the existing chaos in Iraq in order to access the open border to Syria and extend their sectarian mission. These militias have reportedly suffered very heavy losses, but have an unyielding determination to dedicate their life 'for the higher cause'(Blair, 2016).

International investigations into the assassination of the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafic Al-Harriri, have led some to lay the responsibility at the feet of the Syrian Government and Hezbollah together (Fisk, 2015). The powerful presence of Syria's military force and state intelligence within Lebanon has facilitated and largely supported by Hezbollah. The Iranian-backed terrorist group was able to build a state within the state, thereby undermining the paralyzed and dysfunctional governance institutions in Lebanon. When the Syrian uprising began, Hezbollah was amongst the first to provide the Syrian government with political and military support, dispatching troops all over the country (Nakhoul, 2013).

It is worth noting that Iran's political interest in Syria stems from its wider aim to affect the prosperity of its neighboring states. This aim has existed since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Whilst it is neither necessary nor viable to engage in a discussion of the reasons for the Iranian 'pan-Islamic vision', it is sufficient to state the country aspires to a sphere of influence known as the 'Shia Crescent', comprising the Levant. This originates from a religious desire to fight against Sunni Muslims, and is sought after with a fervor that has lasted more than 1,400 years. Nonetheless, despite this impassioned and entrenched political interest that Iran has in Syria, Iranian support alone was not sufficient for the

Assad regime. A stronger ally was needed to assist in the battle against the Syrian people.

7.2.2 The Russian Federation

The Russian intervention in Syria started long before its military campaign began in September 2015. In the political arena, Russia vetoed several resolutions proposed by the UN Security Council to sanction the Syrian government and refer them to the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Aljazeera News, 2017) They also provided several military advisors to Syria (The Telegraph, 2012). In terms of the Russian military campaign on Syrian soil, their contribution to Assad's so-called 'war on terrorism' has been severe. Russian military jets invited by Bashar Al-Assad have targeted schools, hospitals, shelters, and civilian public spaces (Quinn, 2017). Their ongoing and uncompromising commitment to the regime's cause has made it difficult to come to a political resolution of the Syrian conflict. Before venturing into an analysis of the underlying motives behind the Russian support, it is imperative to understand the historical and bilateral relationship between Russia and Syria.

The Asia Minor Agreement of May 1916 can be said to be the originator of the present-day conflicts in the Middle East (Wright, 2016). The 'secret line drawn in the sand' by British Diplomat Mark Sykes and his French counterpart, Francois Georges-Picot, took place shortly before the Balfour Declaration of November 1917. Together, this artificial foreign state-building, as well as the Zionist desideratum, ultimately resulted in the creation of a national home for Jews. After the Second World War, the empowered Israeli State was formed on Palestinian land on the 14th of May 1948. Israel was neighbored by a French-British pattern of Arab states, with some of whom (such as Egypt and Syria) they remained engaged in constant conflict (Adelson, 2012).

After Syria's independence from France in 1946, the people sought to empower a freely elected government. This was in an attempt to restrain the institutional and civilian chaos left behind by the French occupiers. The creation of Israel, too, remained a great concern for the Syrian people. Al-Bayanouni, leader of the SMB for fourteen years, stresses that

Syria has always been in a state of war with Israel. Severe military confrontations have resulted in heavy losses by Syria, whereas Israel has received much support from the West. Reparation fees from Germany, an active Israeli lobby in the USA, and numerous sources of financial support amongst Western supporters and advisors resulted in Israel becoming a remarkably well-equipped military power, with nuclear capabilities (McGuire, 1987). Thus, the newly-formed state has been able to outlive three wars with its Arab neighbors in 1948, 1967, and 1973.

Notwithstanding the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979, and the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty of 1994, Israel and Syria were both involved in the Lebanese Civil War in 1982. Syria occupied Lebanon from 1976 to 2005, whilst Israel were in occupation of South Lebanon in order to fence off the Hezbollah militia from the Israeli border (Sela, 2007). Due to much political pressure brought about by regional and international accusations regarding the assassination of the then Lebanese Prime Minister, Syrian forces were compelled to leave Lebanon in 2005 (BBC News, 2005).

After Hafez Al-Assad came into power following a military coup in 1970, he was well aware of the political situation and outstanding threats of the region. Perhaps the greatest danger facing his Pan Arabism ideology was the military might of the neighboring state of Israel. As the USA and Western democracies were building up Israel's military power, it became imperative for Syria to obtain support from Russia. Ever since, Russia has had a foothold in Syria (Mercouris, 2017).

Another threat to Assad's rule, which history suggests was his primary concern, related to the confrontations brought about by the country's population of Sunni intellects and civilians. In addition to questions surrounding the legitimacy of his rise to power (through military force), Hafez Al-Assad belonged to the Alawite sect. This underprivileged minority is found along the coastal line of Lattakia and the adjoining mountains. Many Syrians questioned the correctness of a minor ethic Shia sect to rule over the country in such a unilateral manner. Fearing domestic turmoil, Assad built a highly-functioning intelligence system (*Mokhabarat*) in order to suppress any opposition to his single-party policy. In so doing, he sought financial and technological support from powerful countries such as Russia. This Russian support continued after the death

of Hafez Al-Assad and after the assumption of power by his son, Bashar. Thus, both before and after the demise of the Soviet Union, Syria has provided a substantial foothold to Russia in the Middle East.

Moscow and Damascus continued to maintain a special relationship even after the demise of the Soviet Union. The Russian Federation provided counsel to the military and intelligence leaders of Hafez Al-Assad, and was able to use Syria as its access to the Middle East. Russian support in Syria extended to empowering Assad's successor and son, providing the regime with heavy military equipment, surveillance software programs, and anti-terrorism support in order to stabilize Bashar Al-Assad's rule over the Syrian people (Rubin Center, 2001). More recently, Moscow has expressed an interest in developing stronger ties with Iran (The Washington Institute, 2017). "During a recent visit to Tehran…Putin announced that Russia would help Iran export enriched uranium and modify nuclear facilities at Arak and Fordo" (Bhutani, 2015).

Despite the special relationship between Syria and Russia, analysts ruled out the possibility of any military entry of Russian forces on Syrian soil in response to the uprising. However, in September 2015 Putin intervened with aerial power, ostensibly in order to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Osborn and Stewart, 2015). At the time, ISIS was engaged in fighting against the rebels resisting Assad's rule. It soon became apparent that ISIS was not, in fact, the target of Putin's excessive military force. Rather, the aerial forces of Russia were directed against the opposition supported by Turkey and Saudi Arabic (Bhutani, 2015). In addition, it has been documented by the US-based organization, Human Rights Watch, as well as other NGOs and eyewitnesses, that Putin's forces were also directed against civilian targets. Humanitarian shelters, medical centers, and civilian accommodation were bombed indiscriminately (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Russian intervention not only added to the dire circumstances and humanitarian crisis, but also exacerbated the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Syrian civilians.

The Syrian Foreign Minister, Walid Al-Muallem, claimed that the Russian sponsorship of Syria exists "in accordance with Syria's own criteria and tradition, based on the fact that it is a pivotal state in the region" (Syrian Observer, 2014). In essence, he stated that

Syria was permitting a Russian naval facility to be built on the coastal city of Tartus (Hume and Isaac, 2016). The base is ideally situated. It is close to Assad's Alawite stronghold city of Lattakia (72km) and Russian jets can reach cities of strategic importance in a short space of time. In 1982, for example, Hafez Al-Assad bombed the city of Hama which had been strong in their support of the SMB. Hama is situated a mere 84km from Tartus, and can be reached by jet in 0.08 hours. Similarly, the city of Homs lies 78km away from Tartus. It represents another Sunni opposition city which has been heavily destroyed by Assad's military forces since 2011 (BBC News, 2015)

Regarding the Russian-Syrian relationship, it was suggested that "the dangerous game initiated by Hafez Al-Assad in 1970 continues and the Syrian player remains in position" (Syrian Observer, 2014). A revival of this 'game' could be evinced from the ongoing crisis in Syria, and the Syrian Foreign Minister, Muallem, was said to be "reminiscent of the Soviet…Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov" (Syrian Observer, 2014). These statements suggested to the SMB, who had entreated with Russia to stay out of the Syrian conflict, that Russia will provide support to Assad and contribute to the regime's survival.

To that end, the survival of Assad's regime was a matter of priority for Putin. It was noted that Russia "has its only maritime military base in the Syrian city [of Tartus] over its only maritime military base in the Mediterranean, and is therefore regarded as the ultimate safeguard and guarantee against the resolutions of the World Security Council, despite the occasional human ailments of the lips" (Wimmen, 2012, 184).

Other analysts recognized Russia's political desire to retain a firm position within the region. In an address to the IDSA in 2013, Chairman of the Russian Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, Fyodor Lukyanov, "recalled Russia's "mistake" in agreeing to the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime and asserted that the Russian stance on Syria was intended to disavow the Libyan precedent" (Bhutani, 2015). It is also worthy to note that Russia has maintained a dialogue with Israel with regards to the scope of its military intervention in Syria. It has been suggested that this in order to reduce the likelihood of any aggressive response by Israel to military action originating on Syrian soil (Bhutani, 2015). Perhaps consequently, Syria has not suffered from any aerial attacks by Israel.

To conclude, the regime's brutal military campaign has been undertaken alongside Iranian and Russian support. The international community has met the campaign with critical reactions, although these reactions have not resulted in any substantive acts. The next section will further demonstrate that the regime would be unable to withstand the international condemnation of their use of force were it not for the political support of their Russian allies. This is because Russia "sees Syria not just as an ally, but as part of the family…The Syrian-Russian relations are…excellent and special" (Syrian Observer, 2014).

7.3 The Relationship between Russia, Iran, and the SMB

This section will provide a brief outline of the official political stances of the SMB towards both Russia and Iran. Both countries supported Assad and the government regime in Syria, but had a dynamic relationship with the SMB due to their other political alliances. Russia had a growing relationship with Turkey, who remained a close ally of the SMB and supported the Syrian opposition coalition, both politically and logistically. Similarly, Iran had a pre-existing relationship with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood before the military coup. Thus, it is important to carefully consider the nature of these relationships.

Since the Russian military action in Syria began in 2015, the SMB has had a strained relationship with Russia. The SMB released a statement declaring that the "blatant aggression on our country and our people puts Russia alongside Iran in direct partnership with Assad's criminal regime" (Ikhwan web, 2015). In this statement, the SMB called for allies within the Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as the entire international community, to put "pressure on the criminal regime and take real and direct political and diplomatic action" to resolve the conflict.

Shortly afterwards, the Brotherhood released another statement wherein they affirmed that the Brotherhood "refuses ongoing endeavors to divide Syria under the auspices of the Mullahs of Iran, the Czars of Russia, and the criminal Zionists, with Arab blessing assisted by the heinous Al-Sissi" (Ikwanweb, 2015). The SMB continued to state that the Iranian-Russian invasion of Syria was not directed against ISIS, as claimed by

mainstream media. They claimed that the two states aimed "to suppress the real revolutionaries fighting Bashar's sectarian repressive regime", and suggested that the political position of the USA participated in the repression of the Syrian revolution.

Due to Russia's place amongst the forerunners of international politics, and their position in the UN, it is possible that the SMB may have to engage in dialog with the state. However, whether this will be directly or through affiliated groups remains to be seen. In any event, such a discussion will have far-reaching ramifications for the SMB, and may result in a political backlash from its followers and supporters on Syrian soil.

Similarly, the SMB viewed Iran as a prototypical opponent of the Syrian revolution, and of the Islamic world in general. In 2012, Al-Drouby stated that the SMB had rejected six attempts made by Iran to engage in dialog through a Turkish intermediary. "We told [the Iranians] that we will not meet with them or negotiate with them before they stop supporting Bashar Al-Assad" (Miller, 2012). In addition, in May 2013 the Muslim Brotherhood stated that the national and community leaders of Iran should pay attention to the danger of the country's "doctrinal" and "nationalistic" outlook, and avoid the pitfalls of sectarianism (The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, 2013) They asserted that "unless Iran abandons its attempts to dominate and agitate, and expressly abandons Assad and his circle, it cannot be a part of any political initiative".

However, the relationship between Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood had not been so strained before the Syrian crisis. The head of a research center within the Iranian Foreign Affairs Department, Mustapha Zahrani, stated that Iran believes in "Islamic democracy and in a moderate Islam: as do organizations close to the Muslim Brotherhood in Turkey and in Egypt"(Dot-Pouillard, 2013). Upon the democratic election of President Morsi in June 2012, Iran applauded the appointment. However, in the following year President Morsi attended a conference wherein he criticized the military intervention carried by Hezbollah. This can be considered to be a turning point in the diplomatic relations between Iran and the MB. It was stated that the "relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran has gone from mutual respect to mutual distrust, potentially fueling the further polarization between Sunni and Shia in the region" (Dot-Pouillard, 2016). Thus, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the SMB did not always interact

with Iran in accordance with one another. However, following the military coup in Egypt and subsequent crisis in Syria, neither branch of the Brotherhood are on speaking terms with Iran.

7.4 International Responses to the 'Crimes Against Humanity'

The previous section outlined the true extent of the reliance that the regime had on its two main allies. Through Iranian and Russian support, Bashar Al-Assad has been able to forcibly overcome any obstacles concerning the legitimacy of his rule and authority over the Syrian people. The present section will evaluate the international responses to the actions committed by the regime in unison and cooperation with these allies.

The Syrian opposition were not alone in expressing their outrage at the excessive use of force, continually rising death toll, and widespread destruction of Syrian infrastructure. The Syrian regime were seen using heavy artillery, including cluster and barrel bombs, as well as internationally prohibited gasses, military tanks, jets and helicopters against civilian targets. These actions were so grave that their effect was felt in neighboring countries, and many European nations as well. Before long, the international sentiment was voiced calling for an immediate end to the acts of violence, perpetuated mainly by the Syrian regime against civilians (Amnesty International, 2017).

Therefore, it can be seen that the West was in accordance with the opposition, including the SMB, in their desire to see Assad removed from power. This is solely due to the deliberate actions of the regime. However, this 'accord' of the international community did not result in any final substantive outcome. It was reported by analysts that "even painful punishments, international abolition and limited military steps (such as the flight ban) [would] not take the Syrian regime off its course" (Wimmen, 2012: 84). Thus, the opposition and external actors in the EU and the USA were faced with a dilemma. Assad seemed committed to his cause. Despite international condemnation, reported numerously in prominent international publications, the regime persisted in their crimes against humanity.

7.4.1 Human Rights Bodies, Humanitarian Organizations, and other NGOs

Syrian NGOs were formed in relation to the crisis in order to administer day-to-day issues involving the provision of healthcare and access to justice. These organizations used any avenue available to them to report evidence of humanitarian crimes committed by the regime to international human rights organizations and leaders of democratic states. As discussed in Chapter 5, members and affiliates of the SMB took an active role in participating or initiating NGOs for the purposes of raising awareness of the situation on the ground and performing rescue missions. This was achieved despite considerable limitations on their financial and logistic capabilities.

Humanitarian organizations such as Save the Children, Oxfam, and Doctors Without Borders took a huge interest in the crisis. The extensive media attention, which has persisted now for several years, remains largely unsuccessful as an intervening agent. Nonetheless, the media coverage has caused the atrocities committed in Syria to reach people from all over the world, and the level of censure directed towards the regime's actions has grown in accordance with the exposure. It is within this context that the SMB partook in activities and dialogues with a sense of urgency. The following examples will serve to showcase the complexity of the Syrian crisis, and will introduce the analytical paradoxes that resulted from the competing interests of state actors. Persistent throughout is the fact that, whilst parties have grave concerns regarding the actions committed by the regime, concrete responses combatting these actions have failed to materialize.

The first international organization to consider is the United Nations. It is remarkable indeed that this all-inclusive, intergovernmental organization was rendered powerless in the case of Syria. Its numerous offices in human rights and humanitarian aid all expressed the dire need for a response to the heinous crimes committed in Syria, including the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA). UN reports evaluating the situation on the ground, through mechanisms such as the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, gathered evidence about the crimes committed on Syrian soil. Many of the results identified the regime as the main perpetrator of excessive acts of violence. Yet, whilst the UN had a general impetus to take action, Ban Ki Moon, the Secretary General of the UN, described in 2015 the lack of feasible solutions as an "international impotency to stop the war" (McGreal, 2015).

UN officials stressed the severity of the Syrian crisis several times over. In 2015, the Secretary General stated that "Syrian civil society has to carry on the heaviest burden ever happened to people since the genocide in Rwanda decades ago" (Ban Ki Moon, 2015) (McGreal, 2015). Adama Dieng, Special Advisor to the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide, issued an urgent statement wherein he expressed deep concern regarding the political and social consequences of the crimes committed by the Syrian Government. He stated, "I reiterate the calls of the international community for the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and stress the importance of taking steps now to facilitate future transitional justice processes in Syria to reduce the risk of retribution, promote reconciliation and provide all communities with a sense of justice and dignity" (Dieng, 2012) reported by (United Nations News Service Section, 2012) .

A proposed 'wake-up call' initiated by the UN was launched in order to provide protection for Syrian civilians under the "Responsibility to Protect" program. This was vetoed by Russia, leading to a sentiment that the UN, at least on an organizational level, felt that they did not have a responsibility towards the protection of the Syrian people. Analysts and political observers alike have discussed the extent to which this sentiment negatively impacted the situation on the ground. On military intervention of Western states, Wimmen opined that "a direct and massive intervention in Syria still remains excluded, not only because of the Russian and Chinese veto in the World Security Council, but also because it seems that the foreign actors are not prepared to bear the associated costs and risks to take such a step. Once again, the international community must recognize the impact of humanitarian norms [caused by] the military resistance and violent regime" (Wimmen, 2012: 184). The Commissioner of the UN Human Rights Council, Vitit Muntarbhorn, as well as the Arab League Secretary General, Nabil Al-Araby, also called for an end to the violence.

The relationship between the SMB and the UN was colored by the Brotherhood's status as a faith-based organization. During an interfaith conference sponsored by the UN, it was stated that "the UN and religions share a common concern for human dignity, justice and peace" (Grills, 2009: 505). Jean Ping, acting President of the 59th General Assembly, considered the value of 'faith and beliefs' and the vital role that it can play in

a peacekeeping process. He stressed that "the UN General Assembly recognizes the important of engaging religious communities" (Grills, 2009: 505). It was to these principles that Al-Bayanouni and other SMB leaders appealed. They argued that the importance of peacemaking in the case of Syria is in perfect alignment with the ideology that the Brotherhood was founded upon (see Chapter 4).

In October 2012, the SMB issued a blueprint for the formation of the Syrian state, widely published in its political manifesto. The primary intent was to reach the Syrian people, and to position themselves for candidacy of the Syrian government (see Chapter 5). In addition, the plan for the new Syrian society was to reach a wider audience: Western and democratic rule makers. The idea was that a comprehensive strategy proposed by the SMB would send signs to powerful international actors, such as the UN, that the SMB could be recognized as a potential partner. However, the Brotherhood came to realize that they had never been seriously considered by any of the world organizations as one of the influential peacekeeping bodies.

The absence of faith-based organizations in facilitating the peacemaking process seems to be a trend in the arena of international politics. Yet, with the increasing number of conflicts that are ethnic or sectarian in nature, analysts and researchers are beginning to reconsider the role of such organizations. It has been noted that "there is tension between recognizing the intensity of religious involvement in a number of contemporary conflicts, and finding appropriate ways of addressing those conflicts"(Harpviken and Røislien, 2010). In terms of reliability and commitment, an organization formed on the same premise as the parties in a conflict would be better suited to find workable solutions. The approach of the SMB has been to take political action informed by their faith-based ideology. It is worth considering why this approach, or that of faith-based organizations generally, have not been pursued by the UN.

In any event, initiatives and effective approaches require financing. Any kind of faith-based peacebuilding that takes place must be backed by sustainable and continuous financial and logistical support. As global financers did not invest in the Syrian civil society, for a number of reasons mentioned previously, newly initiated NGOs and the SMB had to rely heavily on private donations. These are usually directed towards some

immediate response mission, and tend to fund specific endeavors rather than general efforts of the organization. This is so despite the fact that it was shown by analysts that the involvement of faith-based organizations led to improved healthcare in poor areas and conflict regions.

A consultation undertaken by the World Bank, 'Voices of the Poor', found that impoverished persons "often trusted religious institutions based around ashrams, shrines, mosques, and churches more than governments to address their needs" (Grills, 2009, p. 509). Similarly, it was found that in relation to political parties, Islamic-based movements were considered to be "the leading voices of opposition and [an] important player within domestic politics" (Hashemi, 2013). Thus, there are many indicators to conclude that the inclusion of the SMB to roundtable discussions would have had a positive impact on the peacemaking process in Syria.

The next organization to consider is the internationally recognized NGO, Amnesty International (AI). AI was one of the first organizations to draw attention to the conditions of detainees held in the regime's facilities. They published reports condemning the injustices suffered by Syrian rebels in governmental prisons, and in 2011 claimed that they had proof of atrocious crimes committed by the regime. In July 2011, AI reported that the regime had a "violent crackdown [against] peaceful protests" in the northern town of Tel Kalakh, in which demonstrators called for the release of political prisoners. Subsequently, AI issued a report in February 2017 entitled 'Human Slaughterhouse: Mass Hangings and Extermination at Saydnaya Prison, Syria". Saydnaya is a military prison belonging to the Syrian government, the kind of which survivors have detailed torture and mass killings of detainees taking place (Amnesty International, 2012), In one such facility, identified members of the SMB had been detained as political prisoners and tortured before they were released. AI recognized the release as a positive step (Amnesty International, 2001).

Another NGO to evaluate is Human Rights Watch (HRW). This US-based organization has previously stated that the Syrian government has shown "no qualms about shooting dead its own citizens for speaking out". In addition, they have said that the actions committed by the regime "could qualify as crimes against humanity". In relation to the

Muslim Brotherhood generally, HRW has drafted a signed statement against their listing in the USA as a terrorist organization. They state that "terrorist designation would harm USA groups [and] stifle democracy abroad" (Human Rights Watch, 2017). On the SMB in particular, HRW have reported the torture and detention of thousands of members during Assad's first ten years in power – "many of whom subsequently disappeared" (Human Rights Watch et al., 2010).

Both AI and HRW have reported on the massacres committed in Hama. It is worth noting here that Al-Bayanouni had previous experience of the brutal capabilities of the Assad regime from the 1980s. Consequently, in 2011 the SMB had been warning the young and zealous Syrian youth, cautioning them against entering into the uncertain fighting ground. Al-Bayanouni anticipated that Assad would follow the example of his father: fiercely combatting opposition, meeting dissension with lethal force, and staining the modern history of Syria with yet another dark milestone (Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014; Al-Bayanouni, London, 2017).

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have also appealed to the Syrian authorities and members of the opposition. In January 2012, the ICRC called for a daily cessation of fighting in order to deliver humanitarian assistance. They also appealed to all parties of the conflict to distinguish between civilians and combatants at all times, and to have full regard for international humanitarian law. In September 2012, the President of the ICRC, Peter Maurer, travelled to Syria in order to upscale the efforts of the organization and its affiliates.

By 2014, a third of the entire Syrian population had become refugees, the largest number since the Second World War. Many of those unable to flee were subjected to famine and death. Whilst the UN has stopped counting at 100,000, there have been more than 470,000 civilian casualties since the crisis began, with the figures rising on a daily basis. This has been confirmed by Human Rights observers on the ground, international organizations, and political analysts and commentators.

This section has reviewed the responses of some of the prominent NGOs and international organizations to the Syrian crisis. The atrocities committed by the regime

against the Syrian population, and against members of the SMB, has been well-documented by these organizations. The following section will consider the responses from Western States.

7.4.2 Responses from Western States

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, strongly condemned the regime for their brutal response to the Syrian protestors. This was echoed in the responses of many European state leaders. In a joint statement issued in August 2011, the Prime Minister of the UK, the President of France, and the German Chancellor all demanded for Bashar Al-Assad to step down. This high-profile statement also condemned the crackdown unequivocally and called for an end to the violence.

The US Secretary of State, John Kerry, as well as President Obama both placed the blame for the Syrian crisis at the feet of Bashar Al-Assad. In July 2015, in direct response to the violence committed during the 'bloodiest day of the uprising so far', President Obama warned that Assad was "on the wrong side of history and his people. Through his own actions, Bashar Al-Assad is ensuring that he and his government will be left in the past, and that the courageous Syrian people who have demonstrated in the streets will determine its future. Syria will be a better place when a democratic transition goes forward". Whilst he did not explicitly call for the resignation of Assad, President Obama went on to say that the USA would increase its efforts on the international stage to "isolate the Assad government and stand with the Syrian people".

It is important to highlight that the statements of political leaders and their expressions of intent do not necessarily indicate that the state has not supported the regime, directly or indirectly. For instance, the German government received a list from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) naming German companies that had supplied Assad, and others, with the chemicals used in chemical weaponry. This list has since been classified by Germany, due to the fact that the release of "state secrets" would violate the German constitution, and might "significantly impair foreign policy interests

and thus the welfare of the Federal Republic of Germany" (Latsch, Schmid, and Weigerfer, 2015)..

7.5 The Role of the SMB Within Political Opposition Bodies and their Engagement with the International Community

The previous section evaluated the international responses to the actions committed by the regime. Invariably, human rights organizations, political leaders, and internationally recognized NGOs have all condemned and criticized the actions of the Syrian government. Some have gone so far as to report evidence of crimes against humanity, or to call for the resignation of Bashar Al-Assad. The present section will consider the role of the SMB within political opposition bodies. It will demonstrate that their engagement with the international community through official opposition bodies has proved to be unsustainable, yet SMB members have still played key roles in uniting the different Syrian opposition groups. Further, it will analyze how the SMB acts in the political arena as a Sunni Islamic organization, drawing on the tense relationship it has with the Alawite regime.

The political history of Syria provides that there has been little room for the development of any organized opposition. The totalitarian rule imposed by the regime subjected any opposition to severe repression and brutality (Khatib, 2011; Lefèvre, 2013; Pierret 2013). Thus, it was noted that "the opposition parties in Syria lead a shadowy death without a real potential for political mobilization" (Wimmen, 2012: 181). Undeterred by the oppression, and despite operating from exile, the SMB existed as the largest and most organized Syrian opposition group.

In 2011, the SMB demonstrated its organizational ability by bringing together different opposition groups who had been forced into exile. This effort intended to shape the Syrian opposition, and draw attention to the plight of the Syrian people. The SMB were resolved in setting aside ideological differences from amongst the opposition groups in order to meet the needs of the Syrian civil society. They intended to support the demonstrators calling for freedom and political agency, and form a political body which would protect their right to determine their own destiny. As a longstanding and experience political entity, the SMB were well aware of the need to form an all-inclusive

political body that would be accepted by the Western world. It was very clear to the SMB that, without such acceptance, it would be impossible for the exiled opposition to sustain and support the efforts of the revolutionaries inside Syria.

In the effort to form a political body that could exercise legitimate authority over the Syrian people, the SMB financed their efforts solely through personal resources. This decision was taken in part due to the urgency of the need and the limited amount of time available. However, in addition, the decision was a cautious measure taken to avoid the possibility of any accusations of political biases. By remaining entirely independent, there could be no doubt as to whether the newly formed political body had their political agendas compromised or influenced by any states or international organizations who had financed them (Al-Drouby, Vienna, 2014).

From Istanbul in April 2011, the gathered Syrian opposition made its public announcement demanding the reformation of the Assad regime. The political appeal had no impact on the regime, who continued to meet out brutal acts of violence and persisted in their oppression. However, the opposition decided to meet again in Brussels to demand that the Ba'ath party facilitate a true democratic transition in Syria (Al-Drouby, Vienna, 6.2.2014; Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014). In September 2011, the 'Syrian National Council' was formed.

International analysis and media reports described the SMB as the best-organized political faction within the Syrian National Council (SNC) (Lefèvre, 2013; Teitelbaum, 2011). Lefèvre remarks that, although Hafez Al-Assad had shattered the organization within Syria in the 1980s, they were still considered as an influential organization in the eyes of their associates. Thus, it was a natural and logical process for the different Syrian opposition groups to band together under this initiative to present a strong, unified front against the regime. It was hoped that the SNC "would gain widespread international recognition as the country's sole legitimate representative [and serve] as a single point of contact for the international community" (BBC News, 2013b).

However, before long the deep-rooted ideological differences between the gathered members of the opposition started to surface. This was especially apparent between the

faith-based groups and the leftist nationalist forces, in particular the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change (NCC). The NCC was formed in June 2011 as a political alliance between three Kurdish parties and 16 small left-leaning groups, as well as numerous independent political activists. The bloc is chaired by the leader of the Democratic Arab Socialist Union, Hassan Abdul Azim, and voiced objections to what they felt was an ideological domination of the SMB within the opposition's alliance. This was denied by the Brotherhood, who referred to the shared aim of the alliance to set clear definitions of a future pluralistic government after the fall of Assad (Boehmer, 2012; Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014).

Thus, it became clear that uniting the Syrian opposition under the umbrella of one political body presented challenging problems. The multitude of actors who considered themselves to be representatives of different groups within Syria were unable to agree on who best represents the voice of the Syrian people. The SMB were faced with challenging questions. Namely, how can it consider itself a representative of the Syrian people in light of its absence from the political arena for more than three decades? These fractures from within the opposition alliance was a cause for concern for the wider political community, who were now faced with three competing oppositional political bodies: the Syrian National Council, the Syrian National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (*Al-Itilaf),* and the Syrian Interim Government. These three oppositional bodies will be discussed in turn in the following sections.

7.5.1 The Syrian National Council

The idea behind the establishment of the SNC was to form an inclusive political oppositional body that represents the majority of the Syrian people. It was set up by a coalition of groups and individuals, including signatories of the Damascus Declaration in 2005. It consisted of five members from the Muslim Brotherhood and the tribes, five independent political activists, four Kurds, four liberal secularists, one Christian, and one Assyrian (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2012b) .

The main goal of the SNC was to operate together "to overthrow the regime using all legal means" (SNC, 2012). Though the Free Syrian Army were not included in the

formation of this political assembly, the Syrian fighters inside Syria were said to support the idea of the SNC (BBC, 2013). This is despite the fact that the SMB refused to take part in any violent or lethal activities inside Syria, due to their previous experiences of the catastrophic brutality that the regime is capable of in retaliation (Al-Droubi, 2014; Al-Bayanouni, 2014).

By initiating the SNC, the SMB were presented with an unprecedented opportunity to be a part of the political future of Syria. Moreover, having been accepted and welcomed by the Turkish government, the SMB and other opposition forces were able to enjoy the ability to act within the political sphere without fear of persecution. Disapproval came in the form of political analysis, for example a public accusation levied against the SMB that they had "stolen the revolution" (Hassan, 2011). Nonetheless, the Brotherhood managed to stand out in terms of political strength and influence, and worked towards demonstrating their evolution from an Islamic social movement to a capable political actor.

In 2012, the SNC sought domestic and international recognition. They expressed their intent to the Syrian people by presenting a program for a transitional period, and requested the international community to support their proposal. The plan rejected any calls for ethnic segregation and strongly underlined the national unity of all components of the Syrian civil society. In addition, it iterated the need for national independence and sovereignty, rejecting any foreign military intervention. Due to the complexity of the different fighting groups on the ground, there was no general consensus of the legitimacy of the SNC on Syrian soil. The different groups, with their diverse ideological beliefs, could not all agree to have the SNC as their appointed representatives. As a result, the SNC actively sought external recognition, expecting that international legitimacy would boost its credibility within Syria (Strashun, 2013: 14). The alliance began to organize and participate in international conferences in Europe and North America, and advocated for their cause at universities and public institutions (Al-Drouby, Vienna, 6.2.2014).

The efforts achieved early results, with the alliance coordinating with Berlin in 2012 to hold a workshop at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP). The project intended to outline the intentions and governance structure for 'the day after' in a free Syrian state.

Executive members of the SMB were welcomed alongside the other oppositional representatives of the SNC by Germany's high-profiled expert in state constitutions (Die Welt, 2014; SWP, 2014). The finalized document consisted of 120 pages detailing the vision for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as well as the entitlement for all groups of the Syrian society to be represented in the upcoming state building process.

Numerous publications demonstrated the impact that the SMB has on the finalized document. In his analysis of the vision for a pluralistic and democratically-led Syrian state, Boehmer entitled his paper, "What the Muslim Brothers Want for Syria" (Die Welt, 2014). However, the new alliance's diverse political interests coupled with increasing fragmentation on Syrian soil caused the SNC to suffer criticism from the international community. In particular, disapproval expressed by acting Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, proved to be fatal for the alliance. The USA declared that the SNC "could no longer be viewed as the visible leader of the opposition", and the political power of Washington DC was felt the world over. Western nations no longer trusted the alliance to distribute any contributions for humanitarian assistance (Strashun, 2013: 16). Consequently, the position for political representation of the Syrian people opened up to smaller and less experienced opposition forces.

7.5.2 The Syrian National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces

In 2012, following the international denunciation of the SNC, members of the opposition alliance united under a newly established and widened umbrella organization: the Syrian National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, or Al-Itilaf. Al-Itilaf had a profound effect on the influence enjoyed by the SMB, and reduced their political impact within the Syrian oppositional body.

The coalition was founded in Qatar in 2012 and comprised of 150 members. The assembly was attended by a number of representatives of the numerous political opposition groups, including nationalists, secularists, liberals, Christians, Muslims, Kurds, and independent political actors. In addition, organizations and councils operating within Syria, as well as members of the moderate, non-state fighting brigades, were included in the coalition. Whilst the ideological differences remained between these

different oppositional bodies, they were all in agreement that Bashar Al-Assad and his regime must be replaced by a pluralistic, democratic political system.

The acting Imam of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, Moaz Al-Khatib, was appointed as President of *Al-Itilaf*. Al-Khatib was a soft-spoken, moderate Muslim, and was chaired by two internationally renowned Vice-Presidents. The first, Suhair Al-Atassi, was a secular female activist who descended from the prominent Homsi Atassi political family. She earned her reputation from her involvement in the so-called Damascus Spring by demanding that Bashar Al-Assad change the repressive politics of his late father. Political analysts were quick to dub her as the "First Lady of Post-Assad Syria", and wrote that she "might have to put up a fight against some bearded men from the opposition" (Haaretz, 2012). The SMB referred to their public declaration of the vision of a future Syria, wherein it is stated that the organization has no objections against females or secularists. It states that the SMB has always recognized all Syrians as mutual partners in the united fight against the repressive regime (Al-Bayanouni, 2014).

The second Vice-President elected was the businessman-turned-dissident, Riad Seif. Seif had demonstrated his political capabilities in his formation of the Forum of National Dialog in the early 2000s. Thus, in the newly formed oppositional alliance the SMB held no senior position. Instead, leadership was given to independent political actors who had affected the political landscape of Syria after the exile of the Brotherhood in 1982. After their brief return to influential power immediately following the uprising, the SMB found themselves adhering more and more to the will of the new oppositional body. Eventually, in an attempt to mitigate any lasting damage to the reputation of the Brotherhood, Al-Bayanouni decided to resign rather than to compromise on the founding principles of the SMB.

By broadening the opposition bloc, *Al-Itilaf* was able to achieve what the SNC had previously sought: international recognition of their legitimacy. Whilst satisfying the criteria imposed by the USA (see 7.5.1), the fractures that existed in the formation of the SNC persisted in *Al-Itilaf*. The variety of political groups, exiled dissidents, grassroots activists, and armed militants were unable to agree on how best to overthrow the Syrian regime (BBC, 2013). International media attention and political commentary about Al-

Itilaf focused on how divided the coalition had become. Not only in terms of their difference of opinion on how to proceed, but also with regards to the issue of the "future Syria". The coalition was unable to agree on the constitutional form of a post-conflict Syrian state.

Once again, commentators identified the profound discord existing within the opposition coalition (Hassan, 2014; Landis, 2014; Rosiny, 2013; Sahloul, 2014; Shanahan, 2013). The lack of any clear organizational structure and poor coordination between local committees were also criticized. Local coordination committees tended to act in isolation and actively resisted the influence of other bodies within the coalition (Wimmen, 2012: 181). Nonetheless, at all times, and for all Syrian political opposition groups, the need to build an alternative government remained the primary objective to work towards.

7.5.3 The Syrian Interim Government

The Syrian Interim Government was formed in March 2013 by Al-Itilaf. With headquarters in the Turkish city of , the opponents of the regime were well situated to interact with the international community as well as the people of Syria. Recognizing the importance of proximity, a 'twin' headquarter was established in the northern city of Azaz in Syria.

The decision was made to establish between ten and twelve acting ministers, who were to be nominated by an elected Prime Minister. An independent candidate, Ghassan Hitto, was elected as the first Prime Minister by a narrow margin (Barnard, 2013). Again, there were no SMB members appointed to any of the ministerial offices. However, SMB-affiliated post-holders were appointed, as well as junior consultants from the second and third generations of the Brotherhood. Nonetheless, due to the seemingly inevitable internal conflicts, the first interim government dissolved in July 2013 with the resignation of Hitto, just four months after its formation.

To conclude, despite the pragmatic approach of the SMB following the 2011 uprising, the Brotherhood has been unable to affect any lasting influence on the political landscape of Syria. They have been forced by political necessity to remain a marginal influence

within the Syrian opposition, which has only been possible at all due to its extensive network and organizational apparatus. The next section will evaluate the effectiveness of this network, looking at the relationships existing between the SMB and regional and international actors.

7.6 The SMB and Regional and International Actors

At the end of the twentieth century, there were many examples of religious resurgence in the Arab world (see Chapter 4). It has taken a number of decades for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to advocate for a plural democratic society. Branches of the Brotherhood, such as the Jordanian and SMB, have been impacted by the democratic awakening taking place in the Western world since the Second World War (Khatib, 2011; Pierret, 2013). Prominent Islamic scholars, such as Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, have opined that the essence of Islam is compatible with modern democracy (Al-Qaradawi, 2002).

However, for the SMB a belief in the essence of democracy must be coupled with a trustworthy partner from the democratically ruled countries. They sought to establish diplomatic relationships with powerful democratic states in order to safeguard and support their commitment towards the Syrian civil society. The following sections will demonstrate how these efforts descended into a defensive battle, wherein the SMB were forced to prove their intentions, value, and political proficiency. It will evaluate why the formation of the so-called 'Friends of Syria Group' (FOS) did not provide the anticipated outcomes hoped for by the SMB. Whilst the initial response to the FOS was widespread support and international acclaim, the group became increasingly less responsive over time, often completely ignoring political actions and statements.

7.6.1 The Friends of Syria Group

The Friends of Syria Group was established in Tunisia in February 2012 (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2012). President Barack Obama initiated the group in response to the vetoes issued by Russia and China in the UN Security Council, and comprised of more than 70 nations. Their sole purpose was to present initiatives and methods to end the bloodshed taking place on Syrian soil.

The early activities of the FOS proved to be influential. In their second meeting in April 2012, the group recognized the SNC as the legitimate representative of the Syrian opposition, and of the Syrian people (Al-Jazeera News, 2012). The morale of the Syrian opposition was greatly boosted by this recognition. Subsequently, in June 2012 over 100 countries joined delegates at a high-profile meeting in Paris. Foreign ministers and senior diplomats in attendance all backed the legitimated Syrian opposition and provided financial and logistical support, including communication tools and other administrative apparatus (Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 2012). In the fourth meeting in December 2012, the group swelled to 114 states and 15 internationally recognized NGOs (Foreign & Commonwealth Office and The Rt Hon William Hague, 2012).

The SMB was still considered by some analysts to be the primary voice in the political agenda setting (Khatib, 2011; Lefèvre, 2013; Pierret, 2013). However, time would tell that the Brotherhood had already seen its political zenith in terms of its official efforts towards a democratic state of Syria. In February 2013, the President of the SNC, Moaz Al-Khatib, held an official meeting with the US Secretary of State, John Kerry. Just two months later in April 2013, the number of nations represented at the meeting in Turkey was just eleven. As to their effect on the situation on the ground, the FOS proved to be just as ineffectual as the UN.

Neither the state-centric UN nor the FOS group have been able to provide even a partial resolution to the Syrian conflict. Political risk analyst, Primoz Manfreda, examined the "pros and cons of intervening in the Syrian conflict". He concluded that the powerful friends of the Syrian opposition would not interfere in Syria. He mentioned that "talk of intervention in Syria resurfaces whenever a new massacre of civilians by Syrian government forces hits world headlines, but there's little appetite in Western capitals for the huge risks involved in a direct military intervention in the Syrian conflict"(Manfreda, 2017).The maximum support offered by the members of the FOS group was political and financial support of the SNC, and legitimization of the group as the Syrian opposition body.

However, in July 2013 the Muslim Brotherhood would suffer badly following the military coup in Egypt. President Morsi and hundreds of members of the Brotherhood were arrested following a statement by General Abdel Fattah Al-Sissi, labelling the Brotherhood a terrorist organization. This announcement was followed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, severely limiting the freedoms of members of the SMB who had been travelling and acting openly up until this point in time. The relationship between the SMB and European countries, such as the UK and Germany, was also affected by this announcement (see 7.5.4).

The plight of the SMB was exacerbated in June 2017. Newly elected President of the USA, Donald Trump, made his first visit to the King of Saudi Arabia, Salman Al-Saud. Shortly afterwards, the state of Qatar was accused of destabilizing the region by sheltering members of a terrorist organization. In doing so, the Muslim Brotherhood were put on a level with ISIS and Hamas, diplomatic ties with Qatar were abruptly severed by neighboring states in the Gulf region, as well as from the FOS group.

In isolation, Turkey as a member of the FOS group continues to work towards the fall of Assad and call for the dignity of the Syrian people. This seems to go against the political interests of the group, and Turkey continues to host SMB members. This unique relationship between Turkey and the SMB will be considered in further detail in the next section, before evaluating other diplomatic relationships.

7.6.2 The Relationship Between Turkey and the SMB

The Turkish government demonstrated an immediate acceptance to the SMB's political engagement, enabling the organization to establish their headquarters in Istanbul. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) had a good historical relationship with the SMB, with both entities having a foundation rooted in an Islamic identity. Few political analysts have considered the relationship between Turkey and the SMB (Gurpinar, 2015). Whilst Turkey's role in the Middle East has raised doubts as to the intentions of the Turkish government, the SMB remained grateful for the opportunity to engage in political activities from a centralized Turkish hub. Commentators have noted that President Erdoğan had a close relationship with the Brotherhood in general, having

initiated cooperation between Turkey and the Egyptian and Palestinian branches of the MB (Bhutani, 2015). Whilst these relations broke down following the coup in Egypt, the general sentiment from within Syria is that Turkey seems to have their best national interests at heart. Thus, the nation acts as a source of moral as well as material support for the Syrian people (Bhutani, 2015).

Al-Droubi and leading SMB executives have stated that they consider the example of Turkey provides the 'model character' of governance. It is a highly functional, democratic, pluralistic state with a freely elected government. It has moved away from the so-called "Kemalism", identified by a visible show of military power and excessive coups (such as in 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1997). That the SMB has benefited greatly from Turkish support cannot be understated. The centralization of the Brotherhood's activities has allowed members to effectively participate inside of Syria in the areas under opposition control. Leaders of the SMB living in Western countries and elsewhere are able to travel freely and meet in Turkish forums to discuss political developments and coordinate their efforts. Entry into northern Syria is achieved by passing through the frontiers officially at different border crossings. In this instance, the SMB were able to adopt positions of political influence. SMB members joined the locally established councils to provide the Syrian population with administrative support (see Chapter 5).

7.6.3 The Relationship between Arab Gulf States and the Muslim Brotherhood

The shifting political landscape within Egypt had a profound effect on the Syrian crisis, both in terms of how the crisis was perceived by the Egyptian population, and in the power relations operating in the region. Upon the election of President Morsi, the mood within the SMB was understandably buoyed (The Guardian, 2012). As the dictatorship was toppled, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was accompanied with a growing sympathy, due to the years of repression it had suffered previously (Alrajjal, 2013).

The Islamic political solution was gaining attraction as an alternative form of leadership, mainly due to the brutality and cruelty suffered at the hands of previous dictatorships. In particular, the Muslim Brotherhood were seen as bastions of the political ideal, an

embodiment of the model character of governance as seen in Turkey. Many predicted that this form of leadership would also gain traction in the Arab world (Kirişci, 2013). Sunni Islamic parties similar in essence to the Muslim Brotherhood were gaining power and influence, and talks of an 'Islamic arc', stretching from Tunisia to Syria, were popular in 2012.

These talks stopped abruptly following General Al-Sissi's rise to power (Weaver and McCarthy, 2013). Not only did the previous regime regain power in Egypt, it set out to destroy the political opposition root and stem (Human Rights Watch et al., 2015). A powerful coalition of Gulf States supported the Egyptian efforts, including the 'conservative mastermind' of the Arab world, Saudi Arabia, and the 'financial powerhouse' of the operation, the UAE (Steinberg Guido, 2014). Upon analysis of the events immediately preceding and following the Egyptian coup, it seems likely that the Gulf coalition were made aware in advance of the operation. A public declaration of substantial financial support to the new military rulers in Egypt effectively signified the defeat of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and demonstrated the coalition's eagerness in that regard (Nordon, 2013).

Despite the substantial political and financial support, the Egyptian military rulers were confronted with enormous economic challenges, too great to be overcome by an infusion of cash (Ali, 2016). There were no sustainable funding options available, and the contributions made by the Gulf coalition were having adverse effects on their economies (Harb, 2017).In addition, the coalition had to prepare for the possibility of the USA increasing imports of oil and gas from Iraq and Iran. Thus, budget constraints and redefined priorities affected the amount of monetary support that the Egyptian regime could receive (Westphal et al., 2014). Consequently, it affected the magnitude of the opposition to the Brotherhood.

Another factor that may determine the conclusion to the combined efforts against the Muslim Brotherhood is the ideological impact it has had on their host communities. Following the large-scale migration of MB members into Gulf States, their ideological teachings spread amongst the region and generated allegiance to and sympathy for the organization. Over the years, the organization remained politically weak in the Gulf

region whilst their ideas spread, influencing generations of students (Steinberg, 2014). Movements emerged such as The Islamic Awakening, or *Sahwa Al-Islamiya,* which was premised upon comparable features of the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition, there remained an excellent example of the capabilities of the MB in the Tunisian branch, namely the *Ennahda* Party (Wolf, 2017). Thus, whilst governmental efforts were directed against the MB generally, the organization enjoyed backing at the grassroots level in terms of financial, ideological and social support.

This governmental enmity directed towards the MB stems from the perceived threat it poses to the Gulf States (Reuters, 2012). It has been suggested that the antagonism is somewhat surprising, given the support that members received during the 1950s and 1970s in their flee from persecution (Alexander and Doge, 2017). The relationship was first tested in 1990, when prominent members of organizations affiliated with the MB supported Saddam Hussein following the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Subsequently, in 2001 the Interior Minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, called the MB responsible for the emergence of 'Islamist terrorism' (Steinberg, 2014)This was received as a personal slight against the Brotherhood, rather than an official diplomatic stance. However, animosity towards the MB grew in Saudi Arabia until the coalition was formed to avert the strategic threat posed by the Brotherhood. Successful revolutionary campaigns were a major cause for concern to the Gulf monarchies (Gause, 2015). In addition, the Brotherhood presented an ideological challenge to the religious legitimacy of the Gulf States, such as the close relationship between the Al-Saud family and the reformation of the Wahhabi movement (Durie, 2013).

The perceived threat to the monarchy may have been overestimated by the Gulf States. In the early 1960s, the Gulf monarchies were challenged by the Arab nationalism and socialism propagated by the second President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser. The monarchies in Iraq, Yemen, and Libya all fell in the years 1958, 1962, and 1969 respectively, with a military coup attempt also taking place in Saudi Arabia in 1969 (Shlaim, 2003). In addition, the 'Arab Cold War' took place as a direct effect of Egypt's regional policies. Thus, heavy fighting took place in Yemen between the opposing camps

backed by Egypt and Saudi Arabia (Gregory, 2014). For the Gulf States, the parallels between the crisis of the 1960s and the MB were clear: The Brotherhood represented an ideological movement, originating from Egypt, with a revolutionary, republican, transnational potential.

These fears were deeply held, despite the fact that the only organized MB group in the region was found in Kuwait. In Bahrain, some members of the MB held parliamentary seats and supported the state in their domestic and foreign policy. In Saudi Arabia the MB were banned, however the education system had been heavily infiltrated by members of the Brotherhood, which is a similar situation to the MB in the UAE. The following sub-sections will summarize the MB-related presence in members of the Gulf coalition, as presented by (Alexander and Doge, 2017).

7.6.3.1 Saudi Arabia

"The Brotherhood's ideas spread to Saudi Arabia when Egyptians fleeing Nasser's clampdown took up teaching jobs in the kingdom's new public-school system. Its supporters were allowed in by King Faisal in the 1960s, who used them to counter the Arab nationalism of Nasser. But Saudi rulers later grew concerned that Brotherhood ideas would undermine their absolute monarchy. Tensions heightened as Brotherhood supporters criticized the American military presence in the kingdom requested by King Fahd after Iraq invaded Kuwait. They backed protests and demands for political reforms.

In 2014, Saudi Arabia declared the Brotherhood a terrorist organization and has provided economic assistance to Egypt's Al-Sisi as he cracked down on the group. Saudi [Arabia] and three neighbors cut off most economic and diplomatic ties with Qatar [in June 2017], in a move designed to punish the country for its ties with Iran and support for Islamist groups, including the Brotherhood."

7.6.3.2 The UAE

"*Islah* was formed in the 1970s by exiled Egyptians and Emiratis who had studied in Egypt. It gained importance, but relations with the government cooled over the next twenty years amid fears of Brotherhood influence in schools and courts. A crackdown

was launched in 1994. This stance hardened after the Arab Spring. The group was banned in 2014 for alleged ties to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and it was designated a terrorist group. *Islah* denies any formal link to the Brotherhood but says it shares some of its ideology."

7.6.3.3 Bahrain

"The MB is represented in parliament through *Minbar*. *Minbar'*s roots date back to the 1940s but it didn't emerge as a political group until the 1980s. It has stood by the ruling family during political crises and helped unite Sunni Islamists in the Shiite majority country."

7.6.3.4 Kuwait

"Building on an earlier presence, Brotherhood supporters set up the International Constitutional Movement (representing the MB in parliament) after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait was defeated. It severed ties with the Egyptian organization for not having sufficiently backed their country's liberation. Over time, the ICM became focused on gradual political reform, pushing for powers to be transferred from the royal family to elected lawmakers. After boycotting parliament for four years in protest against a change in the electoral law, ICM fielded candidates in elections in 2016, winning four seats in the 50-member assembly. Kuwait joined other Gulf countries in providing financial and diplomatic support to Egypt following the ouster of Morsi."

7.6.4 The Future of the SMB in the Gulf Region

The crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf region is unlikely to signify the end of the MB generally, nor that of the SMB. This is largely due to the powerful support the organization has found in Qatar. The financial and political support offered by Qatar has rendered a coordinated approach between the GCC countries impossible. The region lacks coherence in their MB-related policies due to Qatar's alliance with the Brotherhood and their unwillingness to follow the example of Saudi Arabia and the

UAE. Commentators have noted that this guarantees that containment of the MB in the Gulf region will be difficult (Trager, 2017).

Prior to the fall of Egypt, Qatari wealth had contributed massively to the rise of Sunni Islamic powers in the region. The *Ennahda* Party in Tunisia, the MB in Egypt, *Al-Sallabi and Belhadj* in Libya, and Hamas in the Gaza strip had all benefitted from the financial support of Qatar (Roberts, 2017). Thus, that Qatar would provide political support for 'moderate Islamic movements' in Syria was entirely foreseeable. The Qatar-based media network, Al Jazeera, covered the Syrian crisis extensively from its very beginning. The channel actually received criticism for a lack of neutrality, being described as a "mouthpiece for the Muslim Brotherhood" (Rogers, 2017). In addition, notable leaders linked with the MB, including Khaled Mashal, Ali Al-Sallabi, and Yusuf Al-Qaradawi were all housed by Qatar over a number of years. The political backlash of these actions has led some analysts to suggest that the country has "punched above its weight" (Hiltermann, 2017).

Political asylum for Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, described as the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, has been enabled the Egyptian religious scholar to promote the cause of the Brotherhood, and their ideology, in Qatar and abroad (Brown, 2017). Following the Arab Spring in 2011, Qatar stood squarely behind the MB in North Africa and the Levant. Political capital was used to promote the Brotherhood's ideology, as well as weaponry, finances, and military training throughout the uprisings (Ulrichsen, 2014). The disproportionately large influence that Qatar has had on regional and international politics has been recognized in numerous articles discussing the 'small state, big influence'.

Through cooperation with Turkey in the Syrian crisis, Qatar has provided support to insurgents on the ground (Al-Haj, 2017). With strong diplomatic relations with Islamic-orientated governments, such as Turkey and Tunisia, Qatar has maintained allies beyond the GCC countries. This has proved to be politically invaluable as the Syrian crisis has progressed. Initially, Saudi Arabia and Qatar were in agreement in their strategies relating to the Assad regime, as they both shared an anti-Iranian foreign policy (Steinberg, 2014a). However, with the fall of Morsi in Egypt and the developments of

the Syrian situation, Qatar now stands alone in the Gulf region, cut off from diplomatic relations with their neighbors. There is now much pressure on Qatar to adopt new policies relating to the Muslim Brotherhood, in accordance with the momentous changes in the political landscape.

In conclusion, the preeminence of the Muslim Brotherhood was cut short in Egypt, and the fate of the organization consequently remains uncertain. Their historical position as a favorable alternative to oppressive regimes may indicate a reactionary comeback for the Brotherhood. However, this remains conditional upon international recognition, which must begin with a recovery in their diplomatic relationships with the Gulf coalition. This will be a reversal of the current policies in place for most countries in the region, including Syria. Qatar and Turkey remain the closest allies to the Muslim Brotherhood, and suffer from political censure as a direct result of their association. The future of the SMB, which has been shown to be closely tied with the future of the Syrian people, relies greatly on their support.

7.6.5 The Relationship Between the USA and Western European Democracies, and the SMB

The relationship between the SMB and the democratic states of the West has been greatly impacted by the historical development of Western politics. The separation of church and state, or the historical rejection of religious interference with politics, has made it a challenge for the SMB to achieve general acceptance in the West. The values at the core of the organization are openly Islamic in nature; it is the quintessential political body founded upon a religious ideology. This is in direct conflict with the "enlightenment liberalism [at the core of western organizations] that considers religious influence as inappropriate in secular policy" (Grills, 2009: 512). Some commentators have gone so far as to state that faith-based organizations cannot seriously engage in dialog with western secular states due to incompatibility (Grills, 2009).

Certain historians have suggested that the development of democracy requires a hostile and rigid separation between religion and state. This has been rejected as a misreading of European history. A close study of the religion-state relations in Europe shows that "no

Western European democracy now has a rigid or hostile separation of church and state in contemporary societies" (Sephan and Linz, 2013). Nonetheless, whilst that might presently be the case, there still is much progress required "in terms of developing the necessary religious sensitivity among [western] diplomats and sensible modes of involvement for religious actors" (Harpviken and Roislien, 2008: 352).

The reason why the SMB could not easily be accepted in the West is also colored by the historical religious conflicts between Islam and Christianity. Many historical studies in Europe view the Islamic religion, societies, and political movements as a monolithic threat to the West. Their historical refusal to participate in the democratic process has caused the European intelligentsia to develop an "establishment" perspective, antagonistic towards the religion (Hashemi, 2013: 75). Hashemi notes that "Islam does not mandate or prefer a particular political system. In the Quran, the idea of mutual consultation (*Shura*) is praised, and in classical jurisprudential theory, governance should be based on a civil contract (*Aqd*) between the ruler and the ruled, while a pledge of support (*Bay'a*) from influential members of the community should be obtained" (Hashemi, 2013: 72). This is in accordance with the ideology of the SMB (see Chapter 4).

In addition, the emergence of extreme Islamist groups may have affected the perception of the SMB. Whilst the Brotherhood had often promoted the peacemaking potential of the religion, the increase in Islamic terror groups since the declaration of the 'War on Terror' by the Bush administration caused considerable challenges for the organization. The criteria used by Western countries in the classification of Islamic organizations as 'moderate' or 'extreme' lacks clarity or coherence. "It seems that the claims and pretensions of group religiosity are always to some degree political" (Haynes, 1998: 5). The general perception of Western countries towards Islamic movements is that they are "authoritarian at best, totalitarian at worst, with a proclivity towards violence, terrorism, and a hidden antidemocratic agenda" (Hashemi, 2013: 76).

Al-Bayanouni explained that the SMB leaders were concerned about the political dynamics from an early stage. As the crisis in Syria gained international interest, so too did the position of the SMB, who emerged as the primary political voice for the Syrian

society after their long absence in exile. The need to go public was clear. The SMB intended to raise international awareness about the situation on the ground and the brutality of the regime (Al-Bayanouni, London, personal communication, 2014).

Executive members of the SMB took part in scheduled interviews, public fora, political journals and TV programs broadcasted in English and Arabic. They also attended political conferences and participated in international think tanks. The expressed their deep concerns about the potential escalation of the situation in Syria, drawing upon their experiences in Hama in 1982 (see Chapter 4). In the opinion of the SMB leadership, every single potential avenue for attaining a peaceful solution ought to be pursued. The held that supporting the fighting on the streets of Syria would result in disastrous consequences for the Syrian people.

This prediction proved to be true. As the protests and demonstrations turned into an armed struggle, the SMB refused to support the emerging fighting groups such as Al-Nussra and, later, ISIS (Salem, London, 2014; Waleed, London,2014; Al-Bayanouni, London, 2014). Conversely, these fighting groups rejected the SMB entirely, considering them to be disbelievers that should be fought against. An anonymous interviewee witnessed members of these fighting groups actively searching for SMB members engaged in humanitarian relief work, intending to 'destroy' them (anonymous interviewee , 2014). The intent of the SMB was evinced in their actions. They continued to avoid supporting any of the groups engaged in the fighting within Syria, and publicly advocated for a multi-ethnic, multi-faith, democratic state of Syria (Al-Bayanouni, 2014).

There are three factors of 'religion' that can be said to determine its effectiveness in a peacemaking process: its normative aspect, its relationship to identity, and its organizational function (Harpviken and Roislien, 2010: 351) (Peter and Ortega, 2014). The contention that the religion of Islam is incompatible with democracy stems from the critique that its normative aspect, that is, it's essential core, contradicts democracy. This is based on two false premises. Firstly, that democracy is only possible in one form and, secondly, that Islam can only be expressed in one way (Esposito, 2013). "In a governance environment where faith-related issues are increasingly prominent, such

moves to address this duality will allow faith-based organizations and multilateral organizations to substantively and more effectively work together to advance human development" (Grills, 2009: 517).

Nonetheless, the prevalent sentiment from Western thinkers is that strong religious organizations have a negative influence and generally undermine political and economic development. Their existence "prevents rational dialog and conflict resolution" (Harpviken and Roislien, 2010: 352, 365). However, it has been noted:

> "Religious organizations derive potential legitimacy from their larger ritual role within society. Hence, they are well positioned to serve as agents of conflict transformation, with a potential for communication both with their own grass roots and with the broader public" (Harpviken and Roislien, 2010: 352, 365).

This indicates that there were certain potential avenues for the SMB to attain recognition on account of their situational positioning, however it would have required much time and effort to overcome the strong anti-Islamic stance that dominated in the West.

This was evinced in the investigation of the MB in the USA and member states of the European Union. The political distancing was increased following the military coup in Egypt. The support received in from the Gulf coalition and Western states seemed to indicate an international consensus against President Morsi and, by extension, the MB. However, executive members of the SMB, including Al-Bayanouni, opined that the situation of the Egyptian MB and the SMB remained mutually exclusive. Due to the separate political situations in Egypt and Syria, and the fact that the SMB were merely a part of the Syrian opposition and not the sole political influence, there still could be hope for Western support for the organization (Al-Bayanouni, London, personal communication, 2014). This was reflected in the political commentary of the time. Observers questioned whether the situation in Syria, and the involvement of the SMB in international politics, could "lead to changes in the Western evaluation of political Islam"(Peter and Ortega, 2014).

The interviews have shown that in the opinion of the SMB, Western states could have officially recognized the Syrian interim government in exile as a transitional solution

towards establishing a future governance based on a pluralistic democracy. However, by welcoming the so-called ambassadors of the Syrian opposition, the Western states claimed to have discharged their duty and legitimized the coalition. However, they did not extend the same recognition to the interim government.

Executive members of the SMB, including leaders such as Al-Droubi and Al-Bayanouni, went on to present the political vision of the Brotherhood and express their concerns regarding the situation. These discussions took place through public speeches made in panels, at conferences, and in public events (Lefèvre, 2012; Al-Droubi, Vienna, 2014). These were organized and attended in regional areas and on the international stage. They stressed the unity of Syria and underlined the intent of the SMB to move towards a pluralistic state, wherein the Syrian people could elect their representatives by ballot. Thus, they stressed clearly and publicly that the organization's Islamic ideology is in perfect alignment with democratic values (see Chapter 5).

This could be evinced in the success that the MB and affiliated groups achieved in the democratic elections in Syria's neighboring countries. Political candidates and parties won major victories by the ballot box within the Arab world, including Egypt and Tunisia. However, there remained a noticeable reluctance by Western democracies towards political Islam, even where the Islamic movements are democratically elected.

The issue for the SMB in attaining recognition from Western democracies did not lie in their lack of elected representation. Western powers had shown in their legitimization of the opposition coalition that winning an election is not the sole provider of legitimacy. Rather, their issue was rooted in their Islamic ideology. "The establishment perspective argues that democratic elections that bring illiberal Islamists to power are a setback for political development. They warn against the 'tyranny of the majority' and argue that the goal in the debate on Islam and democracy should be liberty for Muslim societies, along the lines that exist in the West, not mere elections" (Hashemi, 2013: 77). Thus, it seemed as though the source of legitimacy for the SMB would be found in widespread public approval, achieved by engagement in meaningful discussions.

There is a definite lack of coherence with regards to which political Islamic movement can receive acceptance within the West. Commentators have theorized that recognition is not always based on the organization's ability to prove that they are following a 'moderate' Islam. Rather, the criterion is largely based on whether or not the Islamic organization can be considered "strategically useful" (Ramadan, 2001: 274). The West are willing to turn a blind eye towards a dictatorship or traditionalist government, so long as this fit with their strategic goals (Ramadan, 2001). Thus, public declarations of their democratic aspirations and repeated examples of 'moderateness' will not suffice for the SMB if they do not adhere to the West's criteria of strategic utility. With the prevalent anti-Islamic sentiments currently existing within Western politics, this seems highly unlikely.

The contradictory approach taken by Western countries with regards to their support for moderate Islamic governments caused confusion with many of the youth inside Syria, who refused to let their nation adopt secularism. Hashemi notes:

> "For a generation of Muslims growing up in the postcolonial era, despotism, dictatorship, and human rights abuses came to be associated with secularism. Muslim political activists who experienced oppression at the hands of secular national governments logically concluded that secularism is an ideology of repression" (Hashemi, 2013: 82).

Thus, the civil population of Syria was generally averse to a political intervention by the West. It was perceived that external influences on the political development of the Middle East had impaired its progress. According to this historical perspective, the West justified the underdevelopment of Middle Eastern politics by playing down the colonial history and placing undue attention on the internal factors impeding democratization (Hashemi, 2013: 77).

Given that the SMB were not able to fit within the West's political ideology or its strategic aims, the Brotherhood needed to find support from elsewhere. In particular, the organization needed to find a base from which it could operate in order to coordinate the efforts of its members and provide a headquarters for the leadership. Without the strong, longstanding relationship between Turkey and the SMB, it would have been difficult for

the organization to affect any meaningful change (see 7.5.2). Turkey risked international censure for their continued support of the SMB, and stood beside the organization despite the growing sentiment of mistrust directed towards the Brotherhood.

It is worth noting that, whilst the SMB were exiled in Western countries prior to the uprising, they felt that were not successful in rallying support from within those countries. However, having acquiring citizenship of those countries, members of the organization were able to travel freely without visa restrictions. Thus, their presence in the West had enabled them to travel to different countries and present their ideology freely without fear of repression or detainment.

7.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter demonstrated that the fate of the SMB will be determined by a balance of factors, including domestic, regional, and international diplomatic relations. The quick response of the SMB to the Syrian crisis earned them favor amongst the Syrian population. This was also due to their lasting reputation as a political organization in the years before their exile. The subsequent complexity regarding the conflicting Syrian opposition parties foreshadowed a larger fallout between the SMB and the international community at large. If not for strong alliances with Turkey and Qatar, the political situation of the SMB would be dire indeed.

Whilst political analysts anticipated a resurgence of the SMB after three decades of exile, the organization proved unable to navigate the turbulent politics on the international stage, and could not expand their operations at a sustainable rate. Deep-rooted issues existing in their political opponents meant that the Brotherhood were unable to secure their influence over the opposition or gain any traction in UN-based organizations. They were forced by political necessity to downscale their activities and step down from any official positions of power. The organization has left out of the peacemaking processes and initiatives led by the United Nations.

It has been shown that the reasons for this lack of political progress was separate from their capabilities. Measures and propositions introduced by the SMB proved to be effective, and the Syrian civil population was initially content for the Brotherhood to represent their political efforts. Rather, the political area was wrought with both domestic and international opponents. The FOS group stretched the resources of the combined political opposition group ideologically led by the SMB, the SNC, by recognizing and supporting the larger coalition, Al-Itilaf. Legitimacy for Al-Itilaf was sanctioned the FOS group and internationally recognized NGOs, and contributed to fall in political influence of the Brotherhood. The gradual decline of political power resulted in the leadership of the SMB officially stepping aside, with residues of political influence held by certain members of the organization and affiliate groups.

The magnitude of the shifts in power in the international arena caught the SMB by surprise. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood moved from prominence to international exile almost overnight. At the same time, members of the exiled Syrian Muslim Brotherhood suddenly found their host countries in the Gulf region calling for their arrests as members of a terrorist organization. Similarly, extreme fighting groups operating within Syria disavowed the SMB and actively worked towards the demise of their humanitarian aid workers. Their status as an Islamic socio-political movement compelled them to take action in the Syrian crisis, but numerous severe challenges greatly limited their ability to do so.

By utilizing their organizational apparatus, the SMB were able to arrange conferences in Turkey and Brussels aiming to redress the Syrian situation. The Brotherhood worked towards implementing a democratic, pluralistic government system, relying on their pre-existing global network to succeed in its political activities. Whilst all members of the opposition coalition were united in their desire to see the end of the Assad regime, there were strong disagreements as to the best way to bring that end about. In addition, differences of opinion regarding modes of governance for ‘the day after’ caused the opposition coalition to splinter deeply. The SMB leaders eventually acquiesced to the demands and political pressures, though not without suffering some disrepute by their once ardent supporters.

The combined Syrian opposition looked to powerful international actors to contribute to the resolution of the Syrian crisis. To that end, neither the UN, the Arab Gulf states, nor the Western democratic states were able to provide a substantive solution to the complex situation. Vetoes in the UN Security Council prevented any concrete action or commitment by the United Nations. Regional neighbors in the Arab Gulf states were involved in crises of their own, and only a few states remained focused on their commitment to resolve the Syrian situation. Western democratic states broadened the political spectrum of the legitimized opposition, increasing the representation of Syrian society, as well as increasing the internal discord and political conflicts within the coalition. The lack of unity amongst the Syrian opposition caused their efforts to be met with disappointment, which is reflected at the public assemblies taking place internationally.

This disheartening political activity has been coupled with an anti-Muslim Brotherhood sentiment in international publications, and political policies in Western democracies and Arab Gulf states alike. The international recognition of the SMB as legitimate political actors seems unlikely. Oftentimes the SMB has simply been ignored by potential political partners, as well as by media networks. This political isolation naturally resulted in a decrease in the influence that the SMB enjoyed, and can be said to stem from the dramatic events taking place in the Egyptian military coup in 2013. Despite the hopes of the SMB leadership, their fate has been closely tied with that of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The international sentiment shared around the globe is that Islamic activists, such as the SMB, are not a suitable political alternative to despotic regimes.

Stigmatization of faith-based ideological movements has been prevalent in the historical development of Europe, as well as in the recent history of the Arab Gulf region. This has been exacerbated by the emergence of Islamic terror organizations intent on establishing a ‘global Caliphate’. These actors validated the preexisting fears of the Islamic religion and social movements. Organizations with an open connection to the Islamic tradition thus came under scrutiny. It was assumed that such organizations, including the SMB, maintained a hidden antidemocratic agenda. This is so despite clear and frequent calls made by the SMB regarding the compatibility between Islam and democracy.

Due to the clarity of their message and the reality of their intent, it took some time for the SMB to understand how precarious their position had become. Members of the organization had peacefully integrated into their host countries whilst in exile, and their proposal for the future of the Syrian state was clearly a pluralistic democracy. Thus, the Brotherhood had doubts regarding the true intent of the governments of the USA, Germany, and the UK, all of whom had called for investigations into terrorist activities of the MB. The outcome of these investigations was admittedly in favor of the MB. However, that they had taken place at all was indicative of the growing tendency to keep Islamic-based organizations and a distance, and set a border between faith-based organizations and secular political entities.

Despite repeated demonstrations of their cooperative behavior, the SMB were not granted the opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of its political program. On the contrary, the SMB were granted assurances from political parties that were subsequently reneged. In 2011, the SMB met with the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov. Lavrov assured the SMB that Russia would not participate whatsoever in the military action within Syria. In 2015, Russian military jets were witnessed attacking rebel-held cities, destroying residential accommodation and civilian targets indiscriminately. There is a stark contrast in the strict adherence to the promises given by the SMB, who were met with international censure, and the blatant dishonesty of Russian politics, who remain legitimized actors with veto powers in the UN.

The SMB was better suited to avoid developing any diplomatic relationship with Iran. At the bare minimum, the antidemocratic state of Iran was not able to misrepresent themselves to the Syrian oppositional bodies. The country, whose leadership consists of fanatic Shia Islamists, has been an open supporter of the Syrian regime since the start of the crisis. Tehran provided support to the government forces in the form of military consultancy and financial contributions. Many fighting groups, including Shia militias from Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Iraq, were trained and funded by Iran. The country had a vested interest in the destabilization of Syria, and aimed to achieve a number of short-term, medium-term, and long-term objectives by their involvement in the conflict. This was anticipated by the SMB due to their knowledge of Iran's previous involvement in the destabilization of Iraq, and duly avoided.

In summary, this chapter has evaluated the SMB's organizational, discursive, and behavioral responses to the Syrian crisis at a regional and international level. It has demonstrated that the Brotherhood directed all its efforts towards finding a resolution to the Syrian conflict, whilst seeking international recognition and legitimacy for the coalition of political opposition bodies. The organization faced many internal challenges in its attempt to unify the opposition, and the external pressures brought on by the overwhelming majority of international actors proved too much for the SMB to overcome.

The following chapter will elucidate the broad themes presented by this research. A precise analytical evaluation of empirical data and political theory will contribute towards an overarching conclusion. It will provide clarifying insights into the present situation of the SMB, and evaluate the future of the organization as a socio-political Islamic movement. These conclusions will be drawn by looking at the evolution of the SMB throughout the Syrian crisis. The years of exile, the re-emergence and political zenith, and the subsequent decline of influence will all be considered in greater detail in order to better understand the political actions and reactions of the organization.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This research assessed the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's post-2011 evolution within the wider context of the on-going Syrian revolution. The rise of MB-affiliated parties and individuals following the 'Arab Spring' of 2011 piqued the attention of politicians and academics alike. Research surrounding the topic has begun to grow exponentially, particularly surrounding the question of why Arab societies have been attracted to and are voting for decade-old Islamic social movements. The question grows ever more pertinent considering the movements' history of repression. Other than exceptions such as Jordan or Kuwait, the ruling governments have banned and subjugated these movements, leading them to operate in the shadows of civil society. Countries such as Egypt and Tunisia continue to fear the existence of said Islamic social movements.

The Syrian people, in particular the youth, demanded dignity, freedom of speech, and justice. Though the protests were expected following the uprisings in neighbouring countries, the response of the Assad regime turned the potentially peaceful uprising into an era of unprecedented grief for the entire Syrian population. The SMB's absence in the public sphere for three decades followed by its rapid rise to the spotlight makes it a truly remarkable case. While some researchers have briefly outlined the SMB's history and others have noted their role in the current conflict, no research has thus far mapped the organizational historical path alongside the individual engagement post 2011.

By clarifying the SMB's approach to the political arena as the dominant agenda-setting oppositional party, this research aimed to fill the gaps in our understanding of the evolution of an Islamic social movement that had been exiled and faced with immense challenges throughout the Syrian revolution. Whether the SMB would ever play an important role in Syria's future was also discussed. By linking the past with the present, and assessing three of the movement's fundamental traits (i.e. ideological foundation, individual engagement, and organizational structure), the socio-political aims and activities of the organization have been analysed.

Members of the SMB experienced fear following the 1980 death penalty legislation, but its leaders managed to keep the organization alive and well-equipped to tackle socio-

political issues, even if this was carried out from exile. This research aimed to assess the hypothesis that post-2011, it has been the functioning network involving the older generation's wisdom, the younger generations' vitality, and the organization's ideological drive that has allowed the SMB to thrive in this precarious situation. These traits may help the SMB go forth and realize their dream for a democratic Syria. How the organization as a whole, and its members individually, recognize and deal with opportunities during this dramatic political environment has also been analyzed. Additionally, this research aimed to assess how the SMB's leaders have performed when dealing with their new challenges, and how their actions – or lack of actions – have affected the fate of the ideologically Islamic organization post-2011.

For its data, this research heavily relied on more than 40 interviews conducted in a number of Turkish cities, such as Istanbul, Gaziantep, and Killis. The interviewees included many SMB members (including SMB executives), SMB affiliates, and former Ba'athist activists. Therefore, the research benefited from the sources' proximity to the SMB organization. Further interviews were conducted in London, Oxford, Manchester, Leeds, and Vienna. All interviews were carried out in a respectful, honest, and trust-based manner. This research benefits from inside knowledge regarding the SMB's internal structure and its socio-political outlook. This was gained from participation and observation at conferences, debates, and meetings regarding the SMB.

Politicians and analysts were taken by surprise with the Arab Spring. The new dynamics in Arabia have highlighted the need to take a deeper look at political Islamic movements in general, and the MB in particular. Analysts have explored why the MB and its affiliate groups have become so popular, gaining the trust of a large number of people across the Arab world, something evidenced by the success of the MB in Egypt and Tunisia. The MB then, again, gained the attention of the world as its fate in different countries panned out in distinct ways. In mere moments, Egypt's MB were taken from a position of power and their members were imprisoned by the bloody military coup of 2013. This was just one year after the Egyptian people went to ballot boxes to choose their first democratically elected president, Mohammed Morsi.

A corrupt military court outlawed the MB and sentenced hundreds of its members with

the death penalty. The injustices did not stop there; the coup brutally ended the calls for democracy in Egypt, something the youth fought for in January 2011. In contrast, the Tunisian MB went on to gradually progress politically. The Tunisian MB-affiliated political party evolved to become an internationally recognized, influential political actor after the return of the organization's exiled leader. The varying outcomes of these organizations suggest that they are not homogenous affiliates of the same organization, with its headquarters in Egypt (as was assumed by many researchers in the past); rather, they are individual organizations with unique dynamics and contexts.

This research has focussed primarily on the SMB's evolution as a Syrian Islamic socio-political movement. It has explored the SMB's significance by highlighting on its post-2011 internal relationships and actions that have led to the internal challenges it currently faces. In-depth analyses show that these challenges have opened other avenues for activities, which can be claimed to be SMB-related, without officially being SMB activities. These activities were viewed by Syrians as being SMB-related activities, leading to a positive effect on the image of the SMB in rebel-held regions and within refugee camps in neighbouring countries.

It is important to assess the state of Syria since the peaceful calls for reform in March 2011 turned into a multifactorial, international humanitarian crisis. Foreign troops and high-tech military equipment has been despatched by the Syrian regime's allies to strengthen Assad's military force against his own people. Currently, according to Amnesty International, over half a million Syrians have been killed and hundreds of thousands of the regime's opponents have been imprisoned and/or tortured (Amnesty International, 2016). Amnesty International state that in the regime's *Saydnaya* prison alone, over 13,000 opponents of the government have been hanged (Amnesty International, 2017), and millions have been displaced from their homes (Dhala, 2016).

To analyze the post-2011 evolution of the SMB, it has been necessary to revisit the history of the MB and the founding of its ideology by Hassan Al-Banna in 1928. This helped explain why, since 1945, the SMB has faced immense challenges in Syria. The socio-political MB's broad ideology attracted many intellectuals and highly-influential individuals. The SMB housed a number of strong, effective critics of the Syrian regime.

The SMB was thought to be the Ba'athist regime's most active opponents, leading the regime to repress and exile the organization's members. Growing tension between the regime and the SMB since the 1970s and early 1980s led to the death penalty being legislated against all SMB members.

The regime's brutality reached its pre-2011 climax on the 2nd February 1982 during the Hama Massacre in which the regime killed over 30,000 people, most of whom were young men. Tens of thousands of SMB prisoners have been imprisoned for decades without trial at *Tudmor* (Palmyra), which, according to testimonies from the interviewees, is amongst the most miserable and cruel of prison settings. This east Syrian city gained notoriety for the shocking torture of its Syrian SMB (and SMB-affiliate) prisoners.

In the early 1980s, after being outlawed by Hafez Al-Assad, a number of SMB members decided to keep the organization alive whilst in exile. In the neighbouring Arab states, the brothers aimed to integrate wholly within their host countries. SMB families attended local schools and universities, and they ran local businesses. Some SMB members travelled to Western states where they obtained residence permits and, eventually, citizenship to secure their living there. After explaining these matters, this research showed how the SMB maintained its status as an opposing force against the regime despite its members living in exile across the globe.

A number of SMB executives acknowledged the political reality surrounding them and the public desire so loudly stated during the Arab Spring. They used this opportunity to modify the uprising and carry it to Syria. They called for the opponents of the Syrian regime to assemble and take essential steps towards uniting as a political force, demanding the resignation of Bashar Al-Assad and the realization of a new democratic and pluralistically governed Syria. A multi-ethnic group of Syrian representatives, as well as intellectuals from inside and outside of Syria, attended regime opponents' assemblies in Istanbul and Antakya in 2011, and a follow-up conference in Brussels. At these events, the SMB was able to demonstrate its organizational skills. On 23 November 2011, the Syrian National Council (SNC) was launched.

Through public statements and interviews, the SMB presented the agenda of the organization within this new political setting. The SMB incorporated its 'Vision of a Future Syria' agenda within this plan, showing its commitment to long-standing ideological and ethnical diversity within Syria. The diversity of the groups led to differences in opinions regarding tackling the political challenges that lay ahead. Eventually, however, this multi-ethnic group stood defiantly against Bashar Al-Assad, who responded with aggression and violence against his people's peaceful resistance.

Having entered the political arena, the SMB faced a number of international challenges, which its leaders needed to deal with constantly. Whilst sustaining itself as an opposition force amongst other opposition forces, the SMB's leadership acknowledged that it had previously closed the doors to newcomers by operating somewhat undercover and having a strict membership program. This analysis has shown that many junior SMB members have shown themselves to be capable of organizing and leading humanitarian efforts to help the Syrian people. These efforts have bettered the SMB's public image as a socio-political organization. However, despite these efforts, the organization has not reached a high level of political recognition internationally. Much of the organization's work to demonstrate its vision and passion to the international community has backfired. This was the case for the 'Friends of Syria' group, which was affected by the USA's foreign policy.

Governmental allies of the group affirmed its status as an opposition group against the Assad regime. Some went a step further and recognised its members as 'diplomatic representatives' of the opposition's interim government. However, these encouraging initial reactions towards a clean break from the status quo changed the dynamics in Syria, limiting the SMB's international influence drastically. Two major reasons for this have been mentioned. The first is that the SMB found itself amongst growing political intolerance from other opposition groups; the groups, including local tribes, made increasingly unreasonable demands of the SMB, calling for rapid solutions to each and every issue that arose. The second is that, internationally, the Syrian National Council, formed by the SMB and other members of the FOS (SMB being the most dominant), was controlled irresponsibly by the FOS. The FOS made financial contributions a prerequisite to joining. Eventually, over 400 representatives from the different groups

joined together to form the Syrian National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces. This was quickly understood to be a poor move with destructive consequences, as the inexperienced assembly was not able to speak coherently and put forth its message.

The SMB was losing its active members in the confused and disorientated assembly. The organization was effectively being side-lined as a minor contributor. The leaders acknowledged their changing political circumstances and the risks of this; it seems that they had learnt from the MB's actions in Egypt. Al-Bayanouni, the organization's most high-profile member, eventually moved away from the assembly. Through this action, he made clear his concerns about the declining political strength of the organization.

Though the SMB's leadership have shown their intention to enhance the status of the organization to that of an international political force, this analysis has shown that throughout the revolution, these leaders have not been able to portray the organization as a reliable political force within the international arena. After the initial wave of enthusiasm for democratic change in Syria subsided, and after Assad's Shia fighters heightened the battle in Syria, Western states began considering opposition groups as potential allies in a future democratic Syria. These actions unveiled the historical 'clash of cultures' (or religions), as developed by Orientalists and ingrained in Western thought. They showed how these stances still exist, for example, with their perceptions of Islam and democracy, despite their acknowledgement of 'moderate' Islamic groups. Over the past decades, the SMB has repeatedly made clear (through published statements) its intentions of fighting for a future democratic Syria governed by Syrians. They also made clear their intentions to return home when the time was right. They have remained weary of being 'too' public, however, because of the Syrian regime's historic assassinations of its members.

To secure social engagement and family lives whilst in exile, SMB members have maintained their networks. They showed that they were able to build upon the organization's social and educational programs. Generally, much of the international community were annoyed by the success and potential of this Islamic organization, which was working to strengthen the opposition to the Syrian regime. In 2011, the

opportunity arose for the SMB to be, once again, acknowledged as an Islamic social force in Syria. The rapid rise to prominence of the MB provided the leaders of the SMB an opportunity to re-emerge as a key socio-political actor both domestically and internationally. However, the SMB faced immense challenges that were not faced by other MB groups. They became aware that they would not be able to fulfil their political goals whilst under the authority of the repressive, one-party Ba'athist government.

SMB executives also appreciated the fact that the time had come to establish functioning headquarters. Therefore, the leader of the SMB took the pragmatic decision to use neighbouring Turkey for this purpose. Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, Turkey has considered itself to be secularly ruled. However, since the ruling AKP party's ideologies, and those of the public, conform to the ideologies of other moderate Islamic groups, Turkey has proved to be a relatively safe place of refuge for the organization. Istanbul was chosen as the location for the SMB's headquarters because of its historical significance to the Turkish people and its government. The leaders felt that the SMB would be able to coordinate its activities from Istanbul, and they thought that the establishing of headquarters there would increase its international recognition as an Islamic social movement.

SMB members also created their own political groups. By launching a political party, something which has been an aspiration of many members, the leaders demonstrated their desire to stand up for justice for all Syrians. To some critics, the SMB's move to join Syrian intellectuals with different ideologies and religious beliefs in the *Wa'ad* (Promise) party has come as a surprise. Nevertheless, in Istanbul on 8 March 2014, the *Wa'ad* party was introduced as Syria's first independent political party. The SMB went further and reiterated that the party's constitution was built upon both democratic and Islamic values, welcoming all interested Syrian activists to join.

However, due to its significantly Islamic blueprint, and the Islamic maxims under which the party operates, political observers tended to consider the party as being an arm of the SMB. After scrutinizing the party's constitution and analysing in-depth interviews with all members of the party's founding group, this study has found that the *Wa'ad* party's entry requirements and vision differ significantly from those of the much stricter and

more ideologically-based SMB. The analysis has shown that the *Wa'ad* party is, in fact, much more open to the general population than the SMB, which aims to recruit, solely, moderate Sunni Muslims. This is evidenced by the fact that the *Wa'ad* party's Christian deputy eventually became its leader.

This analysis also showed that the SMB's efforts put into creating the *Wa'ad* party during such a precarious and challenging time (but at a safe distance away from the Syrian ground) added to the SMB's claim of legitimately pushing for a democratic Syria. Legitimization by the Syrian people is the necessary aim of the SMB if it is to position itself as a long-standing Islamic organization within Syria. However, the sustainability of the SMB's position was affected by two major occurrences. First, General Al-Sisi carried out a military coup in June 2013 against the first freely elected president of Egypt, Mohammed Morsi. President Morsi's connection with the MB unnerved many Arab countries; Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates followed Al-Sisi in blacklisting the MB as a terrorist organization. The SMB's leaders did not acknowledge their links to the MB in Egypt; the SMB was not officially blacklisted at any stage by these Arab countries. According to the SMB, their members have proven over a number of decades that they adhere to a moderate Islamic ideology. However, despite their efforts, the blacklisting of the MB meant that the SMB were limited in their national and international action radii.

The second factor affecting the sustainability of the SMB's position was that, seemingly, many Western powers were generally against Islamic movements gaining political power, perhaps due to the media coverage of *Daesh's* cruelties. The SMB tried to emphasise that they too had been attacked by *Daesh*, who saw their movement as being too moderate. Many right-wing politicians aimed to evoke provocative reminders of the historic battles between the Christians and Muslims, framing the current situation as an extension of them. Political analysts, former Middle East diplomats, and state agencies analysing the MB on behalf of governments, such as the UK, aimed to link the MB with terrorism. In the case of Britain, this was not successful (Foreign Affairs Committee - House of Commons, 2017).

Regarding the occurrences on the ground in Syria, the SMB did not support armed

confrontation with the regime's highly-equipped military forces. They chose to remain peaceful and use other means at their disposal. The SMB refused to recruit fighters or finance brigades. The SMB leaders tried to 'play it safe' with the Hama Massacre of 1982 still in mind. In their opinion, any physical clashes with the regime's forces would be disastrous for the highly motivated, but untrained and loosely assembled, rebels. The SMB intended to reach a nonviolent solution. Due to this and the decades-long propaganda of the regime, they began to lose the trust of many political activists and rebel fighters. Additionally, the SMB and its affiliates were being targeted by extreme Salafi groups like *Daesh* on one side, and Shias such as the Iraqi and Iranian militia groups on the other.

Internally, the second and third generation SMB members, who have been brought up in exile, have been demanding reforms. Here, the organization's lack of a charismatic, masterminding, genius leader who could unite and reform the organization, opening the doors of decision-making to all members, became obvious. Post-2011, the leaders of the SMB were not prepared for reform. The old guard did not provide room for major organizational reforms of its hierarchical system. Retrospectively, it is clear that such reforms should have taken place during the height of the SMB's power, because at that time, it was recognized as being a powerful, intellectually-driven, and politically-competent opposition force. Simply put, two primary factors prevented the SMB from uniting. The first was – like it was for the MB in Egypt – the generational gap between its members. The second was the decades-long differences between the Damascene, Hama, and Aleppo factions that hindered a smooth reform of the organization's decision-making process. Being in exile made it difficult to alleviate pressure rapidly and to make the daring 'correct' decisions in the heat of the conflict. Instead, the leadership aimed to gather its members around the metaphorical flag of the SMB. They thought that, to overcome the upcoming challenges, they ought to stick to the same strategies that have proven successful for them in the past. They chose to postpone the necessary structural changes to a more peaceful time.

This analysis showed that although the leaders of the SMB did not reform the organization during the crisis, they did support the numerous ideas of SMB activists. The SMB maintained its ideology as a grassroots Islamic socio-political movement by

supporting Syrians in need. The SMB's leader emphasises that the organization has been more than happy to allow its members to provide humanitarian relief and/or join other political groups that are doing so. Many SMB members have offered great amounts of physical and financial support to humanitarian and socio-political causes. This analysis showed that although this was done on a small scale, it was appreciated by a large number of Syrians. Previous relationships and allegiances allowed the Syrian population to see that, although these aid workers were not officially operating as part of the SMB, they were connected to it and supported by it.

Since the start of the uprising, the SMB leaders have been acutely aware that the organization's future rested upon whether the Syrian people viewed it as a trustworthy socio-political actor. As a socio-political grassroots movement, the SMB was active inside Syria. The ad-hoc relief and education they provided served as proof of their sincere care for the Syrian population. SMB members formed many NGOs to provide this relief within opposition-held regions in northern Syria and small parts of southern Syria. Well-known and respected SMB members/affiliates were chosen to hold high positions of authority in local councils in rebel-held areas of Syria. SMB members travelled continuously from Turkey to Syria throughout the crisis. Over time, and with sustained effort, the SMB empowered the Syrian communities with their moderate Islamic ideology. The risks endured by SMB members throughout their relief work were personal risks they took. Risking their lives to help their brethren, the SMB gained huge public support.

This research fits in with other studies on Islamic social movements. Extensive analyses published over the last decade have shown changes in behaviour of various MB-affiliated political parties. These studies generally explore this topic by analysing Islamic movements in relatively stable conditions and with relatively intact administrative institutions around them. This study on the SMB does not fit into that criterion. Therefore, case-based analyses have been carried out to help elucidate the details of the SMB's networks and its members' actions in such a precarious situation.

A comparison with the well-known American Civil Rights Movement (CRM) was made to relate the similarities between the two. Members of both were passionately demanding

dignity and justice. Many critics may see the two movements as being very dissimilar. However, the SMB's battle against mistrust, hate, and, often, murder has made their fight for freedom resemble that of the CRM. Comparing the two broadens the theoretical lens through which the SMB is analysed. The comparison helps show how the SMB could effect change by recognizing opportunities and handling upcoming challenges in a hateful environment. Leaders of both the CRM and SMB have been lauded by both their countrymen and many of the intellectuals within their societies for their ideology-based movements. Both movements struggled for dignity and justice against their governments, resulting in them having to make huge sacrifices, including the loss of lives.

After being exiled and stripped of their Syrian residency, the SMB emphasized its passion for free speech and equality. The short analysis of the CRM showed that many CRM members had similar grievances to those of SMB members. For the CRM, it became clear decades later that if it was not for the endurance of these sufferings, which reached their climax with the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., equality for African-Americans in the USA would not have been won. Barack Obama would not have won two consecutive elections. All of the successes of the CRM would not have panned out the way they did had charismatic and brave voices not resisted oppression and dreamed for justice.

This research has aimed to analyse the many facets of the SMB's evolution throughout the Syrian crisis. Discovering whether this evolution brings joy, like it did to the Tunisian MB, or sorrow, like it did to the Egyptian MB, was not the focus of this research. This research has managed to portray effectively the ideology-based drive and moderate Islamic beliefs of the SMB. It has shown that, despite internal disagreements regarding the organization's hierarchy and structure, all SMB members need to unite and focus on advancing towards their socio-political goals. Whether their ideology can hold the group together is still unclear. The upcoming epoch in Syrian history could bear the evolution of the SMB. It should be borne in mind that a movement's evolution is not instantaneous; rather, it develops gradually over a prolonged period of time. The success and failure of any grassroots movement relies heavily on geopolitical changes and domestic opportunities.

The SMB should be credited with resisting against extreme repression and violence for over 80 years. Taking this into consideration, future research may explore what it takes to make an Islamic social movement more politically integrated than others, despite large amounts of repression and the lack of state backing. Currently, the on-going Syrian crisis makes searching for an answer difficult.

Lastly, our concern for the Syrian population should be made clear. The significance of Syria geopolitically has led to it suffering from brutal bombardment by the Syrian regime, foreign fighters, and *Daesh* who all have multiple interests in the region. The Syrians have peacefully resisted, and now they have also shown that they are brave enough to fight for dignity, freedom of speech, and justice with their bodies on the line. SMB members are Syrians and so the future of their organization is necessarily linked with that of the Syrian people as a whole. At present, Syria is facing the worst disaster the world has seen for a long time.

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Appendix1 Sample of Interview Questions

1. What is your opinion/ view on the newly established political party established by the SMB and its promises? What tools does the SMB, in your view have available to deliver these promises to the Syrian Civil Society?
2. Do you see areas of agreement and disagreement with the armed groups fighting against Bashar al-Assad's regime and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, still staying in exile?
3. How do think would the SMB handle concerns seen by the Western Democratic countries regarding domestic issues in Syria that might be controversial such as human rights, democracy, women's empowerment and transitional justice?
4. And how would the SMB handle concerns seen by the Western democratic countries regarding regional and foreign relations such as the relationship with Israel?
5. Do you believe that the SMB will have a chance to win the majority of votes (like what happened in Egypt) if democratic presidential/ parliament elections took place? How do you think the SMB could benefit from the Egyptian example, to avoid mistakes done by them?
6. In case they would win through democratic elections, do you believe that there will be an opportunity that the SMB will work closely with other parties in Syria, such as Liberal/Secular parties and those formed by Christians, Kurds, Alawits?
7. What would be the biggest challenge that any democratically elected SMB party, which could participate in future governance process, would face?
8. What role, and opportunities do you think; younger SMB members and female activists have in shaping the decisions within the organization?
9. The SMB leadership has been accused, by some Western and Arabic critics of adapting their strategies and rhetoric to changes in the political environment in which they operate. Supposed this statement is true, how is this managed, in your opinion, by the SMB? And how do they react to the past charges of political opportunism?

Appendix 2

1 a Oath/ pledge of SMB membership

أبايعك بعهد الله و ميثاقه على ان أكون جنديا مخلصا في جماعة الاخوان المسلمين، و على ان أسمع و أطيع في العسر و اليسر و المنشط و المكره الا في معصية الله، وعلى أثره علي، و على ألا أنازع الأمر أهله وعلى أن أبذل جهدي ومالي و دمي في سبيل الله ما استطعت الى ذلك سبيلا و الله على ما أقول وكيل

" فمن نكث فإنما ينكث على نفسه و من أوفى بما عاهد عليه الله فسيؤتيه أجرا عظيما"

اللهم انصر دعوتنا و بارك أخوتنا وسدد قادتنا وقو شوكتنا و أقر أعيننا بنصرة دينك العظيم و تحرير الأقصى الأسير جددوا العهد و العزم

والله اكبر ولله الحمد

I pledge allegiance by the covenant of Allah to be a faithful soldier for the Muslim Brotherhood, and to listen and obey in times of hardship and wellness, in health and sickness, while never disobeying the orders of Allah, raising orders above my personal interests, and spending my money, efforts and blood in service of Allah according to my ability and Allah is the witness of all that I say.

"So, he who breaks his word only breaks it to the detriment of himself. And he who fulfils that which he has promised Allah - He will give him a great reward. "Oh, Allah grant our movement victory, and bless our brothers and guide our leaders and grant us strength and comfort our eyes by seeing the victory of your great religion (*Deen*) and the liberation of the captive al Aqsa. Renew your promise and determination. Allah is Great. Praise is to Allah

2 a Testimonies regarding daily obligatory morning chant at Syria's schools

الهتاف الصباحي المناهض لجماعة الإخوان المسلمين في المدارس السورية في عهد المقبور حافظ الأسد :

تم أخذ نص هذا الهتاف من أشخاص رددوه في طفولتهم أثناء تلقيهم التعليم المدرسي في مدارس النظام البائد ، ومن هؤلاء الأشخاص نذكر أسماء شخصين من باب التوثيق بعد أخذ موافقتهم :

أحمد عثمان حنورة – العمر: 50 عام ، العمل قبل الثورة : مدير مدرسة اعزاز

العمل بعد الثورة: مدرس في مدينة كلس التركية .

محمد وليد أقرع – العمر: 36 عام ، العمل قبل الثورة : موجه تربوي في ثانوية حريتان

العمل بعد الثورة: مدرس في مدينة كلس التركية .

نص الهتاف:

1- عهدنا أن نتصدى للإمبريالية والصهوينية والرجعية ونسحق أداتهم المجرمة عصابة الإخوان المسلمين العميلة.

2- قائدنا للأبد الأمين حافظ الأسد الإخوان المسلمون تاريخ أسود و ماضي مشبوه.

ملاحظة:

لقد تحدث الشخصين المذكورين اعلاه أنهم كانوا يرددوا الهتاف السابق من باب الخوف من النظام وبطشه وظلمه فإن لم يستجيبوا أو يخالفوا قد يسجنوا أو يحرموا من الوظائف في المستقبل (علما أن آليات التوظيف كانت تقوم على أساس الإنتماء لحزب البعث ابتداءً ثم المؤيد للنظام ثم الحيادي الإيجابي مع النظام وكان يحرم من الوظائف ويلاحق ليس فقط من يتهم بإنتمائه للجماعة إنما أيضا أقربائه من الدرجة الرابعة أيضا) ولم يكن ترداد هذه الهتافات لقناعة راسخة في نفوسهم ، وبعد تحرير مناطقهم في الثورة السورية و انتقالهم الى عالم من الحريات حرموا منه سنوات طوال في ظل حكم عائلة الأسد واختلاطهم بأفراد الجماعة الذين عادوا من المهجر الى وطنهم وظهور من كان متواري منهم عن أعين النظام بسبب القوانين الظالمة والمتعسفة التي أشهرها النظام في وجه أفراد وقيادات الجماعة ، اكتشفوا زيف هذه الهتافات ومخالفتها للواقع العملي واستطاع الناس أن يلمسوا هذه الحقيقة بأنفسهم .

قانون رقم 19/10/49 الذي ينص على الحكم بالإعدام على كل منتم لجماعة الإخوان المسلمين وبأثر رجعي ((أي قبل صدور القانون وبعده)) .

2b The morning anti-MB chant said at Syrian schools during the era of Hafiz al Assad

The text of the chant was taken from people who used to sing the chant during their childhood when attending regime schools. These people include:

Ahmed Othman Hanoura: 50 years old. Used to be a school principal in Azaz, Aleppo before 2011.

Mohammed Waleed Aqura: 36 years old. Used to be a high school principal in Haritan, Aleppo before 2011

Text of chant:

- We promise to fight back against imperialism, Zionism, regressionist and to destroy their criminal tool, the SMB.
- Our leader forever, Hafiz Assad. The SMB: A dark history and a suspicious past

Note:

The above two people mentioned that they chanted out of fear of the regime's brutality, as if they did not chant along they would be imprisoned and lose their jobs. The recruitment process was based on affiliation with the Baath party, then those who expressly support the regime, then those who are slightly more neutral. Anyone who had an affiliation with the SMB was persecuted to their 4th degree relatives. After the areas where the above people are from have been liberated, and after they mixed with exiled SMB members who returned to their homeland, they discovered how fake these chants were through their personal experiences.

Law number 49/10/19 imposes the death sentence on anyone who belongs to the SMB, and is applied retrospectively.

Appendix 3 List of Interviewee

Note: I respected numerous respondents' wish to withhold their names and meeting place while still fearing that the Syrian's *moukhabarat* will take severe action against their entire families inside Syria (particularly in Aleppo, Idlib and Lattakia; as countless cases had been unveiled by international human rights organizations during the revolution.

1. Abdulhay, Mohamad
2. Al Abdullah, Osama
3. Al Bakr, Mustafa
4. Al Bayanouni, Ali Sadr Eldin
5. Al Daher, Arwa Salim
6. Al Drouby, Molham
7. Al Omar, Mohamed
8. Al Rawi, Fateh
9. Al Shaik, Mohammad
10. Al Shami, Ahmed Yousef
11. Al Soufi, Khitam
12. Aqqad, Mohammed
13. Aqqad, Sadad
14. Assem, Moussa
15. Dada, Mohamed Wael
16. Diar Bakerly, Abdulrazak
17. Fares, Obaida
18. Freej, Abdualsalam
19. Haddad, Ahmed
20. Haffar, Mohammad
21. Hanoun, Abdul Alim
22. Hanoura, Ahmad Othman
23. Immam, Mohamad Farouk
24. Ismail, Ahmad
25. Kamel, Ahmad
26. Khassis, Nabil

27. Najjar, Ghassan
28. Najjar, Yassein
29. O., Sawssan
30. Othman, Othman
31. Rasheed, Mohammad
32. Rihawi, Adel
33. Sabagh, Nour
34. Salim, Zuhair
35. Sarmini, Mohammad
36. Toma, Anas
37. Usman, Mahmoud
38. Waffai, Sa'ad
39. Waffai, Yasser
40. Waleed, Mohammed Hikmat
41. Younis, Mohammad