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Abstract

The Muslim Brotherhood is the most well-known and influential Islamist group in the Middle East and has been since its founding in 1928. The group has been condemned by the West, specifically the United States, for being too radical, as well as by other radical Islamist groups, who accuse the Brother hood of embracing democracy and denying jihad. This study aims to determine how the Muslim Brotherhood gained their influence and whether their existence has had a positive or negative effect on democratization in the region. Specifically, it explores how colonialism in the region allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to gain continued political influence, especially following the Arab Spring. To test the hypothesis that the political environment following colonialism in the region was the root cause of the rise of influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, I look at the group's historical rise in Egypt and Palestine. I then explore the events of the Arab Spring and Intifada and the roles that the group played, both during the uprisings and in their aftermath. Once I have established their level of influence and political positions in and after these movements, I assess whether they have furthered democratization in the region or hurt it. I find that the political environment of remaining colonial elites following the end of colonization in the region is the most likely cause for the group's increased influence and outsized role in shaping regimes following the Arab Spring. I then assess data collected in Egypt before and then after the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate, Mohamed Morsi, won the presidency in 2012. Through use of Beetham et. al's Framework in Assessing the Quality of Democracy: A Practical Guide and survey data from the Arab Barometer, I conclude that, despite their participation in democratic elections, the Muslim Brotherhood ultimately could not be considered to be a positive force for democratization in Egypt, and this has negative implications for its role in the region as a whole.

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To test the hypothesis that the political environment following colonialism in the region was the root cause of the rise of influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, I look at the group's historical rise in Egypt and Palestine. I then explore the events of the Arab Spring and Intifada and the roles that the group played, both during the uprisings and in their aftermath. Once I have established their level of influence and political positions in and after these movements, I assess whether they have furthered democratization in the region or hurt it. I find that the political environment of remaining colonial elites following the end of colonization in the region is the most likely cause for the group's increased influence and outsized role in shaping regimes following the Arab Spring. I then assess data collected in Egypt before and then after the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate, Mohamed Morsi, won the presidency in 2012. Through use of Beetham et. al's Framework in *Assessing the Quality of Democracy: A Practical Guide* and survey data from the Arab Barometer, I conclude that, despite their participation in democratic elections, the Muslim Brotherhood ultimately could not be considered to be a positive force for democratization in Egypt, and this has negative implications for its role in the region as a whole.

Introduction

As a region, the Middle East is home to some of the most politically influential religious organizations in

the world, arguably topped only by the Catholic Church. The most prevalent of these is the Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in Egypt in 1928, the Brotherhood is a "collection of national groups with differing outlooks, and the various factions disagree about how best to advance its mission. But all reject global jihad while embracing elections and other features of democracy" (Brooke and Leiken, 2007). Branches of the group are unified in their mission to maintain Islamic influence in their countries, but they differ in their tactics , some being more extremist than others. In terms of coherence, the Muslim Brotherhood as a whole is not held together by much more than their mission. It "consists of different generations of more religiously modernist and more religiously conservative strands. While the more modernist segments in the group have spearheaded their adoption of several democratic principles since the 1990s, (ex)members of the group and authors have stressed that deeply conservative forces in the group that are influenced by Salafist[1] thought have grown more influential within approximately the past[2] decade" (Ranko and Nedza, 2015). This growing influence of the more conservative branch of the group brings their commitment to democracy, which must include personal and civil rights, into question.

The organization gains political influence by a combination of Islamic ideology and modern grass-roots-style activism. While the origins of the group are working-class, it has reached certain local bourgeoisies of the region. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Brotherhood is its rejection by other Islamist groups as well as much of the Western world. For example, "American commentators have called the Muslim Brothers 'radical Islamists' and 'a vital component of the enemy's assault force ... deeply hos tile to the United States.' Al Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri sneers at them for "lur[ing] thousands of young Muslim men into lines for elections ... instead of into the lines" (Brooke and Leiken, 2007). If the group is too democratic to be accepted by the extremists, yet too extreme to be accepted by the democrats, what does their influence mean for the democratization of the Middle Eastern region?

In order to understand the Brotherhood, we must understand its roots. After the fall of the

[1] Salafist parties have argued that adopting some mechanisms of democracy would be permissible while the spirit of the state would be Islamist (Rank and Nedza, 2015).

Ottoman Empire in 1923, the political environment created by colonialism provided an opening for Islamist groups like the Brotherhood to gain massive political influence. Their emphasis on anti-Imperialism and appeal to the working class differentiated them from the authoritarian elites that held political power during and following colonial rule in the region. The first section of this paper will assess the ways in which the colonial background led to the blossoming of the Muslim Brotherhood and ultimately set it up to gain political influence, whether that be at the voting booth or elsewhere.

Once I have established the roots of the Brotherhood's political influence, the main question still remains: Can the Muslim Brotherhood be considered to be a democratic force in the region? I will begin with a discussion of the uprisings of the Arab Spring, mostly by engaging with Quinn Mecham's chapter 'Islamist Movements' in *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East* (Lynch 2014). Surprisingly, the group was not quick to officially join the revolutions across the region. Although they were founded on the basis of anti-imperialism and saw great value in the end of authoritarian governments, the group[3] saw strategic value in waiting for the conflicts to resolve, so as not to anger[4] any potential victors. Although it appears that the Arab Spring was a pro-democratic movement, surveys actually suggest that it was more-so an anti-authoritarian movement (Robbins 2015). This is an important distinction because, if it is the case that it was not necessarily a pro-democracy movement, then the victories of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian elections do not necessarily show that the group is democratic in nature. In order to analyze the perceptions of Middle Eastern citizens I will use the Arab Barometer. The barometer includes survey data on a range of topic in the region, but I will focus on how citizens view democracy and Islamic movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood, at different points directly following the Arab Spring. The results of several of these surveys show that the people of the region do favor democracy but not all of them think that it is the best system for their specific country right now (Robbins 2015). It also shows that the majority of Egyptians blame the failure of their post-

[2] The group actually became less unified following the Arab Spring as some began to move to Salafist parties due to internal divides specifically on the role of violence in their movement (Ranko and Nedza, 2015).

Arab Spring democracy on the Muslim Brotherhood's control and not on democracy itself (Robbins 2015). Although branches of the Brotherhood differ, the Egyptian branch is the only that has successfully won full control of their national government which is why it is the main focus of the data-driven portion of this study.

This discussion would not be complete without an analysis of the 1987 Palestinian Intifada and victory of Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The Intifada was an uprising against Israel that resulted from decades of social, political, and economic oppression of the Palestinians within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Hamas is the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and, although the secular Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was victorious in the West Bank's elections, Hamas won control of the Gaza Strip. While the Intifada is thought to have been a catalyst for Palestinian unity, the modern PLO and Hamas governments are far from unified. Just like in Egypt following the Arab Spring, many Palestinians blame the failure of the Palestinians to have a unified democratic front on the control of Hamas in the Gaza Strip. More religious Palestinians point to the secular nature of the PLO as the reason for failed consolidation of the Palestinian people. According to Dag Tustad, "the relationship between Hamas and the PLO was marked by insurmountable political differences following the PLO's recognition of Israel in 1993" (2013). In fact, when Hamas gained control of Gaza in 2007, Mahmoud Abbas claimed that, due[5] to the group's Islamist nature, it was a coup and their election was illegitimate. In response to this, the United States and Israel instituted a blockade of Gaza that was supported by the PLO. The reasoning for this was, "once Gazans suffered and their lives were badly hit relative to West Bankers, they would revolt against Hamas's authority. This would pave the way for Hamas's collapse and the return of the Palestinian Authority...under a single leadership committed to negotiations with Israel" (Baconi, 2018). The impact of this blockade has been detrimental to the Palestinian people of Gaza and has put them in a position to be used as political pawns for several actors within the region.

The difference in approach to Israel between Hamas and the PLO shows a major conflict of

[5] The president of the PLO

identity that is present among Palestinians. While Hamas maintains that Israel is illegitimate and should not be recognized or negotiated with, the PLO argues that Israel is there to stay and the only way to ensure a potential state for the Palestinians is to recognize this. Palestinians are then left to make the decision of whether they should abandon their roots and hopes of returning to their homeland in order to potentially improve their chances for a state that is a mere fraction of what they had originally. Through these dis agreements, Israel and the United States have been able to work with the PLO to fight against Hamas, however, "the PLO cannot deliver on a negotiated agreement with Israel as long as the Palestinian home remains divided and Hamas controls Gaza" (Tustad, 2013). While the PLO sees the recognition of Israel as necessary for Palestinian survival, Hamas sees the recognition of Israel as detrimental to Palestinian survival. This case leaves the same questions on whether we can call the Muslim Brotherhood democratic simply because their political influence was partially gained through popular election. For the background on the Intifada I look at Marwan Darweish's 1989 piece 'The Intifada: Social Change'. The Arab Barometer will provide survey data on the perceptions of Palestinians and others in the region surrounding the democratic or non-democratic nature of Hamas and its control of the Gaza Strip in a more contemporary context.

The final section of this study attempts to answer the question of whether the Muslim Brother hood has been a positive or negative force for democracy in the region. This is done by using the Arab Barometer to assess public opinion of religious groups and democracy. I use public opinion data, as it paints a more accurate picture of the situation in the country than self-reported data would. The fact that the data is coming directly after the Arab Spring also implies that citizens are in a period where they are more politically engaged and wanting change. The other part of this analysis will look to a detailed framework from Beetham et. al, as described in their book *Assessing the Quality of Democracy: A Practical Guide* (2008). The piece provides an assessment framework which outlines the following basic democratic principles: participation, authorization, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness and solidarity (p. 23). The framework allows the researcher to assess a state for citizenship law and rights, representative and accountable government, civil society and popular

participation and democracy beyond the state (p. 26). In the opinion of Beetham et. al, each of these are necessary for a thriving democracy to exist. The clear outline of the framework and detailed description of each element of democracy makes this a powerful source for the assessment of a group or regime. In discussion of the Muslim Brotherhood in this study, this framework will be applied as the accepted authority on the definition of democracy. I will use this framework in partnership with the public opinion data from the Arab Barometer in order to assess whether the Egyptian Brotherhood truly has hindered or helped successful democratization following the Arab Spring.

My theory on why the Muslim Brotherhood was able to gain such immense political influence focuses on the political elites in the region. I hypothesize that colonialism created elites that were more concerned with the interests of the former colonizers than with the common people of their state. The way that colonialism and economic liberalization occurred in the region meant that even after they had gained their independence, states were still heavily dependent on the West. In this system, political elites had to work in the interest of the former colonial power in order to maintain their authority, which created a group of elites that had no concern for the needs of the masses. In times of great economic struggle, like in the 1970s and during liberalization, the Brotherhood began to provide social services that the political elites within the government were not. The results of this system are a government that does not work for its people and an opening for Islamist groups to fill those gaps and increase influence and membership. The breaking point of these systems were the rebellions of the Arab Spring which resulted in the brother hood democratically gaining influence and, in the case of Egypt, full control of the first democratically elected government. Ultimately, I do not believe that analysis of public opinion surveys or the application of Beethman et. al's framework for defining democracy will show that the Muslim Brotherhood has been a positive force for democracy in the region.

These results have implications for other Islamist groups in the region. Although this study only focuses on the Muslim Brotherhood, as it is the most prevalent, it shows that Islamist groups' participation in democratic elections is not enough to consider them to be positive forces for democratization. It also suggests that the political environment surrounding the elites and anti-state

sentiment is what ultimately causes religious groups to gain political influence.

Background

The Muslim Brotherhood, originally The Society of Muslim Brothers (Jam 'iyyat al-Ikhwan al Muslimin) was founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna. From a young age, al-Banna was involved in the preservation of Islam within the Middle East. "At the age of thirteen he was appointed secretary of a new group affiliated with the Hasafiyya order that aimed to 'fight for the preservation of Islamic morality and to resist the work of Christian missionaries in [his] town'" (Whickham, 2015). Al-Banna was a teacher [4] by trade and he "was dismayed by the petty rivalries and factionalism that divided Egypt's political elite in the wake of the national revolution of 1919, as well as by the secular orientations of the new Egyptian university and the literary and social salons, newspapers, and magazines, which seemed intent on 'weak ening the influence of religion'" (Whickham, 2015). Along with these frustrations, the presence of British troops on Egyptian soil following their independence in 1923 led al-Banna to commit his life to "returning educated youth to the Islamic way of life by preaching, teaching, and providing guidance to them and their parents" (Whickham, 2015).[6] He became known as a compelling speaker and preached in local mosques and coffeehouses. It was in 1928 when the 22-year-old al-Banna met six laborers from a British military camp who asked for his leadership. al-Banna was moved and accepted. With the men he took an oath to God, "to be troops [jund] for the message of Islam" it was then that he chose the name for the group stating, "we are brothers in the service of Islam; hence we are the 'Muslim Brothers'" (Mitchell as quoted in Whickham, 2015).

After the initial six members of the group took the oath, the Brotherhood spent its first few years recruiting new members. This was done by direct contact at mosques, coffeehouses and even at private homes. In the first instance of community service, the Brotherhood built a mosque, a school for boys, a boys' club, and a school for girls in its originating town of Ismailiyya. Community service would go on to become a key factor in the success of the group recruiting new members and gaining political and social

[6] This quote references the Hasafiya Sufi order, part of the Sufi Mystic Circile, an Islamist society that al-Banna was initated into in 1923.

influence across Egypt and across the Middle Eastern region. Although it was one of many of its kind when it was founded, the group rapidly expanded into a national organization with a growing membership and "a network of social and welfare institutions that eclipsed those of any other civic association, religious or otherwise, in the country" (Whickham, 2015). The charismatic leadership and community-based influence of the group caused it to expand from four branches in 1929 to two thousand in 1949 and "in the mid-1940s it is estimated that the group had grown to an estimated three hundred to six hundred thousand members" (Whickham, 2015). Today, the group has branches in every state in the Islamic world and maintains the allegiance of millions of members "from virtually every segment of society" (Munson, 2016).

Secular versus Islamist Resistance

In order to understand the role that the Brotherhood has played in the attempted democratization of the Middle East, it is vital to understand how the group gained their influence in the first place. The literature provides two possible explanations. The first assesses the role of colonialism in the rise of Islamist groups. This work is written by Political Scientists and based heavily in the idea that the political elites within the region continued to show allegiance for the former colonial powers rather than their own people. These scholars make the argument that the influence of the Brotherhood is rooted in political Is lam (Mecham, 2017; 2014). The second explanation within the literature posits that the influence of the[7] Brotherhood is based on the political opportunity structure of social movements (Munson, 2001). I argue[8] that the turning point for the group and the reason for their success in gaining influence in the region is their commitment to community service and the way that they provided for their members when the state did not.

Although the Brotherhood was founded in 1928 and was rapidly growing through the mid 1940's, Islam was not the basis for most of the political and social resistance taking place at this time. In the political landscape of the 1950s and 1960s, Arab nationalism was the primary ideology and advocated

[7] Political Islam argues that political change is made by political elites.
[8] Social movement theory argues that political change is made by ordinary people.

for[9] Arab unity through secularism. This movement for a unified, secular Arab state was led by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nassar, who was president from 1954 until his death in 1970 and led the short-lived United Arab Republic (1958-61) to fight Israel in 1958 and again in the Six Day War (1967) as well as mediating the 1970 Jordanian Civil War. To this day, many Arabs see Nassar as a warrior for the Arab cause .[10]

Al-Banna stressed that the lack of Islam as a uniting factor would leave Egypt doomed, he "condemned the factional infighting and petty strife that pitted the country's political parties and leading politicians against each other during the interwar years, arguing that such partisan conflict (*hizbiyya*, or partyism) undermined the nation's unity and thereby made it more vulnerable to foreign domination" (Whickham, 2015). The popularity and uniting effects of Abel Nasser's message explains why the shift from a religious group with wide membership to a major political player did not happen for the Brotherhood until the late 1960s, another example of the group "playing the political long game" . It[11] was as early as 1966, however, that "the Palestinian political scientist, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, had begun to detect signs of a 'retreat from the secular path'" (Browers, 2009). In the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, it be came clear that a unified Arab front was not present as different states took different approaches. The lack of unity from the Arab states and the lack of their ability to take on the Zionist threat showed the short comings of secular nationalist ideology. Although some argued that Arab unity can come solely from secular factors like language or geography, historical context of Arab culture tells a different story. According to Iraqi historian Abd al-'Aziz al-Duri, "'Islam united the Arabs, for the first time in history within the framework of a single state'" (as quoted in Browers, 2009).

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[9] "**Pan-Arabism"**, also called Arabism or Arab nationalism, the nationalist notion of cultural and political unity among Arab countries. Its origins lie in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when increased literacy led to a cultural and literary renaissance (known as the Nahda or al-nahdah al-abadiyyah) among Arabs of the Middle East. This contributed to political agitation and led to the independence of most Arab states from the Ottoman Empire (1918) and from the European powers (by the mid-20th century)" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

[10] "No other Arab leader in modern times has succeeded in winning the sometimes hysterical support of Arab masses throughout the Middle east as did Nasser during the last 15 years of his life. Even the loss of two years, with disastrous results for Egypt, did not diim the popularity of this charismatic, almost mythogenic army officer who became the first true Egyptian to rule the country in several millennia, giving his people the dignity denied them under foreign rule" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

[11] This reference comes from Mecham's essay in *The Arab Uprisings Explained* (Lynch, 2014).

Culturally, Islam had always been the uniting factor, and aspects of it were present in most of everyday life. The sudden shift towards secular ideology that took place when the Islamic Ottoman Empire fell and Western colonial powers took over, to many, felt like an attempt at cultural erasure. It was this that led to calls--mainly from Arab scholars--for "an 'authentic' collective identity to substitute for Marxist class consciousness" (Browers, 2009). Political revolution could not be put into secular terms such as 'class consciousness' because the hierarchy of society had always been set up in regards to religion and not class. This is part of what the Brotherhood stressed: "Al-Banna highlighted the incapacity or unwillingness of the elected parliament, dominated at the time by large landowning and commercial elites, to address the country's highly skewed distribution of wealth and alleviate the suffering of the Egyptian masses, whose living conditions were further eroded by rampant inflation and basic food short ages" (Whickham, 2015). According to Hanafi and Husayn, "Authenticity lies in the Islamic heritage [*turath*], which is embedded in the hearts and minds of the masses, and stands in contrast to the imported political and cultural ideas of Western intellectuals and ideologies" (Browers, 2009). Especially in the case of leftist revolutionary groups, appealing to a return to their heritage, or *turath,* created a passionate unity within recruits that was just not able to be achieved by secular ideology. As people from all walks of life begin to feel their heritage or culture be taken away, they become more easily radicalized. This meant that anti-state and anti-imperialist groups, like the Muslim Brotherhood, that used Islam as their basis gained growing influence as the shortcomings of Arab Nationalism became evident and following the death of Abdel Nassar.

The Intifada

The first Palestinian Intifada began in 1987 as widespread protests against Israeli occupation. The spontaneous nature of the mass protests caught the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) off guard, and, as their leadership was abroad at the time, they were unable to strongly influence its events. On the ground, a new leadership emerged: the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNL). The focus of this new group was cohesion of the Palestinian resistance. As Darweish illustrates, "The UNL called for 'the national and progressive focus inside the green line [Israel] to put aside their disagreements, to stop

he mutual attacks on each other and to gather and unite all their strength to support the Intifada in order to achieve the implementation of our national rights'" (1989). Although there was newfound unity among the socialist and nationalist trends for the Palestinian cause, the religious trend acted mostly outside of the UNL. The religious resistance at this time was made up of the Islamic Jihad and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood became active in the Intifada in 1988, but still remained independent of the UNL for the most part. This foreshadows the future of the Palestinian territories and the disunity that arises following the second Intifada in the early 2000s. Darweish makes the argument that "The Intifada under UNL leadership has had an enormous influence on all Palestinian communities whose strength now lies in their unity" (1989). I argue that there was never true unity of all factions of the resistance because the Brotherhood never fully committed themselves to the cause under UNL leadership. This clear unwillingness on the part of the Brotherhood to sacrifice some religious aspects of resistance for the sake of unity is what led to the extreme disunity between the Gaza Strip under Hamas[12] and the West Bank under the PLO. [10]

It is important to note that, "In spite of the antagonism between the PLO groups and the Islamists, their differences were neither political nor strategic, but cultural. Both movements wanted to liberate all of Palestine through armed resistance" (Tuastad, 2013). Resistance through violence is something that has been used by both groups although it is often attributed more to Hamas. In the case of Hamas, however, Lybargar makes the argument that, "their [Hamas] principal focus had become the liberation of Palestinian territory and the creation, in that territory, of a territorially bounded Palestinian state as the first and necessary step of the worldwide Islamic revolution. It was this focus, and their demonstrated willingness to sacrifice their lives and treasure for it, that gave Islamists credibility within the wider society" (2007). Perhaps it was these ties to Islamist groups elsewhere and the idea that the end goal was more widespread than just Palestine that led the Western world to perceive violent resistance from

[12] Hamas (the Palestinan branch of the Brotherhood) was elected in 2007 and controls the Gaza Strip to this day. There is no unity between the PLO controlled West Bank and the Gaza Strip as the PLO was against Hamas gaining power and allowed for the ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Hamas differently. The United States and Israel have named Hamas a 'terrorist organization' and made the PLO the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian People" (Tuastad, 2013). The rest of the Middle East, for the most part, considers Hamas's armed resistance in the form of suicide bombings or rockets fired from Gaza as completely legitimate acts, since they are being occupied and have the right to fight back against that. It is clear that Western legitimacy of a Palestinian government that is not secular is not possible, but it is also clear that many Palestinians would see a secular movement as an erasure of their culture and religion. Again, this puts the Palestinian movement in conflict with itself as it decides whether Western legitimacy is necessary enough to give up cultural aspects or to ignore the votes of the Palestinian people.

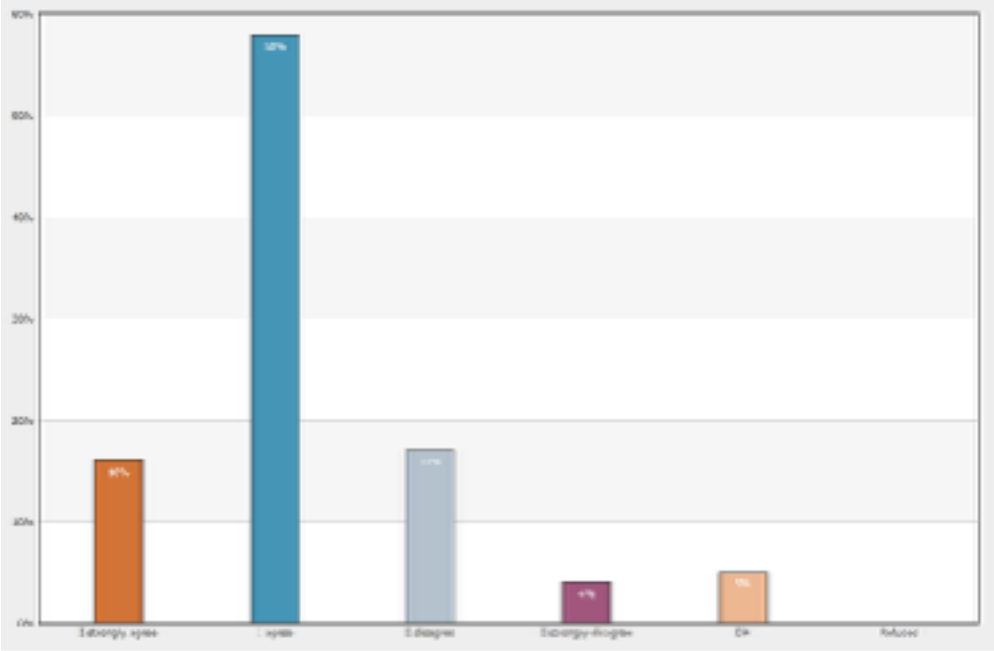


Figure 1.1: "Democratic systems may have problems, yet they are better than other systems" (Arab Barometer Wave V-2018, Palestine)

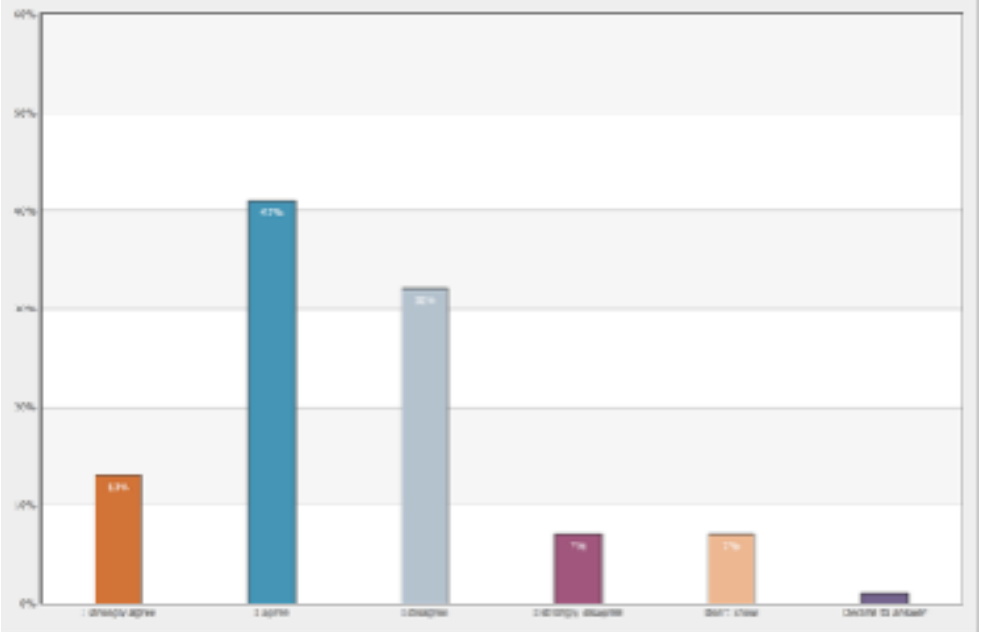


Figure 1.2: "The citizens in your country are not prepared for a democratic system" (Arab Barometer, Wave IV-2016, Palestine)

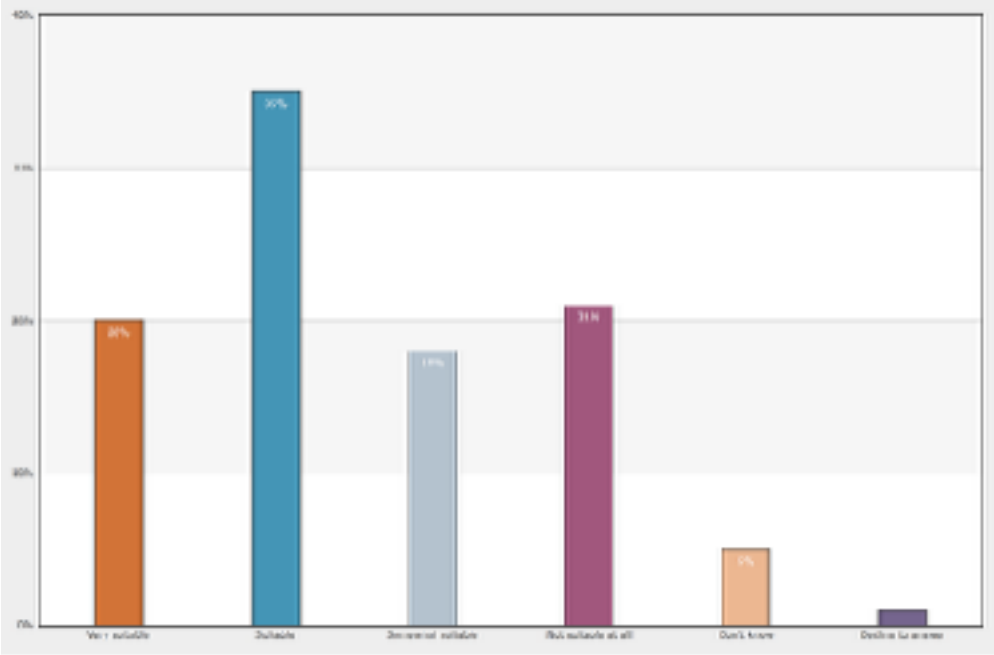


Figure 1.3: "Appropriate for your country: A parliamentary system in which nationalist, left wing,

right wing, and Islamist parties compete in parliamentary elections" (Arab Barometer, Wave IV-2016, Palestine)

As is evident in the Arab Barometer data displayed in figures 1.1 and 1.2, the majority of Palestinians do seem to agree that democracy is the best system but wonder if their people are prepared for it. In 1.3, respondents express that a system including nationalist, right-wing, left-wing and Islamist parties in parliamentary elections is the most suitable, which suggests that democracy and religious parties could successfully coexist in Palestine. According to the 2019 data collected by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 66% of Palestinians said that they supported Hamas's participation in the next elections and 26% said that they absolutely do not. 61% said that they would not participate if the elections were to take place in the West Bank only. If elections were held and allowed for all factions to participate, 70% said that they would participate. Of those, 32% said that they would vote for Hamas, and 39% said they would vote in favor of the PLO. A majority of Palestinians (54%) do not view the PLO as the sole and legitimate representation of the Palestinian people. This data shows a clear conflict because it is clear that a good percentage of people do support Hamas and their ability to participate in elections, yet it was their resistance to unify under the UNL that put the Gaza Strip in the position they are in today. This is a case in which, if elections were allowed to take place democratically and for all of the Palestinian people collectively, Hamas would have representation in parliament but not full control like they do in Gaza to day. This inner conflict when it comes to the PLO and Hamas shows a lack of democracy on both parts, not just on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Western influence within Palestine is what is ultimately hindering democracy here, and without Hamas, there would still be that hinderance. This case shows that, no matter the findings of this study, the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood is simply a portion of the story when it comes to democratization of the Middle East.

The Arab Spring

The 2011 Arab Spring is another instance of spontaneous, anti-authoritarian revolution that took place all throughout the Middle Eastern region. Although it can be argued that the revolutions were a call for democracy, "The Arab uprisings were less a cry for democracy than a demand for better governance and improved economic performance. Few citizens across the region directly attributed to democracy itself the changes, good or bad, that the uprisings brought" (Robbins, 2015). The Muslim Brotherhood actually stayed out of the uprisings for the majority of the time that they were taking place. As Mecham puts it in his 2014 essay, they were playing the "long game." Another reason for their hesitation to join was, "In both Egypt and Libya, for example, state leaders openly (and falsely) accused radical Islamists of leading the protests as a way of justifying state repression. Both Islamists and non-Islamist protestors thus have similar interests in framing these protests explicitly outside an Islamist framework when a protest cycle begins" (Mecham, 2014). He goes on to make the argument that the Brotherhood was able to benefit from the regime changes following the Arab Spring by "free riding" their way through the uprisings. Although the Muslim Brotherhood went on to claim minor victories in several countries in the region, the Egyptian Brotherhood was the only one to win full control when they won the 2012 presidential election. This is an example of political Islam and Social Movement Theory working together. Had it not been for the mass mobilization of ordinary people during the Arab Spring, the opening for the Brotherhood to gain power would not have been present, which is a clear example of political change through the masses. It is also true, however, that the Brotherhood's participation in elections made their influence present in a more formal way, as their leaders became political elites; this is a strong example of political Islam.

Analysis of Democracy

The period from 2011, directly following the Arab Spring until 2013, when a military coup was staged against the new Egyptian president, is vital to understanding the ways Muslim Brotherhood influence shaped democratization. Since it is the case that the Egyptian Brotherhood was the only one to gain full governmental control following the Arab Spring, the analysis in the

next section will zero in on Egypt between 2011 and 2013. In the 2011 report by the European Union on Egyptian Democracy and the Mus lim Brotherhood (Brown et. al), Amr Elshobaki is quoted, "with the fall of the Mubarak regime, the Muslim Brotherhood has a real chance of ridding its politics of religious overtones and becoming committed to democracy, the constitution, and citizenry, while retaining a specific attachment to Islamic identity and civilisation." In 2012, when the Brotherhood was victorious in the country's first presidential elections, this seemed to become a reality. In 2013, however, a military coup overthrew the Brotherhood's newly formed government. This section will assess whether the Brotherhood-led government that was elected in 2012 actually did stay committed to democracy once they gained power.

In order to confirm that Egyptians actually do prefer democracy over any other system, figure 2.1 and 2.2 show that the majority of Egyptians saw democracy as the best system in 2011 and continued to agree with that after the Brotherhood's electoral victories in 2012. This shows that the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood's government is not seen as a failure of democracy as a system for the majority of Egyptian citizens. In terms of the type of democracy that Egyptians want, survey data shows that 64% said that democratic elections that only allow for participation by secular parties would be completely inappropriate for Egypt. On the other hand, the majority of Egyptians also thought that a system with democratic elections that only allow for religious parties would also be completely inappropriate. Similar to the Palestinian case, it is clear that a democracy that allows for both religious and non-religious parties would be the ideal system for the majority of Egyptian citizens. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show survey data for overall government performance in 2011 and 2013 and figure 2.5 shows data for trust in the Muslim Brotherhood in 2011 and 2013. We see a dramatic shift from 31% of respondents calling government performance 'very good' and 45% calling it 'good' in 2011 to 37% calling it 'bad' and 34% calling it 'very bad' in 2013. Trust in the Muslim Brotherhood goes from 34% of respondents saying that they 'absolutely do not trust them' in 2011 to 70% in 2013. These

reaffirm that, although citizens lost trust in a group that was democratically elected, they did not necessarily lose trust in democracy as a system. This suggests that further analysis of Egypt under Brotherhood control is necessary to decide whether the mistrust could be due to their undermining democratic values, which can tell us if their election as a whole helped or hurt democratization.

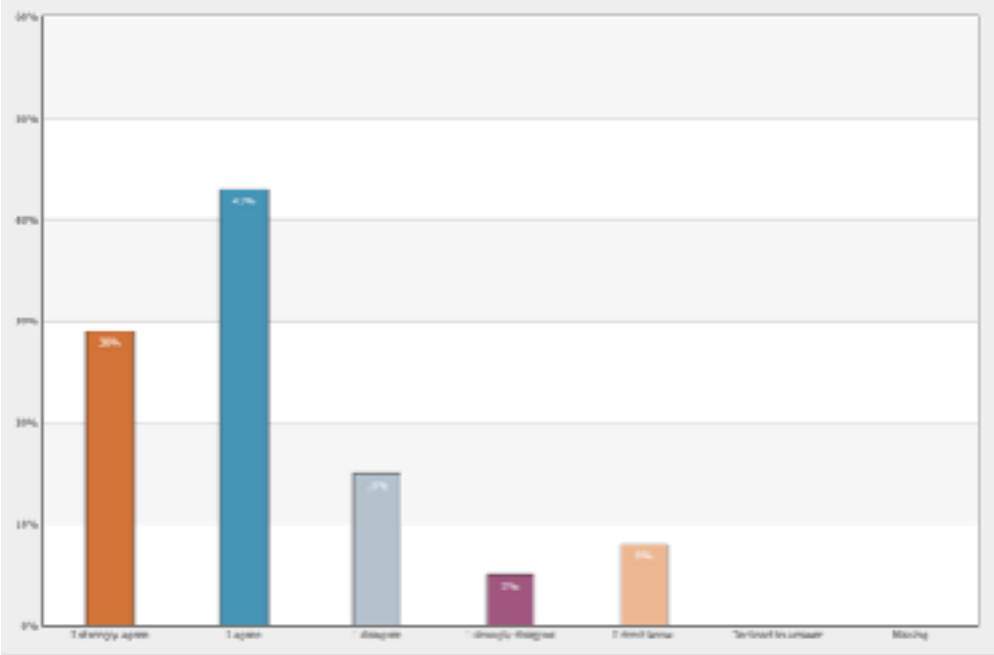


Figure 2.1: "Democratic systems may have problems, yet they are better than other systems" (Arab Barometer Wave II-2011, Egypt)

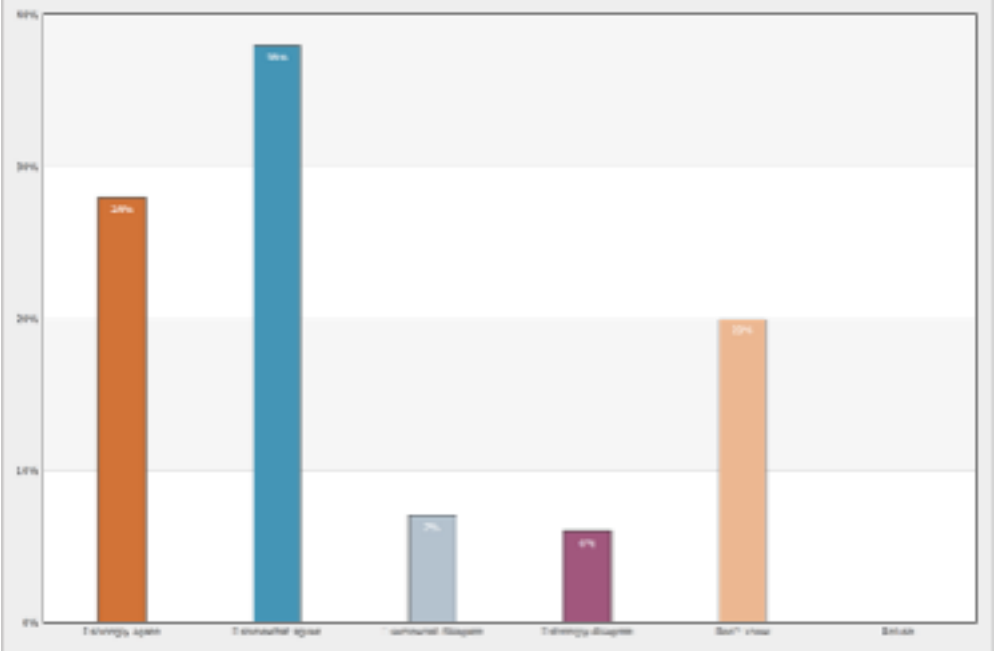


Figure 2.2: "Democratic systems may have problems, yet they are better than other systems"

(Arab Barometer Wave III-2013, Egypt)

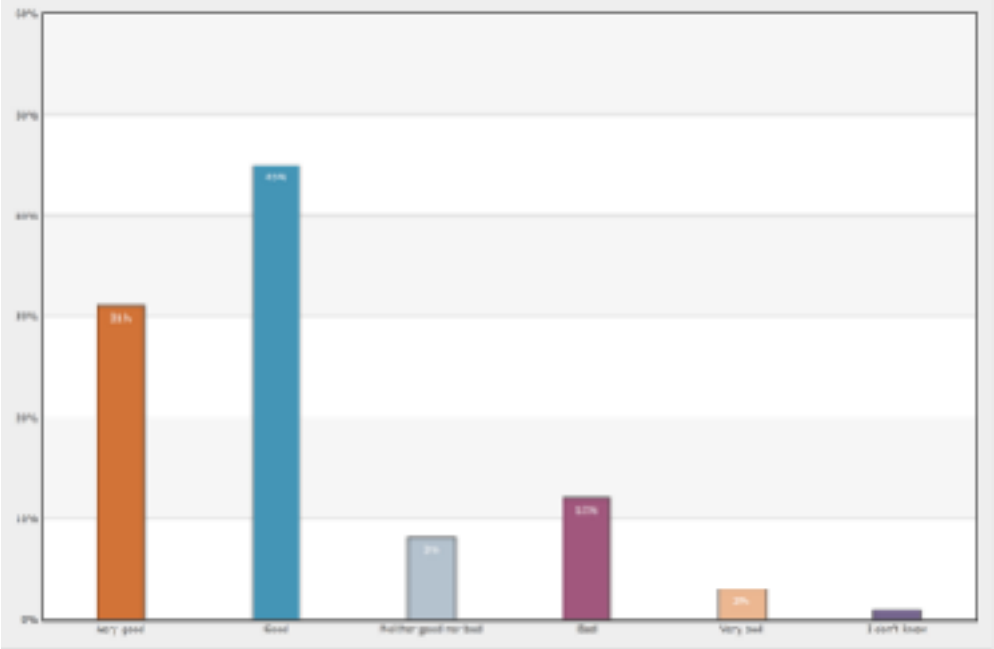


Figure 2.3: "Performance: The government" (Arab Barometer Wave II-2011, Egypt)

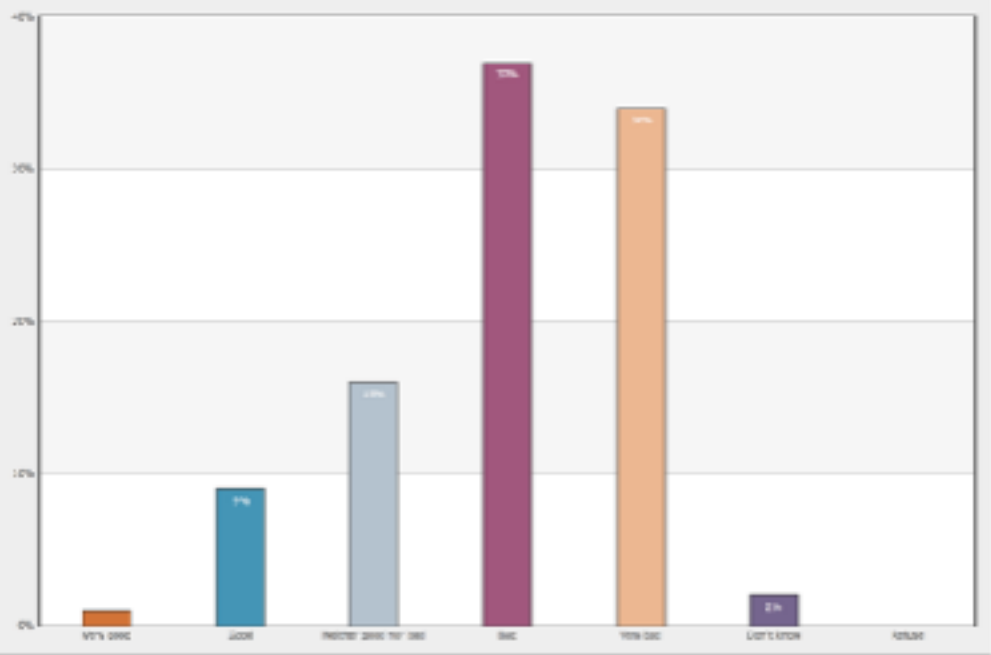


Figure 2.4: "Performance: The government" (Arab Barometer Wave III-2011, Egypt)

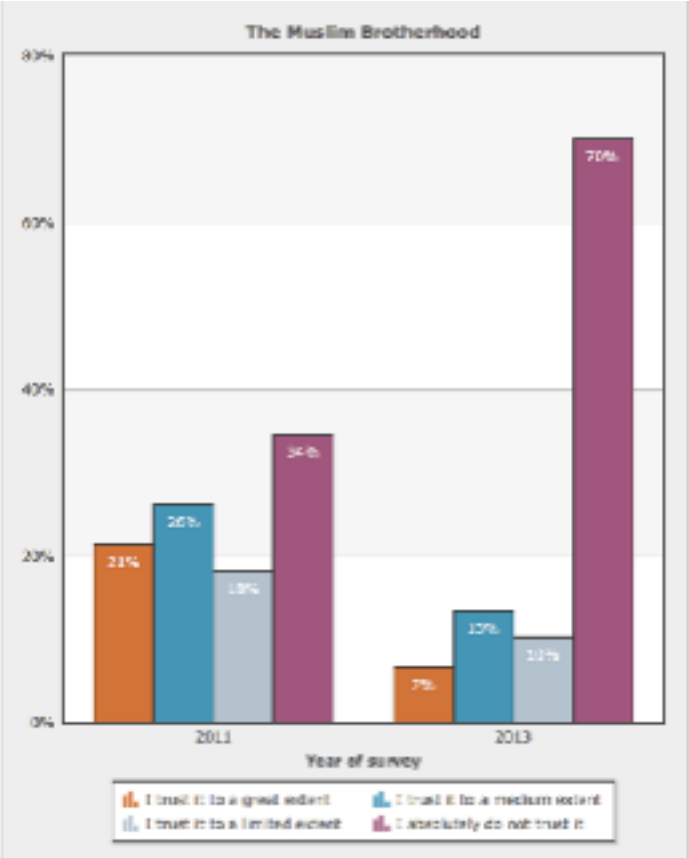


Figure 2.5: "Trust: The Muslim Brotherhood" (Arab Barometer Waves II & III-2011 & 2013, Egypt

In 2008, David Beetham et. al produced a detailed framework for defining democracy and assessing whether a state should be considered democratic[13] They outline that there are four major categories [11] that must be present in order to consider a state to have a strong democracy: citizenship, law and rights, representative and accountable government, civil society and popular participation, and democracy be yond the state. Each of the following sections assess the strength of Egyptian democracy under the Muslim Brotherhood by applying Arab Barometer survey data taken in 2013 to the framework provided by Beetham et. al, as data from 2013 will show the effects of the Muslim Brotherhood's government control. This framework has been selected as the authority for defining democracy because it is objective, neutral, thorough, and provides clear characteristics of democracy that could be applied to any state. The setup of the framework--being divided into four categories--also makes it more compatible with analysis by sur vey data.

Citizenship, law and rights

The first of the four categories represents citizenship, law and rights. This category looks at individual rights and freedoms and citizens' access to justice if their rights have been violated. As the frame work argues, "the guarantee of *civil and political rights* needs no special justification in a democracy assessment, since these rights are manifestly necessary for participation in the political process in association with others" (Beetham et. al, 2008). Figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 assess these values. Figure 3.1 asks respondents how easy it is for them to file a complaint when their rights have been violated, and 3.2 asks how easy it is for them to obtain assistance from the police. These questions connect to 'The rule of law and access to justice' subcategory of the framework as they assess whether citizens can easily find justice. In both cases, the majority of respondents have not tried, but for the respondents who have, the majority

[13] Titled Assessing the Quality of Democracy: A Practical Guide

in both cases said that it was either ‘difficult’ or ‘very difficult.’

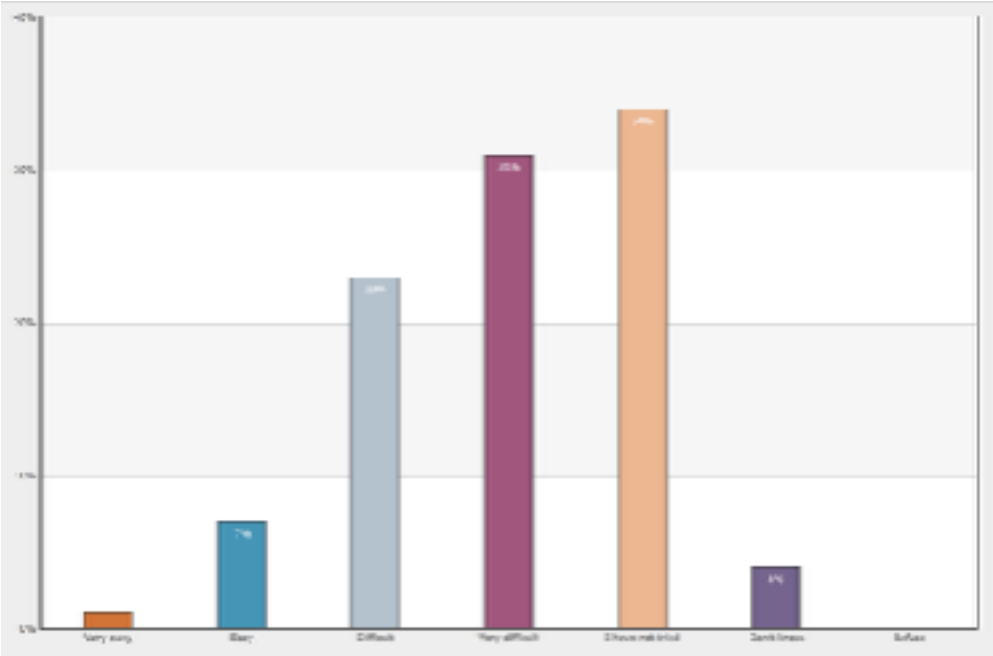


Figure 3.1: “Difficulty: Access to relevant official to file a complaint when you feel that your rights have been violated” (Arab Barometer Wave III-2013, Egypt)

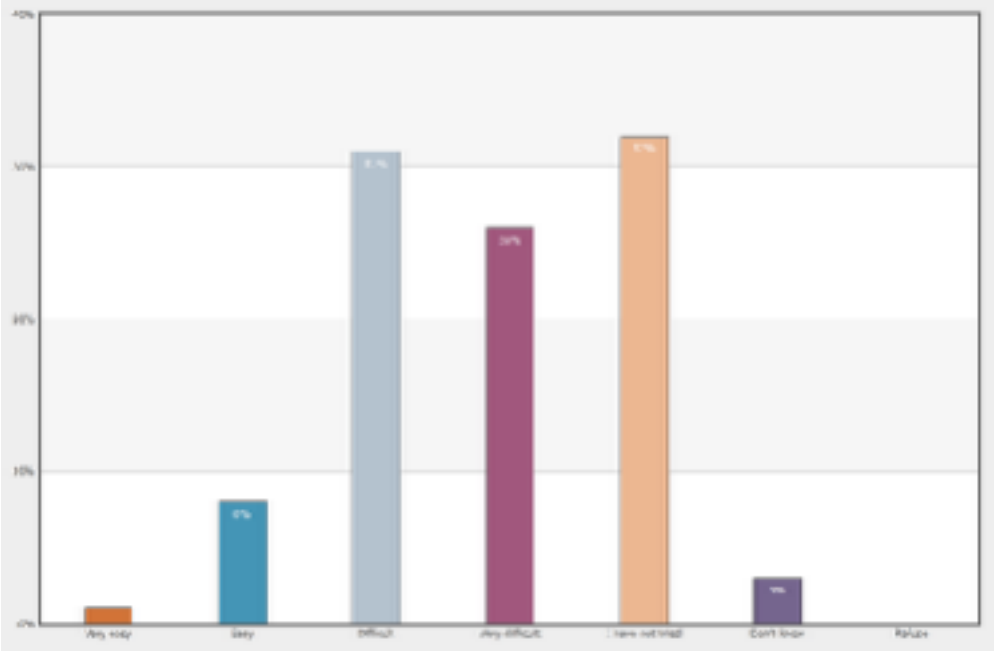


Figure 3.2: “Difficulty: Assistance from public security (the police) when needed” (Arab Barometer

Wave III 2013, Egypt)

Figure 3.3 asks respondents whether they feel that they are treated equally to their fellow citizens. It is important to note that this is simply looking at the perception of citizens and not the reality of whether citizens are given equal opportunities. This is still important to the study, however, as public perception is a big part of democracy, a system that is meant to be based on the will of the people. Only 12% of citizens said that they feel they are treated equally 'to a great extent' and the majority of respondents (52%) said that they either feel they are treated equally 'to a limited extent' or 'not at all.'

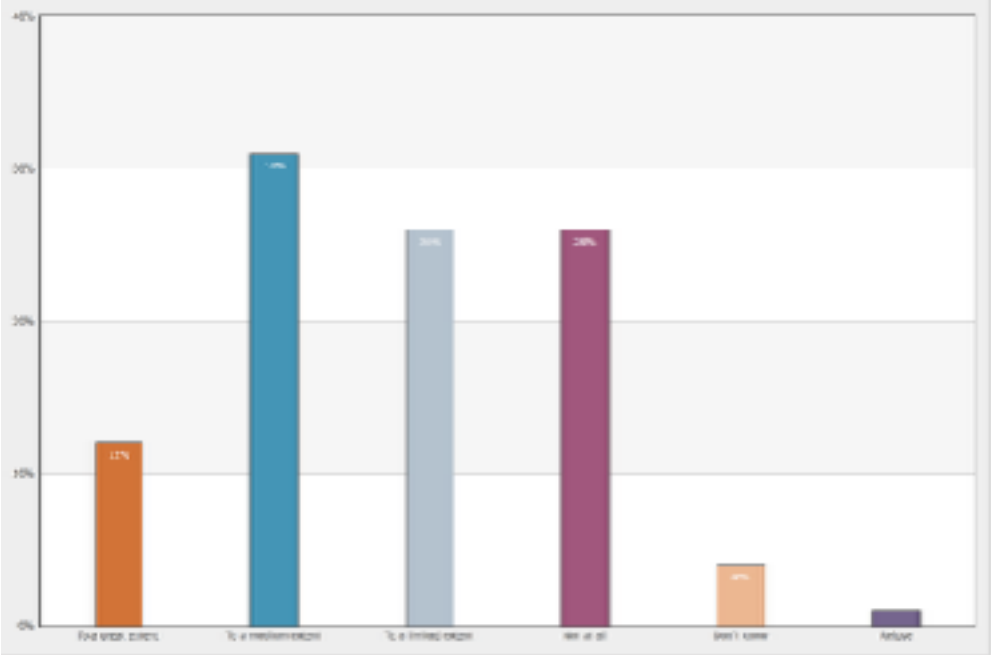


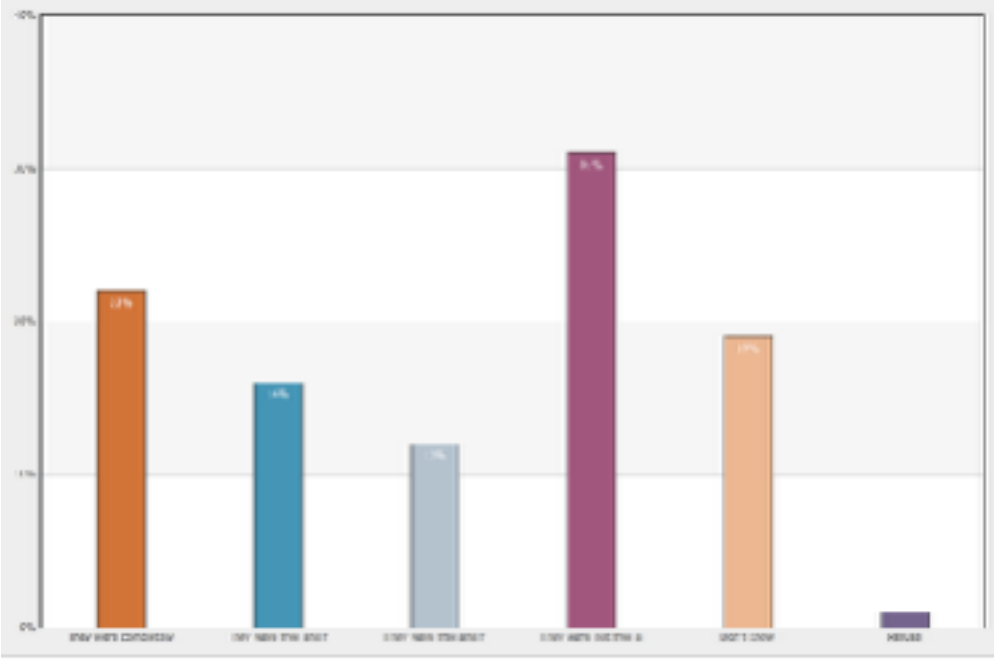
Figure 3.3: "Feeling of being treated equally compared to other citizens in their own country" (Arab Barometer Wave III-2013, Egypt)

It is abundantly clear through this survey data that citizens under the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt found it difficult to get access to justice when their rights had been violated. A The data also demonstrates that they did not perceive that they were being treated equally to their fellow citizens. This strongly suggests that the Brotherhood's government fails to meet the standards

for the first category of the framework.

Representative and accountable government

The second category of the framework looks at the actual political institutions. It asks whether elections are free and fair and whether governmental institutions are free from corruption. This is important to democracy, as it ensures that elected officials are the ones that the people want in office and it ensures that the government is working for the people and responsive to their concerns. Figure 4.1 asks respondents to evaluate the last parliamentary elections. The obvious concern here is that we see the largest category to be 'they were not free and fair'. Figure 4.2 asks respondents to compare corruption in the government to two years ago, which would be 2011 or before the Brotherhood controlled the government. Figure 4.3 asks to what extent the government is attempting to get rid of corruption.



12 **Figure 4.1: "How would you evaluate the last parliamentary elections?" (Arab Barometer Wave III-2013, Egypt)**

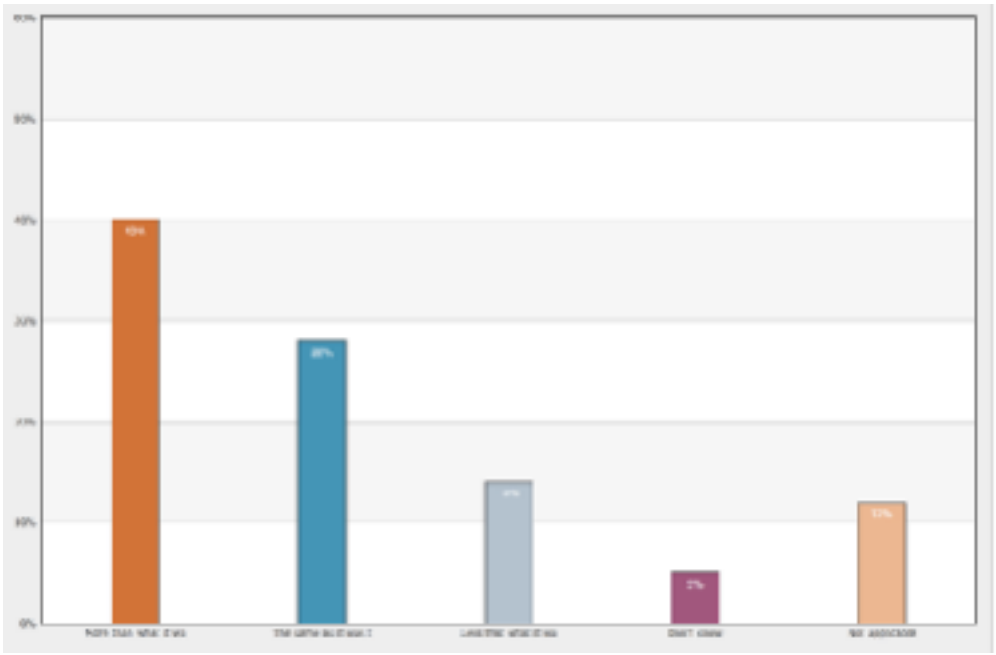


Figure 4.2: "Corruption in state institutions now compared to two years ago" (Arab Barometer Wave III-2013, Egypt) [14]

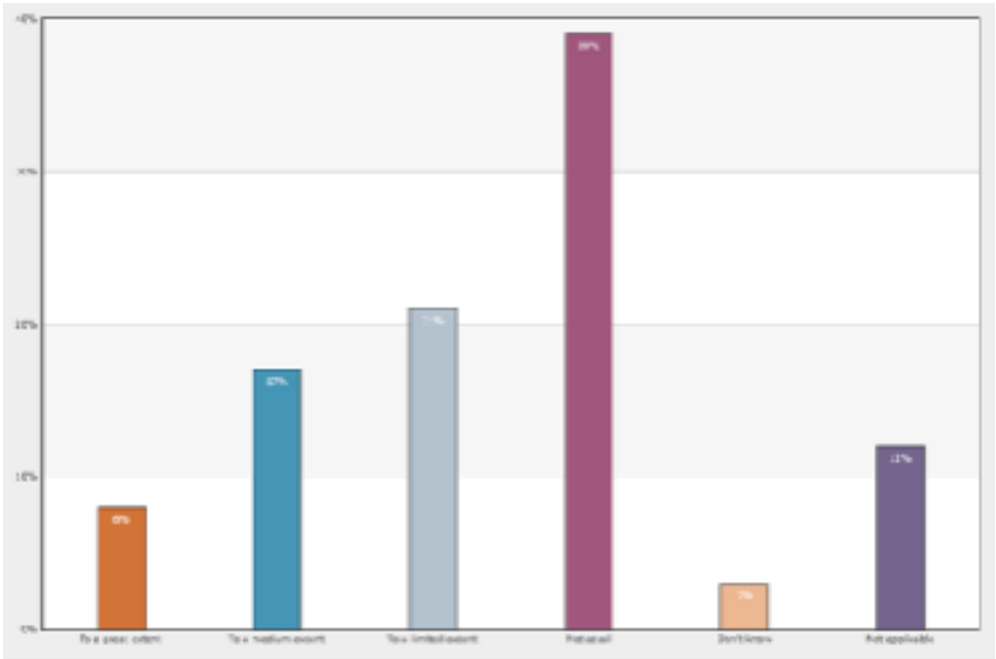


Figure 4.3: "To what extent is the government working to eliminate corruption in your

[14] Vertical labels from left to right: 'they were completely free and fair,' 'they were free and fair with some minor breeches,' 'they were free and fair with some major breeches,' 'they were not free and fair'

country?" (Arab Barometer Wave III-2013, Egypt)

We see that the largest group of respondents said that there is more corruption than there was before the Brotherhood was elected and that they do not think that the government is working to eliminate it. Seeing an increase in perceived corruption after a revolution to eliminate corruption does not imply the newly elected government was a positive force for democracy. The lack of free and fair elections does not re quire much explanation as it is obvious that a democratization cannot thrive without it. This data strongly suggests that the Brotherhood's government in Egypt also fails to meet the standards of the second cate gory of the framework.

Civil society and popular participation

According to Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "a key variable in a stable pluralist transition is a viable civil society, a network of voluntary associations, sufficiently autonomous of state and primordial community, to bridge societal cleavages while buffering society from, yet linking it to, state power" (1993). Within the state, as Hinnebusch argues, civil society is meant to be independent of the government and provide mobilization for the citizenry. According to the democratic framework this study uses, civil society is vital to a democracy. The subcategories include participation in public life and media that is free from government control. Beetham et. al make the argument that, "key elements are independent and pluralistic media of communication, and a vigorous network of voluntary associations of all kinds, through which citizens can act to manage their own affairs and influence public policy. The vigor of associational life is in turn an important condition for securing the responsiveness of government policy, and ensuring that the delivery of public services meets the needs of the population, especially at the most local level" (2008).

Figure 5.1 looks at respondents' freedom to join civil societies and organizations, including, but not limited to religious organizations, charity organizations, and social societies.

The majority of respondents said that they do feel free to participate in these organizations. Figure 5.2 shows that 39% of people do not think that the government blocks media that includes opposition opinions, while 33% think that they do. Figure 5.3 shows that the largest number (42%) of respondents felt that their freedom to protest was protected to a great degree. Figure 5.4 shows that 33% of respondents felt that their right to vote is guar anteed to a great degree, 29% felt that it was guaranteed to a medium degree, and only 17% felt that it was not guaranteed at all. Finally, figure 5.5 shows that, although people feel free to join organizations within civil society, many of them do not trust it. It is unclear, however, what exactly they do not trust about it.

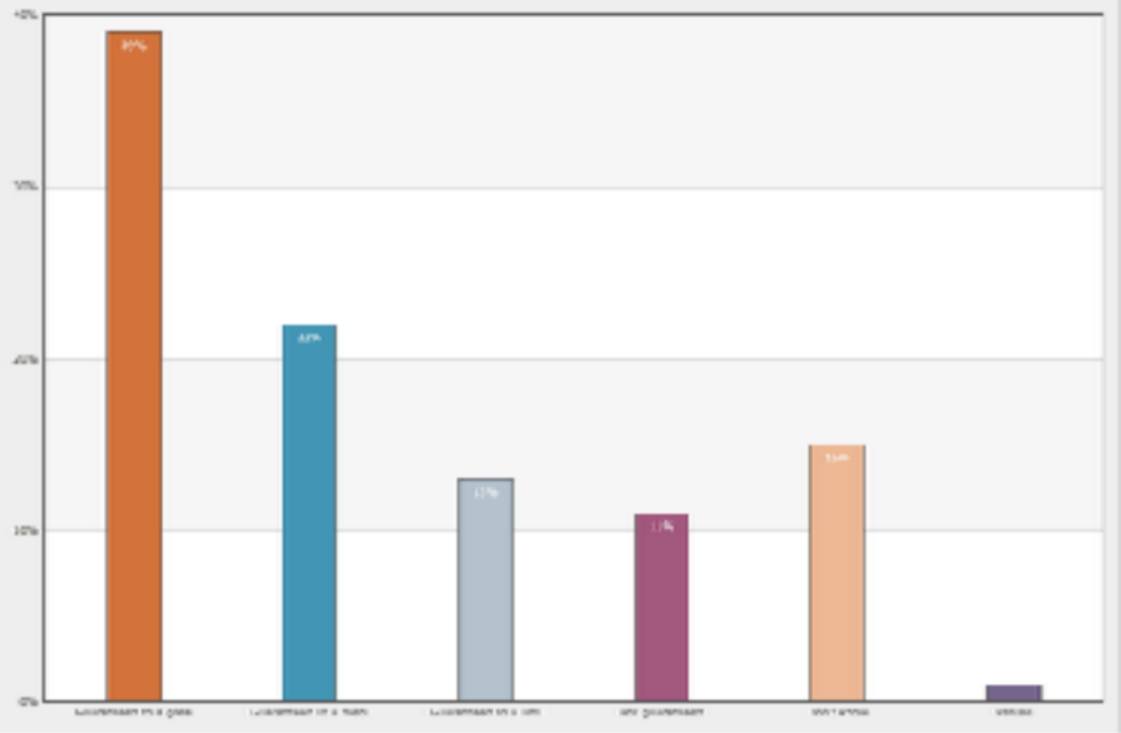


Figure 5.1: "Freedom to join civil associations and organizations" (Arab Barometer Wave III-2013, Egypt)

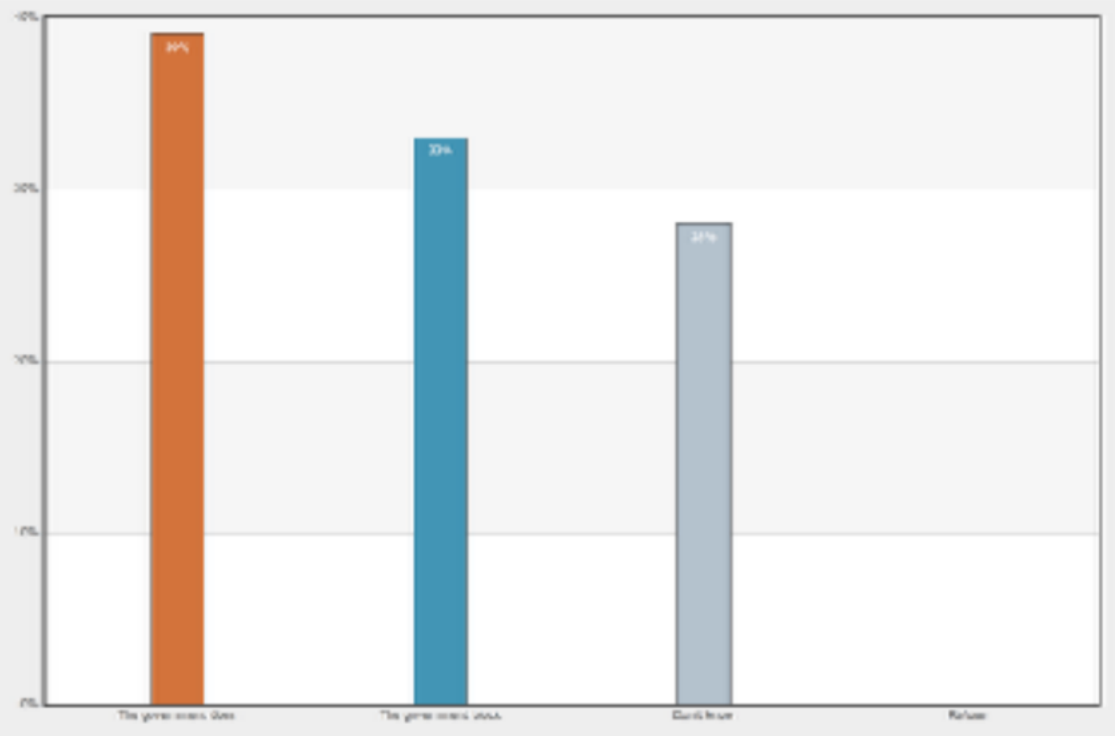


Figure 5.2: "Government blocks media coverage of the activities and positions of the opposition in the daily press" (Arab Barometer Wave III-2013, Egypt)

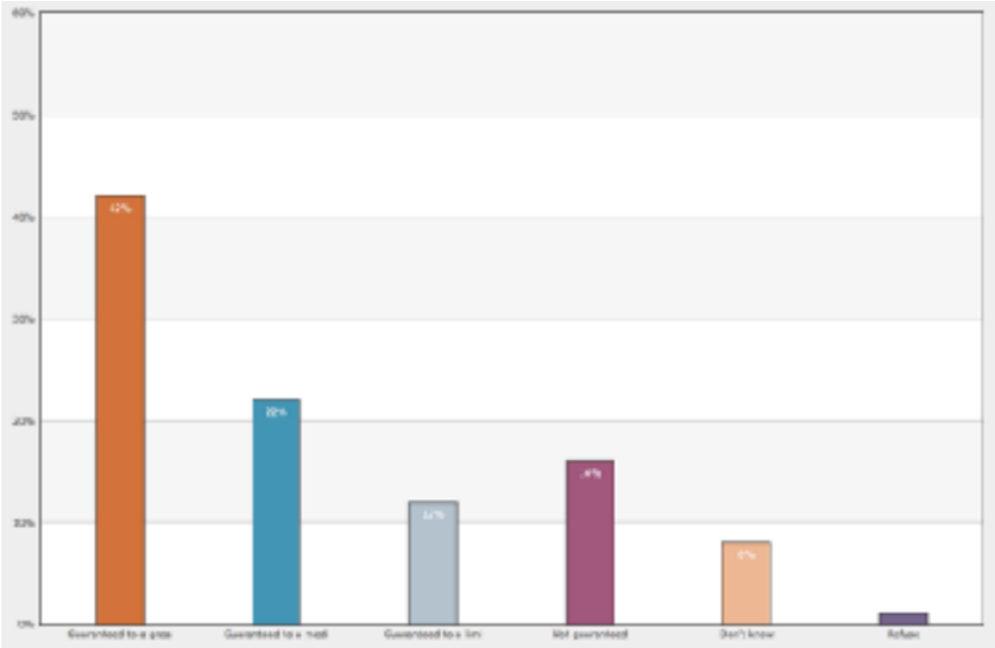


Figure 5.3: "Freedom to participate in peaceful protests and demonstrations" (Arab Barometer

Wave III-2013, Egypt)

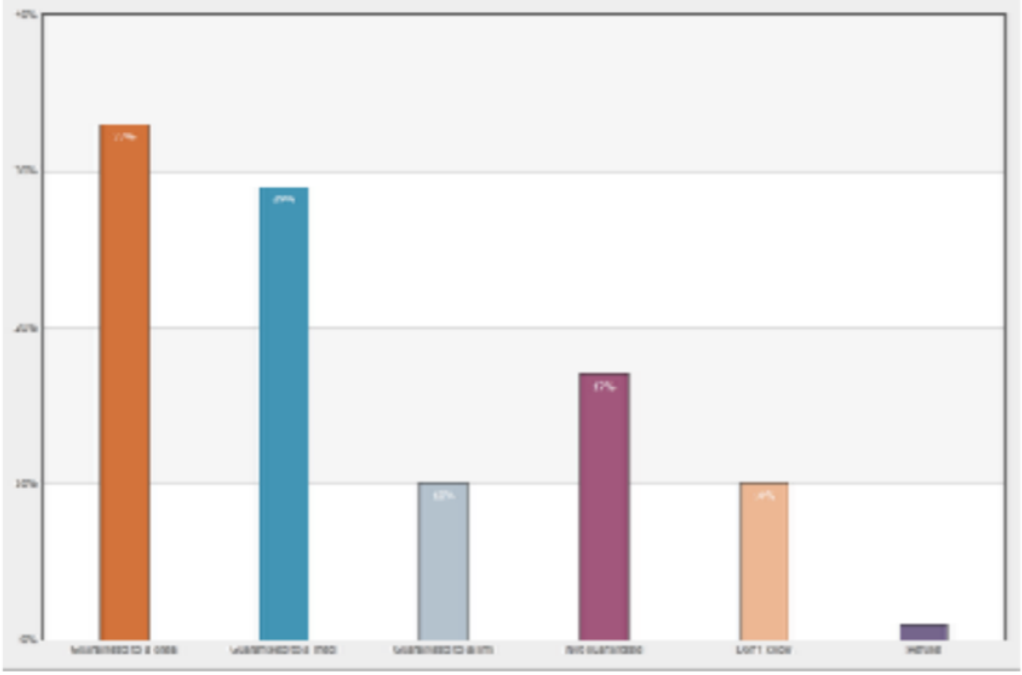


Figure 5.4: "Freedom to vote" (Arab Barometer Wave III-2013, Egypt)

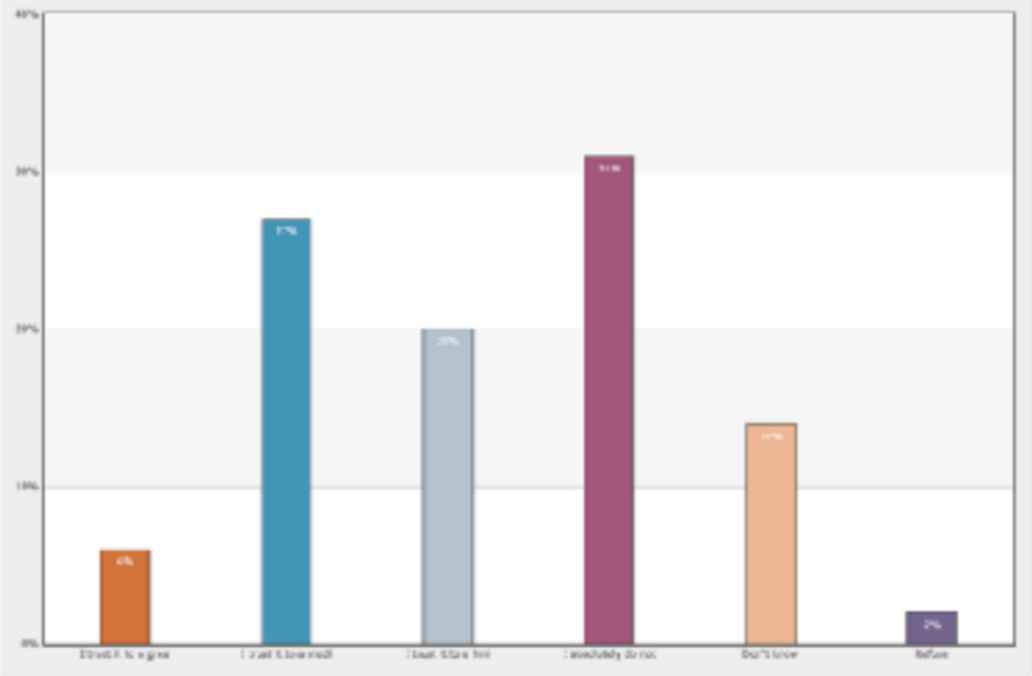


Figure 5.5: "Trust: Civil society institutions" (Arab Barometer Wave III-2013, Egypt)

These results seem a bit more complicated than the other categories. It appears that citizens do feel free to join and participate in civil society. They feel like they can go out and protest and that they are able to vote. The issue is, if the elections are not free and fair as shown in the previous section, then none of that really matters. Due to the fact that the data on government media censoring is split, I would be hesitant to declare that subcategory as having the standards met. It seems that Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood somewhat meets the standards required for this category of the framework. The framework does not mention how civilian trust in civil society plays a role in the strength of a democracy, however.

Democracy beyond the state

The fourth and final category of the framework is Democracy beyond the state. This category concerns the ways in which the democracy participates in the international community and inspires others to democratize. As Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood was an extremely new democracy and ended in a military coup, there is not data to assess this category. However, it is important to note that the Western world was very much not in favor of the Muslim Brotherhood's victory in the 2012 elections and did not consider them to be democratic at all.

Conclusions and implications

This study sought to find the ways in which the Muslim Brotherhood gained influence in the Middle East and whether that influence was ultimately a positive or negative force for democracy. Through a discussion of the history of secular versus Islamist resistance, it is clear that there was a commitment to secular resistance to colonialism at first, but once its shortcomings became evident, the Brotherhood was able to use anti-Western and anti-colonial sentiment to gain influence and membership. Current events in the region suggest that religious resistance is becoming less popular, however, especially after it has severed the Palestinian resistance and failed due to a military coup in Egypt. The growth of political influence of the Brotherhood appears to have aspects of both of the two major theories within the literature: political Islam and social movement theory. It is obvious that the mass mobilization of the Arab Spring is what opened the door for political Islam to take hold in Egypt in 2012. It is clear

that both Palestinians and Egyptians have a desire for a democratic system and that they both would prefer one that includes both secular and Islamist parties. Through use of the Arab Barometer survey data and Beetham et. al's framework, it is easy to conclude that Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood cannot be considered a democracy.[15] This implies that the victory of the Brotherhood immediately following the Arab Spring was [13] ultimately a negative force for democracy in Egypt and in the region. As much of the Middle East remains in a transition period, the implications of this study are that Islamist control of government will likely serve as a dividing and negative force on sustained democracy in a state.

[15] Table 1.1 outlines these findings

Table 1.1: Summary of findings

Framework Category	Survey Data Used	Met/Did Not Meet Standards
Citizenship, law and rights	• Ability to file a complaint when rights have been violated • Assistance from police when needed • Feeling of being treated equally to fellow citizens	• No, majority found it difficult • No, majority found it difficult • No, majority felt they were not treated equal
Representative and accountable government	• Evaluation of last elections • Corruption compared to two years ago • Government work to eliminate corruption	• No, largest number said they were not free and fair • No, largest number said corruption increased • No, largest number said they are not working at all
Civil society and popular participation	• Freedom to join civil associations and organizations • Government censoring of media • Freedom to participate in peaceful protests • Freedom to vote • Trust in civil society	• Yes, majority said they do feel free to • Split, around the same number said they believe they do and they believe they do not • Yes, majority said they do feel free to • Yes, majority said they do feel free to • No, largest number said they do not
Democracy Beyond the State	N/A	No, democracy under the Brotherhood did not last long and the Western world did not consider the democracy legitimate

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