EXPLAINING THE MODERATE PLATFORM OF
THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD: AGAINST THE
INCLUSION-MODERATION HYPOTHESIS

BY

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Abstract

Throughout its existence, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB) has consistently maintained a moderate policy on governance. The main aim of this study is to explain this moderation. Previous literature has usually explained moderation in similar movements by an "inclusion-moderation hypothesis", which holds that moderation results when movements have the opportunity to participate in pluralist political processes. However, the SMB has been progressively excluded from the Syrian political arena since 1963. The inclusion-moderation hypothesis implies, as its converse, that exclusion leads to radicalisation. This study shows that contrary to this expectation, the SMB's ultimate exclusion from the Syrian political arena in 1982 was in fact the primary driver of its moderate policy. The SMB also participated in parliamentary politics in its early history, and therefore has not moderated over time, as the inclusion-moderation hypothesis would require. Thus, the inclusion-moderation hypothesis does not work for this case, and this dissertation advances an alternate explanation for the SMB's continued commitment to a moderate policy on governance.

This study's central thesis is that the SMB's moderate policy on governance can be explained by the Brotherhood's primary target audience, that is to say, the political force which, in the SMB's view, can deliver its political objective. As this definition implies, the target audience shifts over time, in accordance with changing circumstances. In 1980, the primary target audience comprised diverse actors in opposition to the al-Asad government: the Fighting Vanguard, the Syrian ulama, and the secularist opposition. In 2001, the audience was the Bashar al-Asad government. In 2004, it was the secularist opposition; and in 2012, it was the foreign sponsors of the secularist opposition.

For a better Syria

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I run the risk of being overcome with gratitude in writing these acknowledgements. Thus, it takes some discipline to stick to the production team and the members of the main cast.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This dissertation's primary aim is to explain the opposition Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's (SMB) moderate policy on governance. It will seek to uncover why the SMB has remained committed to a parliamentary democracy, even though the Brotherhood has been progressively excluded from the Syrian political arena since 1963. The fact that the SMB has thus been excluded from active participation in Syrian politics forecloses explanation of this particular case by means of a popular theoretical approach, which claims that Islamists are typically moderated because they have access to "inclusion in pluralist political processes".[1] Thus, my dissertation asks: Why has the SMB remained committed to a moderate policy on governance?

A secondary aim is to show that the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy does not undermine its commitment to its ideal Islamic state, as some would argue we would expect, but rather, conversely, that its official commitment to *hakimiyya* or God's sovereignty in fact challenges 'the people's' legislative authority.

I will also investigate the SMB's prioritising of political interests over its religious agenda. I will show that individuals within the leadership of the SMB might have passed the point where *hakamiyya* rules supreme. As an Islamist movement, the SMB officially remains committed to sharia, but in practice, its political objectives enjoy priority. This implied tension between religion and politics is however not true for Muslims in general,[2] and neither is it true for the SMB in particular. In fact, the idea that sharia or politics must be "prioritised", one over the other, implies an incompatible tension between religion and politics, but I will show

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[1] Jillian Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis," *World Politics* 63, no. 2 (2011): 348.

[2] Nazih. Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1991), 50-51; Abdullahi Ahmed An‑Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari`A* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 4.

that in fact, this is not the case, whether for Muslims in general or for the SMB in particular.

This dissertation's central thesis is that the Brotherhood's primary target audience can explain the SMB's moderate policy on governance at any given time. The SMB's primary target audience is the political force, which, in the Brotherhood's view, can deliver its political objective; and as this implies, the target audience shifts over time, in accordance with changing circumstances. I will show that in 1980, the SMB's primary target audience was diverse, and consisted of conservative Muslim scholars, the radical Islamist Fighting Vanguard, and the secularist opposition; in 2001, the SMB reached out to the Bashar al-Asad government; in 2004, the audience was the Syrian secularist opposition; and in 2012, the SMB targeted the foreign sponsors of the secularist opposition.

The dissertation's thesis rests on the notion that the SMB's political objective in the 1950's, "to remain a part of Syrian politics",[3] has remained constant. It is not unusual for a political actor to desire political power. In the case of Syria, the SMB's political objective is particularly acute when viewed against the ruling Ba`th party's ever-increasing exclusion of the SMB from the Syrian political arena.

The dissertation will cover the SMB's moderate policy and actions from its inception in 1946 to the Syrian uprising-turned civil war in mid-2017.[4] During this period, the SMB published four main policy documents, namely in 1980,[5]

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[3] Reissner in Umar F. Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1983), 115.
[4] The civil war continues at the time of writing in July 2017. The dissertation's cut-off date is therefore a practical decision.
[5] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," in *The Islamic Struggle in Syria* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1983).

2001,[6] 2004,[7] and 2012.[8] To structure the argument, I will use these policy documents as four reference points in the Brotherhood's political history. Thus, at each interval, I will interrogate the SMB's policy and actions in order to identify the SMB's primary target audience.

The dissertation will address related questions on the SMB's democratic commitment, and the relationship between religion and politics, as follows:

- It will debunk the notion that Islamists, who pursue an Islamic state by definition in this study, are "culturally" averse to parliamentary politics;[9]
- It will show how the SMB's democratic discourse and its notion of an Islamic state evolved;
- It will show that the political environment had a bigger influence than ideology on the SMB's policy and actions; and
- It will debunk the notion that all Islamists radicalise when excluded from pluralist political processes (exclusion-radicalisation hypothesis).

The remainder of this chapter comprises five main sections. The first section will critically interrogate prior literature on the SMB, which affirms the SMB's moderate policy on governance, but also alleges that the Brotherhood radicalised during the 1970s. We will see that the prior literature therefore does not interrogate, and neither does it offer an explanation for the SMB's ongoing moderation. The second section will discuss three theories on Islamist moderation, which in effect will act as my foils. The third section will consider

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[6] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity: Interim Papers Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Released in London, 3 May 2001," *Middle East Affairs Journal* 7, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring, 2001).

[7] A copy of *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria* ((Place published not known): Dar al-`Ahd, 2004), was handed to me during an interview in January 2015. The full document is available at www.ikhwansyria.com under the Political Project (*al-mashrū' al-siyāsī*), December 2016.

[8] "Syrian Muslim Brotherhood: Pledge and Charter on Syria," Carnegie Middle East Center, http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48390.

[9] See Jillian Schwedler, "Studying Political Islam," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 1 (2011): 135-136.

two main challenges for researchers who work on "moderate Islamism", namely the challenge of defining contested terms "Islamist", "moderate", "democracy", and the challenge to determine whether moderate Islamists will abide by their moderate policies, should they come to power. The fourth section will give a chapter outline for the dissertation, and the fifth will discuss the potential contributions of this thesis.

1.1 The SMB in the Literature

Prior literature on the SMB has been dominated by two themes, namely the SMB's ideology,[10] and the SMB's adoption of armed jihad or armed struggle.[11] In this section, I will review this literature in four main steps: The first two sub-sections will follow the two dominant themes, i.e. the ideology of the SMB, and its adoption of armed jihad. The third will focus on life cycle studies. The fourth will a) consider the relationship between the early SMB and the Egyptian (MB) (EMB), and b) explain the imbalance in scholarly literature on the two Brotherhoods.

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[10] Johannes Reissner, *Ideologie Und Politik Der Muslimbrüder Syriens: Von Den Wahlen 1947 Bis Zum Verbot Unter Adib Ash-Shishakli* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Klaus Schwarz, 1980); Joshua Teitelbaum, "The Muslim Brotherhood and the 'Struggle for Syria', 1947-1958 between Accommodation and Ideology," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 3 (2004); "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, 1945-1958: Founding, Social Origins, Ideology," *The Middle East Journal* 65, no. 2 (2011); Itzchak Weismann, "Democratic Fundamentalism? The Practice and Discourse of the Muslim Brothers Movement in Syria," *The Muslim World* 100, no. 1 (2010); Thomas Pierret, "The Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Flexibility, and Its Limits," (Unpublished); Hans Günter Lobmeyer, "Islamic Ideology and Secular Discourse: The Islamists of Syria," *Orient*, no. 32 (September 1991); Thomas Pierret, "Syria's Unusual "Islamic Trend": Political Reformists, the Ulema, and Democracy," in *Post-Islamism the Changing Faces of Political Islam*, ed. A. Bayat (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*.

[11] Nikolaos Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba`Th Party* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 89-117; Thomas Mayer, "The Islamic Opposition in Syria: 1961-1982," *Orient* 24 (1983); Brynjar Lia, "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2016); Raphaël Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama: The Perilous History of Syria's Muslim Brotherhood* (London: HURST C & Company Publishers Limited, 2013), 81-129; Dara Conduit, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Spectacle of Hama," *The Middle East Journal* 70, no. 2 (2016).

I will show that the literature on ideology provides background to my study, while the literature on the SMB's adoption of armed jihad provides me with a foil. Scholars explain the armed jihad phenomenon as due to the SMB's "radicalisation" during the 1970s. In contrast, I will argue that the SMB has consistently adhered to a moderate stance (eschewed violent means to its political ends), despite the fact that it has found itself in a situation where prevailing theory would lead us to expect radicalisation.

1.1.1 The SMB's Ideology

I will now review the scholarly literature on the ideology of the SMB. In doing so, I will show a) that the SMB's founding ideology defines it as a reformist movement, which is politically active, and committed to an Islamic state; b) the literature confirms the SMB's commitment to a democratic political system; and c) scholars offer three possible reasons for changes in the SMB's behaviour, namely: ideology, political tactics, and the SMB's constituency.

1.1.1.1 The SMB's Founding Ideology

The SMB's founding ideology defines it as a reformist movement. The early SMB resembles the 19th century Salafiyya movement.[12] The Salafiyya movement originated in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and aspired to "reform Islam from within…to confront the challenges of European domination".[13] Reissner argues that the early SMB wanted to "change the world",[14] i.e. to change the Muslim world's mediocrity vis-à-vis Europe. However, the SMB did not consider Islam to be inferior to Europe,[15] neither did the

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[12] Reissner, *Ideologie Und Politik Der Muslimbrüder Syriens: Von Den Wahlen 1947 Bis Zum Verbot Unter Adib Ash-Shishakli*, 133.

[13] For a discussion of the Salafiyya movement in Syria, see Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 3-11, at 13; and Thomas Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 102-105, on the decline of the Salafiyya influence in Syria after the Ba'th takeover in 1963.

[14] Reissner, *Ideologie Und Politik Der Muslimbrüder Syriens: Von Den Wahlen 1947 Bis Zum Verbot Unter Adib Ash-Shishakli*, 132.

[15] Ibid., 133.

Brotherhood seek to emulate Europe. The early SMB wanted to live according to the example of an ideal society, as presented by the *salaf al-salih,* or first three generations of Muslims.[16] The SMB therefore sought to empower Islam by reforming it.

The founders of the SMB were political activists, based on an understanding of Islam as faith and action.[17] This approach is evident in the SMB's early and enduring political activism. It can also be traced back to major Muslim reformers Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-97), Muhammad Abdu (1849-1905), and Rashid Rida (1865-1935), who propagated a dynamic Islam.[18]

An Islamic state is central to the SMB's ideology, based on the notion that Islam is relevant for all times, and all aspects of life. Reissner affirms that the SMB shares these principles with the EMB,[19] due to the ideological similarities between the EMB and the Islamic societies in Syria from which the SMB sprung.[20]

Thus, the scholarly literature on the SMB's founding ideology identifies the Brotherhood as a reformist movement, which is politically active, and committed to an Islamic state.

1.1.1.2 The SMB's Engagement with Democracy

Prior scholarship affirms the SMB's long engagement with democracy, both as a concept and in practice. For example, Weissman argues that the SMB does not see democracy as a tactic to attain power, but as a strategic choice. While he links the SMB's "Islamism" with "Islamic fundamentalism", he says that the SMB's "fundamentalist discourse is democratic".[21]

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 132.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 136.
[20] Ibid., 99.
[21] Weismann, "Democratic Fundamentalism? The Practice and Discourse of the Muslim Brothers Movement in Syria," 6.

However, the early SMB's "Islamic model of democracy" is not compatible with a liberal democracy. By comparing the supervisory role of the "men of religion" in the vetting of candidates, and legislation, with "the people as the source of legislation",[22] Weismann shows that the SMB's early conception of democracy is not compatible with a liberal democracy. In focusing on the SMB's 2004 and 2012 political platforms, Pierret argues that the SMB "is not (and does not claim to be) a post-Islamist movement that recognizes the people, rather than God, as the source of laws."[23] (Post-Islamism will be discussed in detail later.) Notwithstanding the SMB's support for a "civilian state",[24] and liberal principles, the SMB "remains attached to its long-standing demand for a constitution that makes Islam the 'religion of the state', and to its calls for the 'gradual Islamization of the laws'".[25] Pierret concludes that although the SMB's democracy affords people the right to elect their rulers, such a democracy cannot be equated with popular sovereignty, because "the people is not the source of laws", and sovereignty or *hakimiyya* therefore remains with God.[26]

The SMB not only thought about democracy, but also participated in Syria's early democracy.[27] Pierret demonstrates the continuity between the SMB's early stance and the liberal principles in its 2004 and 2012 political platforms.[28] He concludes that the SMB already accepted many of these liberal principles at its inception in 1946.[29]

Thus, the prior literature confirms that the SMB is commitment to a democratic political system. This is an important basis for my inquiry into the SMB's democratic discourse, its purpose, and changes thereto. The prior literature also

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[22] Ibid., 9 and 13.
[23] Pierret, "The Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Flexibility, and Its Limits," 1.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 1 and 5.
[26] Ibid., 5.
[27] Ibid., 1-2.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

highlights the conflict between popular and divine sovereignty, which I will pursue further in Chapter 4.

1.1.1.3 Behavioural Change

Scholars identify three possible reasons for changes in the SMB's behaviour, namely: ideology,[30] political tactics,[31] and the SMB's constituency.[32]

The role of ideology in behavioural change is best demonstrated by the evolution in the SMB's conceptualisation of citizenship. The SMB's 2004 political platform states that for the SMB "citizenship...has replaced the concept of '*dhimma*', and constitutes the basis for full participation and complete equality in the civil and political rights and duties that are guaranteed by the constitution".[33] Pierret shows that a statement by SMB founder Mustafa al-Siba`i that "neither religion, nor sex, nor language should prevent a citizen from reaching the highest positions in the state" is only quoted in a footnote in the 2004 platform, and not incorporated as part of the text.[34] The 2012 Pledge and Charter eliminates any ambiguity around citizenship by stating that "any citizen has the right to occupy the highest positions [in the state] on the basis of election and competence".[35] The SMB has therefore distanced itself from the Islamic concept of *dhimma* by embracing equal citizenship in the 2012 Pledge and Charter.

Lefèvre also highlights the role of ideology in arguing that the ideological evolution of the leader, as opposed to the movement, can bring about behavioural change. Lefèvre posits that the SMB progressively moderated its ideology from the 1990s onwards, due to the leadership of `Ali Sa`d al-Din al-

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[30] Ibid., 3.
[31] Yvette Talhamy, "The Muslim Brotherhood Reborn," *Middle East Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (2012).
[32] Lobmeyer, "Islamic Ideology and Secular Discourse: The Islamists of Syria," 415.
[33] Pierret, "The Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Flexibility, and Its Limits," 3.
[34] Ibid., 4.
[35] Ibid.

Bayanouni.[36] He shows that although al-Bayanouni was one of the first military commanders of the SMB, he had by 2000 made a "commitment to non-violence, the protection of minorities and the protection of democracy".[37] Lefèvre further shows that al-Bayanouni was instrumental in the SMB's adoption of the 2001 Draft Charter, which condemned the use of violence for domestic change.[38]

However, not all scholars share the opinion that the SMB has evolved ideologically. Talhami suggests that the Brotherhood's policy shift in 2009 was a political tactic. In 2009 the SMB withdrew from the opposition National Salvation Front (NSF), which was formed when the SMB established a partnership with ex-Vice President `Abd al-Halim al-Khaddam in 2006.[39] Talhami argues that the SMB's withdrawal from the NSF showed that the Brotherhood moderated its stance vis-à-vis the "Asad regime".[40] She ascribes this moderation as due to the Brotherhood's "weakness" after 27 years in exile (since Hama in 1982).[41] Talhami further notes the SMB's ambition to return to the Syrian political arena in 2009,[42] and asks whether its moderation towards the Syrian government is a "tactical manoeuvre"?[43]

In a later article, Talhami asserts that although "the SMB's political platform is a model of Islamist moderation and tolerance"; it reflects the SMB's "political tactics", rather than "thinking".[44] Talhami further explains the "moderation of the SMB's political platform" as due to a) the SMB's attempts to reconcile with both the Hafez and Bashar al-Asad governments, and b) to "forge" alliances with "secular dissidents".[45] To Talhami, the SMB's "moderation" as reflected in its

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[36] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 170.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Yvette Talhamy, "The Syrian Muslim Brothers and the Syrian-Iranian Relationship," *The Middle East Journal* 63, no. 4 (2009): 578.
[40] Ibid., 579.
[41] Ibid., 580.
[42] The SMB's ambition to return to the Syrian political arena is not only true for 2009, but also for 2001, 2004, and 2012, as I will demonstrate later.
[43] Talhamy, "The Syrian Muslim Brothers and the Syrian-Iranian Relationship."
[44] Talhamy, "The Muslim Brotherhood Reborn," 33.
[45] Ibid., 34 - 39.

political platform is therefore indicative of a "mercurial history of political shifts",[46] and not ideological change. To take Talhami's argument to its logical conclusion would have it that the SMB presents itself as moderate, but in fact, it is not.

The third possibility scholarship offers for behavioural change is the SMB's constituency. Lobmeyer ascribes a change in the SMB's discourse in the 1970s to a change in its constituency, as opposed to ideological change. He argues that the SMB changed from a religious-political movement to a socio-political movement, and that this change coincided with a change in the Brotherhood's constituency.[47] His argument rests on the alteration of the SMB's discourse, namely from a religious discourse to a secular one.[48] For example, in the 1980 document, the SMB refers to the ruling Alawis in Syria as a "minority which exercises dictatorial control over the Sunni majority", as opposed to using the disparaging term "Nusayri" that labels Alawis as heretics (more later). Lobmeyer further cites the SMB's 1980 Statement and Program, and the almost identical Islamic Front's Charter, which he says are "more bourgeois-liberal in character than Islamic".[49] He concludes that the SMB's changing discourse is due to a change in the SMB's constituency,[50] and by implication, is not due to ideological change.

In sum, the literature on the SMB's founding ideology offers background information on the Brotherhood as a reformist movement, its political activism, and commitment to an Islamic state. The literature further affirms the SMB's enduring commitment to democracy, but highlights the conflict between popular and divine sovereignty. I will attempt to clarify this inconsistency in the coming chapters. The literature also offers three reasons for changes in the SMB's behaviour, namely ideology, political tactics, and the SMB's constituency. The

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[46] Ibid., 39.
[47] Lobmeyer, "Islamic Ideology and Secular Discourse: The Islamists of Syria," 415.
[48] Ibid., 401 - 412.
[49] Ibid., 413.
[50] Ibid., 415.

explanation in terms of political tactics, in particular, implies that the SMB is not (really) moderate, which conflicts with this study's assessment that the SMB has displayed an ongoing commitment to a moderate policy on governance. The SMB's conceptualisation of citizenship in 2012 illustrates its ideological change, while we will see in Chapter 3 that the change in the SMB's constituency in the late 1970s was bigger and broader than is suggested in the prior literature.

1.1.2   The SMB's Adoption of Armed Jihad

After ideology, the SMB's adoption of armed jihad or armed struggle in 1979 is the leading theme in the literature. Two questions dominate this literature: Why did the SMB adopt armed jihad? What is the SMB's relationship with the radical Fighting Vanguard?

In this section, I will show that a number of scholars ascribe the SMB's adoption of armed jihad to its "radicalisation" during the 1970s, after which, I will demonstrate that scholars disagree on the SMB's relationship with the Fighting Vanguard.

Van Dam argues that the SMB's adoption of armed jihad is due to sectarian tensions between Sunnis and Alawis.[51] This argument presents the Brotherhood as sectarian and violent,[52] and Syria as a Sunni majority country, controlled by an Alawi minority.[53]

Van Dam's study however fails to identify the Sunni militia, called the Fighting Vanguard (*al-Tali`a al-Muqatila*), which developed peripheral to the SMB in the 1960s and 1970s.[54] This led to an ambiguity as evident in Van Dam's description

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[51] Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba`Th Party*, 89-117.
[52] Ibid., 89 - 117.
[53] Ibid., 15-33; Also see Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "The Islamic Movement in Syria: Sectarian Conflict and Urban Rebellion in an Authoritarian-Populist Regime," in *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World*, ed. Ali Hilal Dessouki (New York: Praeger, 1982), 147-148.
[54] Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 65.

of the Syrian mujahidin (fighters) as "apparently composed of Muslim Brothers but not identical with the organisation of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood".[55] Van Dam further relied on the SMB's covert publication, *al-Nadhir* (The Warner), which did not identify the Fighting Vanguard as a separate organisation, but presented the mujahidin and its objectives as follows:

> "The Mujahidin are young people who believe in Allah as their Lord, in Islam and their religion, and in our master Muhammad...as prophet and messenger. They sacrifice themselves to liberate their religion and their nation from tyranny, infidelity, injustice and aggression...and to make the magnanimous Shari`ah the compassionate [Islamic] law for all people, and for the Syrian people in particular. They have tried to do this in various ways, and only the Jihad remains."[56]

Van Dam also attributes the assassination of Alawi military cadets at the Aleppo Artillery School, on 16 June 1979, to "Sunni Muslim extremists".[57] This is not wrong, but it would be better to specify that it was the Fighting Vanguard who assassinated the 83 Alawi cadets in Aleppo.[58] This scholarship is therefore ambiguous in its allocation of responsibility for the sectarian violence in Syria in 1979. Such ambiguity persisted, even after scholars identified the Fighting Vanguard as an active role-player in the Islamic insurgency, as we will see next.

Some scholarship has it that the SMB was not violent and sectarian at its inception, but that its subsequent radicalisation explains the Brotherhood's adoption of armed jihad. For example, Pargeter posits that the SMB played a more significant role in the violence during the early 1980s, than what the

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[55] Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba`Th Party*, 89.
[56] Ibid., 90.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 65.

"official record would suggest".[59] She views the SMB and the Fighting Vanguard as two separate organisations – in contrast to others who present the Fighting Vanguard as the "Brethren's military wing" –[60] but argues that when a revolution seemed possible, the SMB was more than happy to accept the Vanguard's ideology and actions.[61] Pargeter attributes such "radicalisation" of the SMB to the "economic and political upheaval" that resulted from the Ba`th party's coup in 1963; the sectarian nature of the Ba`th government; the spread of Qutb's ideology; and the "weakness of the Syrian Ikhwan's own leadership".[62]

Lefèvre concurs that the SMB "radicalised", and ascribes the Brotherhood's adoption of armed jihad to an ideological shift in the 1970s and state violence in 1979.[63] He posits that the SMB's ideological shift should be viewed against the intersection of two trends, the first of which was the switch in the SMB's leadership from the moderate "Damascus wing",[64] to the militant "Hama clan" by 1975.[65] Lia agrees, and says that the boundaries that delineated the SMB from hard-line Islamists became unclear, after the leadership shifted to the `Adnan Sa`d al-Din faction.[66] Lefèvre's second trend was the emergence of the jihadis in Hama in the mid-1960s, which led to the formation of the Fighting Vanguard. [67]

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[59] Alison Pargeter, "From Diplomacy to Arms and Back to Diplomacy: The Evolution of the Syrian Ikhwan," in *The Muslim Brotherhood from Opposition to Power*, ed. A. Pargeter (London: Saqi Books, 2010), 65-66.
[60] Mayer, "The Islamic Opposition in Syria: 1961-1982," 595.
[61] Pargeter, "From Diplomacy to Arms and Back to Diplomacy: The Evolution of the Syrian Ikhwan," 83 and 87.
[62] Ibid., 66 - 67.
[63] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 96-98 and 110-115.
[64] `Isam al-`Attar was the leader of the "Damascus wing", but eventually settled in Aachen, Germany, after his involuntary exile from Syria. Al-`Attar joined the SMB and the Fighting Vanguard to form the "Joint Command" in December 1980, which lasted for less than 12 months. Apart from this short-lived union, the Damascus wing never reunited with the SMB after 1970.
[65] This empowered militant activists, such as Hama-born `Adnan Sa`d al-Din, who became head of the SMB in 1975, and Sa`id Hawwa, an Islamic scholar from Hama, who became the SMB's main ideologue in 1975 and head of the SMB's armed wing in January 1982. See Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 97 and 125.
[66] Lia, "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 4.
[67] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 81-82.

Lobmeyer also identifies a change in leadership as responsible for the SMB's "radicalisation", i.e. adoption of armed jihad. He centres his argument on two developments: 1) the SMB's split in 1970 due to a disagreement on whether an armed or a political strategy should be followed vis-à-vis the Syrian government, and 2) because `Isam al-`Attar's "moderate wing" lost the SMB's leadership position to Sheikh `Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghudda's "more radical wing" in 1970.[68] Lobmeyer therefore identifies a slightly earlier change in leadership than Lefèvre, but the two authors agree in principle that the departure of the `Isam al-`Attar-led faction led to the SMB's "radicalisation". Lobmeyer posits that this "radicalisation" culminated in the Aleppo "massacre" in 1979.[69]

Thus, Pargeter, Lefèvre, Lia, and Lobmeyer concur that the SMB "radicalised" in the 1970s. We have also seen that Lefèvre identifies the Syrian government's brutal repression of the Brotherhood after the Aleppo massacre as the catalyst for the SMB's decision to adopt armed jihad, and posits that this decision was facilitated by the SMB's ideological shift in the mid-1970s.[70] But this question about the SMB's "radicalisation" cannot be solved separately from the SMB's relationship with the Fighting Vanguard.

Scholars do not agree on the relationship between the SMB and the Fighting Vanguard. Lefèvre traced the formation of the Fighting Vanguard to its SMB origin in Hama in 1964, but posits that the SMB and the Fighting Vanguard "remained for the large part organizationally and ideologically distinct".[71] Lia, in contrast to Pargeter, argues that the relationship between the SMB and the Fighting Vanguard was ambiguous, and fluctuated over time.[72] Lobmeyer suggests that the Fighting Vanguard emerged from the "mujahidin", who came

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[68] Lobmeyer, "Islamic Ideology and Secular Discourse: The Islamists of Syria," 398.
[69] Ibid., 409.
[70] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 109-110.
[71] Ibid., 101-109, at 109.
[72] Lia, "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 5.

into being in the 1960s, and were committed to armed jihad.[73] He further argues that these "mujahidin" cooperated with the SMB from the late 1960s, and finally not only infiltrated, but also dominated the SMB's armed wing.[74] This leads Lobmeyer to conclude that that the SMB was "at least indirectly responsible" for the "massacre" at the Aleppo Artillery School.[75]

Thus, Lobmeyer demonstrates the complex relationship between the SMB, its armed wing or mujahidin, and the Fighting Vanguard. However, my research does not support his conclusion that the SMB (indirectly) supported sectarian violence. I will show that the Fighting Vanguard, and not the SMB, was responsible for the majority of violence perpetrated during the Islamic insurgency, including the Aleppo Artillery School attack. I will further show that there were important ideological differences between the SMB and the Fighting Vanguard, which eventually caused the Fighting Vanguard to reject the SMB in 1981.

Thus far, the literature concurs that the SMB "radicalised" during the 1970s, due to a change in its leadership, but fails to agree on the relationship between the SMB and the radical Fighting Vanguard. In contrast, I will argue that political considerations, and not ideological change, moved the SMB to adopt armed jihad in 1979. I will therefore show, in Chapter 3, that the SMB did not adopt armed jihad because the Brotherhood "radicalised" in the 1970s. I will demonstrate that the SMB remained moderate, which, in fact, was the reason why the radical Fighting Vanguard distanced itself from the SMB in 1981.

In sum, a number of scholars suggest that the SMB "radicalised" during the 1970s, and that such "radicalisation" explains the Brotherhood's adoption of armed jihad. However, no such consensus exists upon the more contentious issue of the SMB's relationship with the Fighting Vanguard, which I will show is key to the Brotherhood's adoption of armed jihad. In this study, I will argue that

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[73] Lobmeyer, "Islamic Ideology and Secular Discourse: The Islamists of Syria," 409.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 408.

the SMB's adoption of armed jihad was influenced by political considerations, and not ideological change. In fact, I will show that the SMB did not radicalise, and that the ensuing ideological incompatibility between the SMB and the Fighting Vanguard thwarted a potentially enduring relationship.

1.1.3 Life Cycle Studies

This section will identify two life cycle studies on the SMB. The first is a historical account of the SMB from its inception until 1981. This work by Abdallah is not directly relevant to my argument, but it offers a uniquely personal account of the SMB's history in English.[76] Abdallah's contribution is further enhanced by his translation of the SMB's 1980 Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria (*Bayan al-thawrat al-Islamiyya fi Suriyya wa-minhajuha*).

The second author, Lefèvre, offers a historic narrative on the SMB up until 2012. Lefèvre's study is the most detailed work on the SMB to date, but does not interrogate the SMB's ongoing moderation as his primary focus.

1.1.4 The Relationship between the SMB and the EMB in the Literature

As background to the study, I will review the literature on the relationship between the SMB and the Egyptian MB (EMB). I will proceed in two steps. First, I will show that Mustafa al-Siba`i established the SMB independently from the EMB, even though a prior relationship existed between him and the founder of the EMB, and the fact that the EMB paid a visit to like-minded organisations in Syria in 1935. Second, I will offer three reasons for the greater quantity of scholarly literature on the EMB, than the SMB.

Mustafa al-Siba`i was able to draw on the example of the EMB when he formed the SMB in 1946. He first met the founder of the EMB, Hasan al-Banna, at Al-Azhar University in Egypt.[77] Mustafa al-Siba`i was originally from the city of

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[76] Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*.
[77] Hasan al-Banna established the EMB, also known as the Society of the Muslim Brothers (Jam`iyat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin), in Egypt in 1928. For the historic details of the EMB, see Carrie R. Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of*

Homs (in Syria),[78] but was studying at al-Azhar in 1933. He and Hasan al-Banna became close friends, and Siba`i also worked for the EMB,[79] whilst in Egypt. Thus, al-Siba`i was able to draw on his experience as a member of the EMB and his friendship with Hasan al-Banna, when he formed the SMB in 1946.

Reissner shows that the Members of the EMB further paid a visit to Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria in 1935 to gather information, and make contact with like-minded organisations.[80] A report on the visit indicated that a positive encounter(s) occurred with a group in Damascus, who had much in common with the EMB.[81] Thus, a certain ideological commonality between the EMB and the societies or *jam`iyyat* in Syria, which a few years later provided the organisational foundation for the SMB, already existed in the mid-1930s.

Scholars agree that the SMB had friendly relations with the EMB, but the SMB functioned completely independently from the mother organisation. Khoury was further correct in positing that the founding members of the SMB were at least "inspired", if not "influenced" by members of the EMB,[82] based on the role of al-Azhar University, and the EMB's outreach to Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine in 1935. Al-Siba`i further made an oath of allegiance or *bay`a* to Hasan al-Banna at

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an Islamist Movement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998).

[78] Teitelbaum, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, 1945-1958: Founding, Social Origins, Ideology," 214; Pargeter, "From Diplomacy to Arms and Back to Diplomacy: The Evolution of the Syrian Ikhwan," 64; Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 96-97; and Ruth Roded, "Lessons by a Syrian Islamist from the Life of the Prophet Muhammad," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 6 (2006): 860.

[79] Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 96, noted that al-Siba'i and al-Banna were close friends throughout their lives.

[80] Reissner, *Ideologie Und Politik Der Muslimbrüder Syriens: Von Den Wahlen 1947 Bis Zum Verbot Unter Adib Ash-Shishakli*, 98; Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*, 155.

[81] Reissner, *Ideologie Und Politik Der Muslimbrüder Syriens: Von Den Wahlen 1947 Bis Zum Verbot Unter Adib Ash-Shishakli*, 99.

[82] Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*, vol. 58 (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987), 608.

the end of the Second World War.[83] However, unlike the MB in Jordan,[84] the SMB was not established as a branch of the mother organisation.[85] Al-Siba'i, himself, said that the SMB was financially and administratively completely independent.[86]

Mustafa al-Siba`i traced the origin of the SMB to the establishment of Dar al-Arqam in Aleppo in 1935.[87] However, it appears that Dar al-Arqam and other societies or *jam`iyyat* as well as *halqa* or study circles continued to function independently until May 1946,[88] when Siba`i unified a number of them to be known as the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*).[89]

Next, we will consider the imbalance in the quantity of scholarly literature between the two Brotherhoods.

Whilst reviewing the available literature on the SMB, it struck me that studies on the EMB far outweigh those on the SMB.[90] I will explain this imbalance as due to

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[83] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*, 155.
[84] See Teitelbaum, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, 1945-1958: Founding, Social Origins, Ideology," 218.
[85] Roded, "Lessons by a Syrian Islamist from the Life of the Prophet Muhammad," 860; Weismann, "Democratic Fundamentalism? The Practice and Discourse of the Muslim Brothers Movement in Syria," 2; Teitelbaum, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, 1945-1958: Founding, Social Origins, Ideology," 214-218; Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 170; Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 3-17; Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 91.
[86] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 25.
[87] Mustafa Al-Siba`i, *Al-Ahzab Al-Siyasiyah Fi Suriya* (Damascus: Manshūrāt Dār al-Rūwād, 1954), 11.
[88] For two different perspectives on the merger of these societies, known amongst each other as 'Young men of Mohammed', see: Ishaq Musa Ḥusaynī, *The Moslem Brethren: The Greatest of Modern Islamic Movements* (Beirut: Khayat's College Book Cooperative, 1956), 75-78; and Teitelbaum, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, 1945-1958: Founding, Social Origins, Ideology," 214-218.
[89] Al-Siba`i, *Al-Ahzab Al-Siyasiyah Fi Suriya*, 11.
[90] There are many studies on various aspect of the EMB, but three outstanding publications on its history are: Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*; Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*; Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*.

three factors: the status and long history of the EMB, the global impact of major EMB ideologues, and the EMB's influence on Egyptian civil society.

Until today, the EMB is recognised as the mother organisation of Brotherhoods in Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq, Sudan, Bahrain and Palestine.[91] The EMB, established in 1928, does not have, nor has it ever had any structural or financial influence over the SMB. [92] The only exceptions are two leadership disputes in the SMB, one in 1970,[93] and the other in 1986.[94] On both occasions, the International MB ruled to settle a dispute between two competing factions of the SMB. As permanent chair of the International MB,[95] the EMB therefore indirectly brought its influence to bear on the SMB.

Academic interest in the EMB is further driven by the impact of its founder Hasan al-Banna, and major ideologue in the 1950s, Sayyid Qutb. These two Muslim Brothers had a significant influence on the EMB in particular,[96] and Islamism in general. For example, Hasan al-Banna is an important reference for the SMB as witnessed in its founder Mustafa al-Siba`i's writing, and the SMB's 2004 political platform.[97] Sayyid Qutb, in contrast, inspired Marwan Hadid, a SMB ideological outlier, who led an armed uprising against the Syrian

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[91] *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 20.

[92] R. Stephen Humphreys, in *The Comtemporary Resurgence in the Context of Modern Islam*, ed. Ali E. Hilal Dessouki (New York: Praeger, 1982), 80; Lobmeyer, "Islamic Ideology and Secular Discourse: The Islamists of Syria," 396.

[93] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 95.

[94] Lobmeyer, "Islamic Ideology and Secular Discourse: The Islamists of Syria," 409, fn. 465.

[95] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 95.

[96] See Ana Belén Soage, "Ḥasan Al‑Bannā and Sayyid Quṭb: Continuity or Rupture?," *The Muslim World* 99, no. 2 (2009).

[97] In the SMB's 2004 political platform, Hasan al-Banna is said to be "the martyr...who introduced Islam in the last century", see: Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, 12; a similar reference to al-Banna can be found in the SMB's handbook for its youth, written by Siba'i (n.d.) in Teitelbaum, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, 1945-1958: Founding, Social Origins, Ideology," 217.

government in 1964.[98] Qutb's vision also appealed to Egyptian jihadis in the 1970s,[99] and jihadis further afield in subsequent years.[100] In comparison, the SMB's founder Mustafa Siba`i and ideologue Sa`id Hawwa had a limited impact on Islamism broadly.[101]

Thirdly, from 1976, the EMB exercised a measure of political influence through its participation in parliamentary politics, and later, also through its membership of professional associations.[102] The SMB, in contrast, had virtually no influence in Syria between 1982 and 2011. Therefore, it is no surprise that academics have shown significantly less interest in the SMB than in the mother organisation in Egypt.

The uprisings in Egypt (2010) and Syria (2011) have inspired renewed scholarly interest in both countries. However, the SMB is still severely under-researched in comparison to the EMB.

In sum, Mustafa al-Siba`i established the SMB independently from the mother organisation, notwithstanding his friendship with its founder Hasan al-Banna, and despite prior contact between the EMB and like-minded organisations in Syria.

We have seen that scholars have produced far more work on the EMB than the SMB. This imbalance is due to the EMB's longer existence, and status as the

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[98] Hanna Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 262.
[99] Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, trans. Anthony F Roberts (Harvard University Press, 2002), 36.
[100] Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 129.
[101] Abu Musab al-Suri, who fought in the Islamist insurgency in Syria and later joined al-Qaeda, is an exception. See Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
[102] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, 31-32, 46.

mother organisation; the importance of its founder, and primary ideologues; and its relative, but consistent influence on Egyptian institutional politics since 1976.

To conclude this literature review as a whole, we have seen that two themes dominate literature on the SMB, namely: the ideology of the SMB, and its adoption of armed jihad. The literature on ideology affirms the SMB as a reformist movement, and its commitment to a parliamentary democracy. It convincingly illustrates the SMB's ideological change, based on citizenship, but does not fully succeed in explaining instances of behavioural change.

We have seen that scholars explain the SMB's decision in 1979 to adopt armed jihad as due to is "radicalisation" during the 1970s. In this study, I will show that the SMB did not "radicalise" during the 1970s, and that "radicalisation", therefore, does not explain its adoption of armed jihad. In contrast, I will show that the SMB has remained moderate throughout the 1970s and beyond. This still leaves unasked, and therefore, obviously, unanswered, a key question about the movement: Why has the SMB steadily remained moderate, against all expectation? This is the central question of this thesis. As we will now see, we also cannot find an answer to that question in scholarly work that has attempted to explain moderation in the analogous cases of other movements like the EMB.

1.2 Theories on Islamist Moderation

As mentioned, no scholar to date has attempted to explain the consistent moderation of the SMB. However, scholars have mounted various theories to explain moderation in the case of analogous movements.[103] As I will show in this section, none of these theories can explain the moderation of the SMB. I will

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[103] For a comprehensive overview of relevant research, see Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis." Relevant studies, published after 2011 are: Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone, "Moderation through Exclusion? The Journey of the Tunisian Ennahda from Fundamentalist to Conservative Party," *Democratization* 20, no. 5 (2013); Francesco Cavatorta and Raquel Ojeda Garcia, "Islamism in Mauritania and the Narrative of Political Moderation," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 55, no. 2 (2017); Mohammed Masbah, "Morocco's Salafi Ex-Jihadis: Co-Optation, Engagement, and the Limits of Inclusion," *Middle East Brief*, no. 108 (April 2017).

discuss three such theories of moderation, namely: a) the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, b) state repression and moderation, and c) moderation in exclusion.

The inclusion-moderation hypothesis is based on the idea that Islamists "may become more moderate as a result of their inclusion in pluralist political processes".[104] Schwedler shows that this idea can be traced back to Samuel P. Huntington's notion that "political inclusion provides incentives for groups to negotiate and compromise".[105] Huntington calls this process a "democratic bargain", which allows opposition groups to take advantage of political openings once they have 'modified their demands and moderated their tactics'".[106] In this context, moderation means that groups have abandoned "violence and any commitment to revolution", and that they have come "to accept existing basic social, economic, and political institutions,…and to work through elections and parliamentary procedures in order to achieve power and put through [advance] their policies".[107] Therefore, key to the inclusion-moderation hypothesis is the notion that political actors will become more moderate as participants in pluralist political processes, because in doing so, they will enlarge their constituencies, which in turn will increase their share of the political power.[108]

Three reasons render the inclusion-moderation hypothesis unsuitable to my study, they are: the SMB's exclusion from Syria's institutional politics since 1963, the SMB's participation in Syria's parliamentary democracy from its inception, and the SMB's ongoing commitment to a parliamentary democracy.

The SMB was excluded from Syria's institutional political system, after the Ba`th party's takeover in 1963.[109] However, exclusion was incremental, as opposed to

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[104] Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis," 348.
[105] Ibid., 353.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Huntington in ibid.
[108] "Islamists in Power? Inclusion, Moderation, and the Arab Uprisings," *Middle East Development Journal* 5, no. 01 (2013): 4.
[109] The SMB did not directly participate in Syrian institutional politics after 1963, but did so indirectly by supporting some successful conservative candidates in

immediate. In 1973, a new constitution made the Ba`th party "the leader of the state and society". Only "opposition" parties that recognised the Ba`th party's leadership, were henceforth allowed. Next, came Law no 49 of 1980, which made membership and association with the SMB a capital offence. The violent standoff between the SMB and the Hafez al-Asad government in the late 1970s and early 1980s, ultimately led to the Brotherhood's physical disappearance from Syria. Those SMB members who were not incarcerated, or killed in the violent standoff in Hama, in 1982, had little choice but to leave Syria for a life in exile. After 1963, the SMB was therefore progressively excluded from the Syrian political arena. The inclusion-moderation hypothesis is therefore not applicable to the SMB's moderation, as the Brotherhood was progressively excluded from the Syrian political arena from 1963.

Schwedler further notes in her conceptualisation of Islamist moderation that cross-cultural cooperation creates opportunities for political learning, which can lead to ideological moderation for Islamists and/or Islamist organisations.[110]   In Chapter 4, we will see that the SMB cooperated with the secularist opposition to produce the Damascus Declaration in 2005. However, for the SMB, cooperation with the secularist opposition in 2005 was possible, because of the SMB's moderate policy on governance. The SMB's moderate policy was therefore not the outcome of learning during a period of cross-cultural cooperation, but rather that, which permitted cross-cultural cooperation in 2005.

Second, the SMB participated in "pluralist political processes" from its inception in 1946. The SMB's 1949 electoral platform supported "free elections", and peoples' freedom to choose their representatives.[111] The Muslim Brotherhoods

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the elections for governorates in 1972. See Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 184.
[110] Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis," 362-363.
[111] Pierret, "The Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Flexibility, and Its Limits," 2.

in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen only entered institutional politics in the 1970s,[112] late 1980s, and 1990s,[113] respectively.

Third, the SMB has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to democratic principles, as opposed to the EMB's trajectory of moderation.[114] We have seen that the SMB engaged in democratic practices, from its inception. It even obtained Ministerial positions in 1949 and 1962.[115] Though the Brotherhood's rhetoric has changed to remain relevant, the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy has been a constant in all its political platforms.[116]

In sum, the inclusion-moderation hypothesis is not applicable to my study, primarily because the SMB has been excluded from the Syrian institutional political arena since 1963. We have also seen that it is something other than "cross-ideological cooperation" and "political learning", which explains the Brotherhood's moderation.

The inclusion-moderation hypothesis is also not relevant to the SMB's parliamentary experience before 1963, because the SMB has demonstrated consistent moderation from its inception, as opposed to a trajectory of cumulative moderation.

The second theory that we will consider is state repression and moderation. This theory has it that Islamist moderation does not occur as a consequence of Islamists' participation in democratic processes, but the opposite, namely due to

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[112] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, 43.
[113] Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 50-51 and 60.
[114] Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 3 (2005).
[115] Pierret, "The Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Flexibility, and Its Limits," 2.
[116] For a similar case, but where the authors argue that for some Islamists moderation has always been a key trait if the concept and practice of moderation is historically located, see Cavatorta and Garcia, "Islamism in Mauritania and the Narrative of Political Moderation."

state repression.[117] The groundwork for this theory comes from the inability of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis to explain ongoing Islamist moderation when political openings are closed, and state repression increases. For example, in 1996, under severe state repression, members of the EMB "associated with the reformist trend" in the organisation, split off from the EMB to form the Al-Wasat party.[118] Hamid argues that the case of Al-Wasat "mimics, to a large degree, the process of 'forced moderation'", which the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) experienced in 1997.[119] He posits that the military coup in Turkey against the elected Islamist-led government taught the AKP "the parameters of democracy and the power of the secularist establishment". [120] Hamid therefore contends that it was the AKPs encounter with the military establishment in Turkey, which led to its moderation.[121]

At face value, this theory seems relevant to the SMB, as the Brotherhood has shown itself as moderate in the face of state repression. But the examples of the Egyptian Al-Wasat party and the Turkish AKP occurred after a period of relative political freedom in both countries, which allowed these parties to participate in their respective institutional political arenas, followed by renewed state repression.[122] In Syria, from the time of the Ba`th party take-over, there has not been any significant decrease in state repression, except when Bashar al-Asad came to power in 2000. The Bashar al-Asad government allowed a slight opening of the political space, for a limited period between July 2000 and February 2001, which became known as the Damascus Spring.[123] However, the Damascus Spring ultimately failed to open up the Syrian institutional political arena to the

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[117] Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of Power: Islamists and Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 167.

[118] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, 81.

[119] Hamid, *Temptations of Power: Islamists and Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East*, 44.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid., 61.

[123] See: Alan George, *Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom* (London: Zed Books, 2003), 30 - 63; Volker Perthes, "Syria: Difficult Inheritance," in *Arab Elites: Negotiating the Politics of Change*, ed. Volker Perthes (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 103-106.

opposition, which even during the Damascus Spring remained completely closed to the SMB. Since 1963, the SMB has therefore not experienced any reprieve from state repression, in contrast with Al-Wasat in Egypt and the AKP in Turkey.

The third theory, moderation in exclusion,[124] serves as a counter-argument to the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, and also refutes the state repression and moderation theory, at least for Tunisia's Ennahda party. Cavatorta and Merone argue that in the case of the Tunisian Ennahda party, "repression in reality simply delayed a process of moderation that had already begun within al-Nahda [Ennahda] autonomously from state repression".[125]

Cavatorta and Merone further argue that Ennahda moderated, due to its exclusion from the political system and society, which share an "implicit social consensus".[126] They posit that when Islamists are rejected by large parts of society, state repression does not necessarily lead to radicalisation, but might influence Islamists to reconsider their "ideological tenets and strategies",[127] i.e. moderate their policy and actions. Cavatorta and Merone base their thesis on Ennahda's moderation of its rejectionist policies, of the 1970s, to form a coalition with two centre-left secular parties in 2011.[128]

Even though the SMB and Ennahda share in their respective exclusion from institutional politics, the SMB differs from Ennahda in two respects. First, the SMB did not moderate its policy, but demonstrates a persistent commitment to a moderate policy on governance, as discussed. Second, since 1963, the Syrian state and society have not shared an "implicit social consensus", due to the empowerment of Alawis through a sectarian `*asabiyya* or "tribal solidarity"

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[124] Cavatorta and Merone, "Moderation through Exclusion? The Journey of the Tunisian Ennahda from Fundamentalist to Conservative Party."
[125] Cavatorta and Garcia, "Islamism in Mauritania and the Narrative of Political Moderation," 306.
[126] Cavatorta and Merone, "Moderation through Exclusion? The Journey of the Tunisian Ennahda from Fundamentalist to Conservative Party," 866.
[127] Ibid., 864.
[128] Ibid., 870-871.

process (more later).[129] Exclusion, therefore, plays an important role in my analysis of the SMB's moderation, but does not in itself explain the Brotherhood's moderation.

To conclude, we have seen that in cases that might be similar to that of the SMB, scholars have proposed three main theories to explain moderation: the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, state repression and moderation, and moderation in exclusion. However, for various reasons, none of these theories works to explain the case of the SMB. The most important reason being the SMB's distinct history, which includes its early parliamentary experience, and progressive exclusion from Syria's institutional politics after the Ba`th party's takeover. Further, as we saw in the preceding section, on the SMB in the literature, no scholar has yet explained the ongoing moderation of the SMB over more than seven decades. This means that the reason for the ongoing moderation of the SMB remains an open question. It is the task of this dissertation to propose an answer to this conundrum. Before we do so, however, we need to arrive at a clear understanding of two central concepts at issue --- Islamism and moderation.

1.3   Challenges in the Research Field of "Moderate Islamism"

Scholars who research "moderate Islamism" work with contested concepts, which makes it important to carefully control the use of the same terms in scholarly analysis of those movements. Such scholars also often work with Islamist movements who have little or no opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to democratic principles in practice, that is through the exercise of actual government at the level of the state. This has resulted in a fear that the inclusion of Islamist movements in democratic elections might produce an undemocratic regime, a notion that is often called "the paradox of democracy in

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[129] Ibn Khaldun used the concept "*asabiyya*" or tribal solidarity to explain the rise and fall of dynasties. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah, an Introduction to History* trans. F. Rosenthal (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).

the Middle East".[130] To meet these challenges, in this section, I will first examine three contested concepts, namely "Islamism", "moderate", and "democracy". In addressing the "paradox of democracy in the Middle East", I will show that we need not concern ourselves with an impossible search for moderate Islamists' "true intentions", but that we might look to the political environment, and more specifically, opportunities and constrains, which influence the behaviour of rational political actors, including moderate Islamists.

1.3.1   Defining "Moderate Islamism" and "Democracy"

The literature has bequeathed us various understandings of the key terms "Islamist", "moderate", and "democracy", only some of which are useful. In this section, I will analyse these three terms to arrive at a working definition of the term "moderate Islamists", and present a typology of democracies, with which the SMB's democratic rhetoric can be compared. I will build my analysis in seven steps: First, I will describe the problem, namely the diversity inherent in the term "Islamism". Second, I will consider the early use of "Islamism". Third, I will follow the influence of significant historical events on the conceptualisation of the term "Islamism". Fourth, I will discuss the antithesis of "Islamism", namely "post-Islamism". Fifth, I will consider "moderate" as a qualifier to "Islamism". Sixth, I will produce a working definition of "moderate Islamists". Seventh and finally, I will present a typology of democracies relevant to this study.

1.3.1.1 The Inherent Diversity of "Islamism"

The first problem with "Islamism" is that the term describes "diverse groups and practices", as opposed to "a single category of analysis".[131] This diversity inherent to the term challenges its academic application.[132] The problem is even

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[130] Janine A. Clark, "Islamist Movements and Democratic Politics," in *Beyond the Arab Spring: Authoritarianism & Democratization in the Arab World*, ed. Rex Brynen, et al. (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012), 124.

[131] Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*, 8; See also Salwa Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2006).

[132] See Richard Martin, C. and Abbas Barzegar, *Islamism - Contested Perspectives on Political Islam* (CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

more relevant in the wake of the Arab uprisings,[133] after which a proliferation of Islamist actors took place. For example, in Egypt's 2011/2012 parliamentary elections, different Islamist groups (the EMB and Salafi Hizb al-Nour) competed against each other for seats in the People's Assembly.[134] The post-uprising contentions in Syria and Libya, have further witnessed the formation of diverse armed jihadi groups, i.e. Salafi-jihadis such as Ansar al-Sharia in Libya,[135] and Islamic State in Syria and Libya, and "revisionist" jihadis, such as Ahrar al-Sham in Syria.[136] These groups differ in ideology and practice from each other, and from mainstream or moderate Islamists, such as the SMB, but they are all described as Islamists.

1.3.1.2 The Early Use of the Term "Islamism"

A second dimension of difficulty that we must confront in using the term "Islamism" is its history of diverse meanings. In the mid-eighteenth century the term "Islamism" or rather the French *islamisme* was used as a synonym for the "religion of Mahomet",[137] i.e. Islam. *Islamisme* disappeared from use over time, only to be resurrected in the late 1970s by French scholars to mean: "Islam as a modern ideology and a political program".[138] The term "Islamism" gained currency in France in the mid-eighties, and was later used in the United States as a replacement for "fundamentalism".[139] "Islamism" did not completely escape the negative value judgement that links "Islamic fundamentalism" with violence and

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[133] John Voll et al., "Symposium— Political Islam in the Arab Awakening: Who Are the Major Players?," *Middle East Policy* 19, no. 2 (2012): 13.

[134] Stephane Lacroix, *Sheikhs and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism* (Brookings Doha Center, 2012), 1; Mazen Hassan, "Elections of the People's Assembly, Egypt 2011/12," *Electoral Studies* 32, no. 2 (2013): 373.

[135] See Frederic Wehrey, "The Wrath of Libya's Salafis," *Sada (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace)* (12 September 2012).

[136] Sam Heller, "Ahrar Al-Sham's Revisionist Jihadism," *War on the Rocks* 30 (2015), https://warontherocks.com/2015/09/ahrar-al-shams-revisionist-jihadism/.

[137] Martin Kramer, "Coming to Terms: Fundamentalists or Islamists?," *Middle East Quarterly* (2003): 65.

[138] Ibid., 71.

[139] Ibid., 71-72.

terrorism. [140] Still, it is a better term than "fundamentalism", because "fundamentalism", at best, implies something that is anti-modern, and at worst, in popular literature, associates "fundamentalism" with violence. Today, "Islamism" is the preferred choice for scholars of Islam and Muslim societies,[141] and is also used by Islamists,[142] notwithstanding its inconsistent history and inherent diversity.

1.3.1.3 Historical Events and the Conceptualisation of "Islamism"

Much of the instability that we have seen above in the use of "Islamism", and some of the negative connotations that still attach to the term, is a product of the historical circumstances that influenced its construction. In order to work towards a working definition of "moderate Islamists", we will now consider historic events that shaped scholars' understanding of "Islamism" in the twentieth century. They are: a) the founding of the EMB in 1928; b) the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, c) the Israeli victory in the 1967-War; d) the Iranian revolution in 1979; and e) the destabilisation of three strategic countries, based on the ongoing war in Afghanistan, US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and militarisation of the Syrian uprising in 2011.

Retrospectively, scholars see the EMB, founded in 1928, as the first instance of Islamism in the twentieth century. Islamism, in this context, was characterised by a reformist trend linked to the major Muslim reformers of the nineteenth century, i.e. Jamal al-din al-Afghani, Rashid Rida, and Muhammad 'Abdu.[143] These reformers advocated Islam as the solution to Western expansionism, which can be attained when believers return to the Islam of the first three generations of

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[140] Line Khatib, *Islamic Revivalism in Syria: The Rise and Fall of Ba`Thist Secularism* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 6; Euben and Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden*, 4-5.

[141] *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden*, 4; Bassam Tibi, *Islamism and Islam* (Yale University Press, 2012), 106.

[142] See Rached Ghannouchi, "From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 5 (2016).

[143] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 321.

Muslims or *salaf al-salih*. [144] The EMB further understood Islam as a comprehensive system of values that represents religion and state/politics, or *din wa-dawla,* to which sharia is central.[145] The Islamism of the early EMB was therefore characterised by a professed return to the scriptural foundations as practiced by the early generations of Muslims, the unity of religion and state, and the expressed intention to implement sharia.

The next historic event is the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, which brought an emphasis on an Islamic state to our understanding of Islamism. The prolific Islamist writer Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (1903 – 1979) made his contribution to Islamism by emphasising the agency of the state. Mawdudi initially held that a "holy community" would lead to an Islamic state,[146] but the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, and Mawdudi's subsequent involvement in Pakistan's politics, witnessed a change in his thinking.[147] No longer was Mawdudi's focus on saving Islam in India, but to have an Islamic state in Pakistan.[148] The EMB ideologue Sayyid Qutb (1906 – 1966) popularised and elaborated upon Mawdudi's work, specifically his concept "pagan ignorance" or *jahiliyya*,[149] as the antithesis to an Islamic state.

Then came the Israeli victory in the Six-day War of 1967, which created an opportunity for Islamism to replace "pan-Arabism" as a unifying force in the Arab world. The establishment of Israel in 1948 was an affront to Muslims in the MENA region. This placed the struggle with Israel central to pan-Arabism, as an

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[144] Erwin I. J. Rosenthal and E. J. J. Rosenthal, "Some Reflections on the Separation of Religion and Politics in Modern Islam," *Islamic studies* (1964): 251.

[145] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, 23-24; Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 245.

[146] See Sayyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-I Islami of Pakistan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1994), 28-30; Euben and Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden*, 83.

[147] Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-I Islami of Pakistan*, 7-9.

[148] Ibid., 7.

[149] Euben and Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden*, 84; and see Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Cairo: Kazi Publications, 1964).

ideology to unify and empower the Arab states. The Arab defeat by Israel in 1967 was therefore not only a disaster as measured by the territorial cost to Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, but more than that, it was the defeat of "pan-Arabism".[150] This paved the way for the Islamist slogan: "Islam is the solution" to gain currency, and for Islamists to become the strongest authentic opposition in an autocratic Middle East.[151]

The next turning point for Islamism was the Iranian revolution in 1979. Islamists in Egypt saw the Iranian revolution as "the triumph of Islamic ideology and its establishment in a state structure". [152] However, it was not Khomeini's political system, i.e. the *wilayat al-faqih* (governance of the jurist), which captured Sunni imagination. Rather, it was the establishment of a political entity committed to the implementation of sharia. This ensured that both an Islamic state and sharia became central to Islamists' rhetoric.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Islamism further took on the characteristic of armed jihad or "just war", the legacy of which still troubles moderate Islamists today. The centrality of armed jihad to Islamism in the 1980s is not exclusively due to the Iranian revolution. The ideas of Sayyid Qutb played a role,[153] as mentioned earlier, as did the legacy of "left-wing, Guevarist vanguardism in the 1960s-1970s",[154] and state violence, which for example led to the martyrdom of both

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[150] Fouad Ajami, "The End of Pan-Arabism," *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 357.

[151] Nathan J Brown, Amr Hamzawy, and Marina Ottaway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring Gray Zones," *Carnegie Papers* (2006), http://carnegieendowment.org/2006/03/08/islamist-movements-and-democratic-process-in-arab-world-exploring-gray-zones-pub-18095.

[152] Walid M Abdelnasser, "Islamic Organizations in Egypt and the Iranian Revolution of 1979: The Experience of the First Few Years," *Arab Studies Quarterly* (1997): 26.

[153] Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, 142.

[154] Thomas Pierret, "Salafis at War in Syria: Logics of Fragmentation and Realignment," in *Salafism after the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*, ed. Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2016), 286.

Qutb, and his ideological ally in Syria, Marwan Hadid.[155] These and other examples of state violence by autocratic regimes have not stopped the same regimes from accusing Islamists of "harbouring violent and revolutionary tendencies".[156] They do so to discredit Islamists, and stoke fear amongst other sectors of society, often successfully, as evident in minorities' support for the Bashar al-Asad government in the wake of the Syrian uprising. This tendency to distrust Islamists is also prevalent amongst Western policy makers, some of whom view Islamism broadly as a threat to the West, based on the notion that Islam is incompatible with modernity and democracy.[157]

In recent years, three events ensured the ongoing prominence of armed jihad as an element of Islamism, now mostly called: "radical Islamism". They are: the ongoing war in Afghanistan (which started with the Afghan mujahedin's commitment to armed jihad against the Russian occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 – 1989); the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003; and the militarisation of the 2011 Syrian uprising. These three events fuelled radical Islamism, to which armed jihad is integral.

1.3.1.4 Post-Islamism

It is also relevant for us to consider a kind of antithesis to the term "Islamism" in scholarly analysis, namely, the term "post-Islamism". Post-Islamism is of specific interest to this study, because Bayat claims that the Arab uprisings are "post-Islamist", which by implication includes the Syrian uprising of March 2011. He further contends that "moderate Islamism" does not equal "post-Islamism". Following, I will attempt to clarify these statements.

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[155] Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 104 - 106.
[156] Brown, Hamzawy, and Ottaway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring Gray Zones". 10.
[157] Muqtedar Khan, "Five American Perspectives on Islam: An Analytical Report," (University of Delaware: Center for Global Policy, January 2018), 5-7; Also see Ghassan Salame, "Introduction: Where Are the Democrats?," in *Democracy without Democrats?: The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, ed. Ghassan Salame (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994), 3-9.

The compatibility of Islam and democracy inspired Asaf Bayat's study of "post-Islamism".[158] He says that Islamism refers "to those ideologies and movements that strive to establish some kind of an 'Islamic order' – a religious state, shari`a law, and moral codes in Muslim societies and communities".[159] Key to this definition is Islamists' association with the state, which differentiate Islamists from religious, but apolitical movements, such as the Jama`at at-Tabligh. [160]

By contrast to Islamism so defined, Bayat describes post-Islamism as "a critical discursive departure or pragmatic exit, albeit in diverse degrees, from an Islamist ideological package characterized broadly by monopoly of religious truth, exclusivism, and emphasis on obligation, toward acknowledging ambiguity, multiplicity, inclusion, and flexibility in principles and practice".[161] Key in this instance is a "discursive and/or pragmatic break from an Islamist paradigm".[162] However, this break is not with the Islamic religion to embrace secularism, but "a complex process of breaking from an Islamist ideological package by adhering to a different, more inclusive kind of religious project in which Islam nevertheless continues to remain important both as faith and as a player in the public sphere". [163]

Initially, Bayat based his observations on the Iranian "reform movement" in the later 1990s, but subsequently included as post-Islamist parties: Hizbullah in Lebanon, the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in Morocco, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey.[164] Tunisia's Ennahda party can be added to the aforementioned, as Rached Ghannounchi, ideologue and co-founder of the Ennahda party, announced in 2016: "Ennahda has moved beyond its origins as an Islamist party and has fully embraced a new identity as a party of

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[158] Asef Bayat, "Post-Islamism at Large," in *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, ed. Asef Bayat (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.
[159] Ibid., 4.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid., 25.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid., 25-26.
[164] Ibid., 7 and 10-18.

Muslim democrats".[165] A colleague of Ghannouchi confirms: "Islamism has become irrelevant for us...we are living in a 'post-Islamist' era".[166]

Bayat also frames the Arab uprisings as "new politics...post ideological and, above all, post-Islamist", based on the popular slogan in Tahrir square: "Our revolution is civil, neither violent nor religious".[167]

Al-Anani, similar to Bayat, argues that Islamists partaking in electoral politics in the wake of the Arab uprisings have moved away from a *halal* versus *haram* absolutism in favour of relativism and pragmatism,[168] i.e. closer to Bayat's description of post-Islamism. As an example, Al-Anani offers the change in the Egyptian Salafi discourse, where terms such as democracy, citizenship, and elections, which were previously absent if not anathema to their discourse, became the norm during the 2011-2012 election campaign. Anani understands this development as politics that overshadows religion.[169]

However, the observation that politics dominates religion is not exclusive to post-Islamism. In the beginning of this section, we have seen that key to Islamism is its association with the state, which makes it explicitly political.[170] Concepts such as democracy and regular elections have further been part of the SMB's discourse from its inception. Thus, the "political liberalism of the MB [in Syria] is not the product of a recent ideological shift but, rather, the continuation of a decades-old political discourse."[171] How do we then distinguish between the

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[165] Ghannouchi, "From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy."

[166] Hudson Institute, "The "End of Islamism" and the Future of Tunisia - an Interview with Said Ferjani," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 20 (2016), https://www.hudson.org/research/12349-the-end-of-islamism-and-the-future-of-tunisia.

[167] Asef Bayat, "'Our Revolution Is Civil': An Interview with Asef Bayat on Revolt and Change in the Arab World," *Hedgehog Review* 13, no. 3 (2011): 53.

[168] Khalil Al-Anani, "Islamist Parties Post-Arab Spring," *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 3 (2012): 468.

[169] Ibid.

[170] Also see Euben and Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden*, 4.

[171] Pierret, "Syria's Unusual "Islamic Trend": Political Reformists, the Ulema, and Democracy," 324.

moderate Islamism of the SMB and post-Islamism? We might even ask: Does moderate Islamism equal post-Islamism?

Bayat argues that moderate Islamism does not equal post-Islamism. He posits that reformist Islamist movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jama`at-e Islami in Pakistan, pursue a "gradualist strategy of Islamizing the society, and the state", which will see them participating in elections and following legal procedures, as opposed to resorting to violence.[172] Bayat further argues that "electoral Islamism" might be moderate, but that these Islamists' participation in elections, or their legal status, does not make them post-Islamist.[173] Therefore, what Bayat finds to be absent from the MB and the Jama`at-e Islami is a transition from one "ideological package" to another.

Bayat's claim that moderate Islamism does not equal post-Islamism is true for the SMB, even though Bayat's rejection rests more on the weakness of the term "moderate", than actual differences.[174] But the SMB's enduring commitment to sharia does prove Bayat correct, as will be discussed in more detail later (section 1.3.1.6). Next, we will consider the term "moderate" and its weaknesses.

1.3.1.5 What is "Moderate"?

The term "moderate" is problematic, but I will show that it serves as an important qualifier in this study. On the one hand, it distinguishes the SMB from radical Islamists, such as Islamic State (IS). On the other, it labels the SMB's policy on governance, as elucidated in its four main policy documents.

Though the dichotomy of "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim" inevitably comes to mind when using "moderate Islamists",[175] the purpose here is not to level a value judgement, but to recognise the diversity within Islamism. Thus, we will next

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[172] Bayat, "Post-Islamism at Large," 26.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid., 27.
[175] Mamdani captured the simplicity of the binary in his book: Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: Islam, the USA, and the Global War against Terror* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2005).

discuss "radical" as the antithesis of "moderate" based on two criteria: the use of violence, and an ideological commitment to a parliamentary democracy.

It is common to recognise that discussion of "moderate Islamists" often implies a complementary category of "radical Islamists", although scholars do not agree on the meaning of either term.[176] A general disagreement is whether "moderate" and "radical" should be used to describe objectives, i.e. rejecting or accepting existing institutions and power relations, or tactics, i.e. the methods used to achieve objectives.[177] The latter is more prevalent in scholarship,[178] which means that radicals are generally distinguished by their use of violence in pursuing political change, while moderate Islamists are seen as working "within the existing legal channels", for example, by participating in elections.[179]

As we see, the question of whether or not a group uses violence is key to definitions of moderate versus radical Islamism. In the following study, we will see that there have in fact been some episodes in its history when the SMB has condoned or espoused the use of violent means. Nonetheless, I will argue that the SMB has indeed been moderate in its tactics and policy on governance. I base this claim on what I see as a necessary finer distinction in the relevance of adoption of violent means for our evaluation of the basic character of a group.

It is important to note that there is a significant contextual dimension to violence as a tactic, which depends upon whether or not violence is a mainstream norm in the context in question. Where politics is ordinarily being conducted by other, peaceful or civic means, and a group perpetrates or calls for violence, I would still say, for the purposes of my argument, that it is legitimate to call the group in question radical. A good example of such a group is the Egyptian Islamic Jihad,

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[176] For a discussion of these challenges, see: Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, 5-8; and Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis."
[177] "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis," 350.
[178] Clark, "Islamist Movements and Democratic Politics," 140, fn. 144.
[179] Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis," 350.

which assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981. However, where violence has become the norm, as in the Syrian uprising turned civil war, it would be folly to regard all political actors who condone, espouse or pursue violent means as radical, as this would include the United States, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian government, to name the most obvious parties to the conflict, as well as the SMB.

Thus, in the post-2012 Syrian context, the use of violence in aid of political objectives is not in itself sufficient to categorise a political actor as radical. To distinguish between radical and moderate actors in a conflict situation, such as the 2011 Syrian uprising turned civil war, we have to scrutinise the type of violence, for example, whether the violence is indiscriminate or not, whether it is proportionate or not, or whether it is sectarian or not.

In this study, the term "moderate" is also used to label the SMB's policy on governance, based on its ideological support for a parliamentary democracy. Earlier, we have said that moderate Islamists tend to work "within the existing legal channels",[180] that is participate in electoral politics, when possible. Again, we can distinguish between moderate and radical Islamists, where a moderate Islamist movement "ideologically accepts electoral democracy and political and ideological pluralism", while a radical Islamist movement "ideologically rejects democracy as well as the legitimacy of political and ideological pluralism".[181]

However, the meaning that moderate Islamists attach to a parliamentary democracy does not necessarily include political and ideological pluralism, which is common to a Western-style democracy. Electoral democracy and pluralist politics have become part of moderate Islamist rhetoric since the 1990s,[182] and has been part of the SMB's democratic rhetoric since its inception in 1946. But moderate Islamists use the concept of *shura* or consultation as equivalent to Western parliamentary rule, and therefore, "as the basis of an

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[180] Ibid.

[181] Clark, "Islamist Movements and Democratic Politics," 123.

[182] Brown, Hamzawy, and Ottaway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring Gray Zones". 12-13.

authentic Islamic democracy".[183] Moderate Islamists further present their commitment to political and ideological pluralism in an "Islamic frame of reference" or Islamic *marji`iya*. This use of an "Islamic frame of reference" invites questions as to moderate Islamists' commitment to democratic principles, such as pluralism.[184] For example, in its 1980 platform, the SMB equates *shura* with democracy.[185] At the same time, the Brotherhood suggests in the same document that sharia jurists would abolish anything that contradicts sharia.[186] Though the 1980 platform therefore commits the SMB to pluralist politics, Communist parties are seen as undermining Islam, and would therefore not be allowed.[187] Thus, there seems to be some evidence that shows that moderate Islamists are genuinely committed to democratic principles and structures, but also other evidence that shows there might be limits to their commitment. How do we resolve this apparent contradiction?

Kramer attempts to resolve the apparent contradiction between Islamists' commitment to pluralist parliamentary politics, based on *shura*, and Western parliamentary rule/ liberal democracy, by proposing that Islamists are engaged with a moral, rather than a political discourse.[188] In this context, a *shura* council is a group of elected representatives who rule on right and wrong, based on the common good (*al-maslaha al-`amma*), and not "a political assembly representing conflicting opinion and interest".[189]

Kramer's distinction between a moral and a political discourse is useful to explain the use of *shura* in moderate Islamist rhetoric. However, recognising the

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[183] Gudrun Krämer, "Islamist Notions of Democracy," *Middle East Report* (1993): 7.
[184] Brown, Hamzawy, and Ottaway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring Gray Zones". 13.
[185] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 215-216.
[186] Raymond Hinnebusch, "State and Islamism in Syria," in *Islamic Fundamentalism*, ed. S Sidahmed and A Ehteshami (Pittsburgh: Harper Collins, 1996), 206.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Krämer, "Islamist Notions of Democracy."
[189] Ibid., 7.

variation between *shura* and a liberal democracy, and identifying moderate Islamists' use of an "Islamic frame of reference" do not translate as support for Arab exceptionalism.[190] It has been well established that Arab citizens want their governments to be accountable, and want civil and political rights, similar to those enjoyed by their counterparts in liberal democracies.[191] We will therefore measure moderate Islamists' commitment to democracy against the same principles as any other political actor.

Thus, although ideology provides us with another criterion to distinguish between moderate and radical Islamists, it also alerts us to specific challenges when researching moderate Islamists' policy on governance. The first challenge is moderate Islamists' equation of *shura* with a parliamentary democracy. The second challenge is their use of an "Islamic frame of reference". These two challenges give rise to questioning where moderate Islamists' most basic inclinations might lie. This issue will be addressed in the context of what is often called "the paradox of democracy in the Middle East", in section 1.3.2.

In sum, we have seen that the use of violence is generally taken to distinguish radical from moderate Islamists, but that it is more sensible to apply this criterion only when violence is not mainstream. We have also seen that moderate and radical Islamists can be distinguished based on ideology as the criterion. In this instance, moderate Islamists accept electoral democracy, which they equate with the concept of *shura*, and political and religious pluralism "in an Islamic frame of reference", while radical Islamists unequivocally reject democratic principles.

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[190] Essentialists, such as Samuel Huntington in "The Clash of Civilisations" and Daniel Pipes in "The Long Shadow: Culture and Politics in the Middle East" promote a view that the Islamic world or Muslims in general constitute a unified entity that is prone to violence, and opposed to Western democracy.

[191] Michelle Pace and Francesco Cavatorta, "The Arab Uprisings in Theoretical Perspective – an Introduction," *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (2012): 134.

1.3.1.6 Defining "Moderate Islamists"

Based on our discussion thus far, and borrowing from Krämer, [192] we can define moderate Islamists for the purposes of this study as a discursive community that a) shares an understanding of Islam as a comprehensive system, b) engages in politics as opposed to violence, unless violence has become an unavoidable necessity and thereby, in some sense, a norm for all parties, c) intends to implement sharia, though sharia remains ill defined, and d) is ideologically committed to a parliamentary democracy, which is equated with *shura.*

Given our definition of moderate Islamists, the SMB remains Islamist, due to its commitment towards sharia, as opposed to the Tunisian Ennahda party, which has become only "accountable to the electorate and civil society".[193]

To conclude, in this discussion of key terms we have seen that the diversity inherent to the term "Islamism" makes it difficult to apply the term in an academic context. The term has been linked to the religion of Islam in the mid-eighteen century, and to Islam as an ideology, from the 1970s. The EMB is seen as the first instance of Islamism in the twentieth century, with an emphasis on its reformist nature. We have also seen that certain historical developments influenced the conceptualisation of Islamism to include an Islamic state; the term as a unifying force; and with an emphasis on armed jihad, as central to radical Islamism, and for some policy makers, even to Islamism in general. We have also seen that Bayat rejects the notion that moderate Islamism equal post-Islamism, but we saw that his stance has more to do with the weakness of the term "moderate", than with actual differences. Nonetheless, I showed that I concur with Bayat, based on moderate Islamists' unceasing commitment to sharia. Second to last, we saw that the term "moderate" is an important qualifier in that it describes both the SMB as a moderate Islamist movement, and its policy on

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[192] Gudrun Krämer, "Justice in Modern Islamic Thought," in *Shari'a: Islamic Law in the Contemporary Context*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Frank Griffel (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 21.
[193] Hudson Institute, "The "End of Islamism" and the Future of Tunisia - an Interview with Said Ferjani". 120.

governance. This brought us to a working definition of moderate Islamists, which will be used throughout this study.

1.3.1.7 Defining "Democracy"

If a system or group is "democratic", that implies that it is politically legitimate and internationally acceptable. Thus, it is no surprise that most political actors claim to be democratic. A range of views on the meaning of democracy, and therefore, various definitions of democracy can be found in academic literature.[194] In this section, I will show that procedural definitions of democracy are useful for this study, because they allow a range of democratic systems, which are helpful when dealing with the MENA region. Then, instead of presenting one best definition of democracy, I will discuss Møller and Skaaning's typology of democracies, which offers a hierarchy with which the SMB's democratic rhetoric can be compared.

The absence of democracies in the MENA region makes procedural definitions of democracy useful. In 2017, the advocacy organisation Freedom House posited that based on political rights and civil liberties, the Middle East and North Africa have consistently been two of the worst performing regions globally.[195] Syria was singled out as the world's least free country, in the same report.[196] Studies on democratisation in the MENA region therefore primarily deal with types of authoritarian rule, in which moderate Islamist opposition movements and/or parties are co-opted,[197] partially included and controlled,[198] or persistently

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[194] Jørgen Møller and Svend-Erik Skaaning, "Regime Types and Democratic Sequencing," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 1 (2013): 142.
[195] Arch Puddington and Tyler Roylance, "Freedom in the World 2017," (2017), https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FIW_2017_Report_Final.pdf.
[196] Ibid.
[197] The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan was allowed to form a political party in 1992, which was subsequently co-opted by the Monarchy.
[198] The EMB was allowed to participate in elections from 1984 onwards, but such participation was constantly controlled to ensure that the Brotherhood remained part of the opposition.

repressed.[199] In this context, it is unlikely that countries in the MENA region will evolve directly from authoritarian rule to a mature democracy. Rather, these countries, if they are moving towards a democratic political system, are expected to advance step-by-step. Thus, procedural definitions of democracy as useful to this study, because they accommodate a range of democratic systems, and specify the properties relevant to a democracy.

Procedural definitions of democracy propose that democracy is distinguished three central properties: electoral rights, political/civil liberties, and the rule of law.[200] Regular elections that allow political competition for leadership in which the outcome is uncertain, meaning that the leadership can be changed, distinguish a democracy from an autocracy.[201] For example, regular elections are held in Syria, but no real political competition exists, and Syrian citizens can therefore not unseat President Bashar al-Asad through the ballot box. This means that the Syrian system does not count as democratic, on the terms of this definition.

Two further features of electoral rights in a procedural definition of democracy are that elections are competitive, and that they are free, fair, and inclusive. This means that suffrage is "equal and universal", and no non-elected group has a "veto on significant areas of politics",[202] as does Iran's Guardian Council. Political/civil liberties require the freedom of expression, assembly, and association, while the rule of law means equality before and under the law,[203]

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[199] The Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria's success at the polls ended in a military coup in 1992, while a political opening in Tunisia in 1989 was firmly closed down shortly after by the Ben Ali government.
[200] Jørgen Møller and Svend-Erik Skaaning, *Democracy and Democratization in Comparative Perspective: Conceptions, Conjunctures, Causes and Consequences* (London: Routledge, 2013), 43.
[201] "The Third Wave: Inside the Numbers," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 4 (2013): 98; "Regime Types and Democratic Sequencing," 143.
[202] *Democracy and Democratization in Comparative Perspective: Conceptions, Conjunctures, Causes and Consequences*, 44.
[203] "The Third Wave: Inside the Numbers," 98.

irrespective of differences between citizens, based on political allegiance, socioeconomic status, and ethnic or religious affiliation.[204]

Second, based on eletoral rights, civil/political liberties, and the rule of law, Møller and Skaaning distinguish four types of democracies, namely: minimalist democracy, electoral democracy, polyarchy, and liberal democracy.[205] A minimalist democracy is characterised by only the bare external forms of electoral rights, but this is nonetheless a democracy. In an electoral democracy, elections must in addition be competitive, and free, fair, and inclusive, which delivers a higher level of electoral integrity. These electoral rights plus respect for the freedom of expression, assembly, and association deliver a polyarchy, while a liberal democracy comprise substantial electoral rights, political/civil liberties, and the rule of law.[206] Møller and Skaaning's four types of democracy therefore present us with a hierarchy of decmoracy, based on what they identify as democracy's three central porperties: electoral rights, political/civil liberties, and the rule of law.

The SMB's democratic discourse is central to this study, and will be discussed in detail in the chapters to follow. In this section, we have seen that procedural definitions of democracy offer a range of democratic systems, which are useful to study the democratisation of countries in the MENA region, and therefore also to my study of the SMB's policy on governance. Møller and Skaaning's typology further offers a hierarchy of democracies, against which, where it is relevant, I will compare the SMB's democratic rhetoric.

1.3.2 The Paradox of Democracy

How can researchers determine whether moderate Islamists are really moderate? This question has been asked in many forms, but essentially refers to the fear that moderate Islamists will use free and fair elections to obtain power,

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[204] "Regime Types and Democratic Sequencing," 143.
[205] *Democracy and Democratization in Comparative Perspective: Conceptions, Conjunctures, Causes and Consequences*, 43.
[206] "The Third Wave: Inside the Numbers," 98.

and once in power will destroy the very democracy that empowered them.[207] This is often called "the paradox of democracy in the Middle East".[208]

In fact, the compatibility of Islam and democracy has occupied scholars for a considerable time, and received renewed attention when moderate Islamists won the majority of votes in the first democratic elections in Tunisia and Egypt, respectively.[209] Some scholars and policy makers saw these election victories as a positive step on the road of democratisation in the MENA region, while others viewed the moderate Islamist victories as a step away from democracy. In this section, we will consider the relationship between moderate Islamists and democracy. In doing so, I will show that the suspicion of moderate Islamists stems from a perceived ambiguity in their policy positions on governance. Then, we will see that this difficulty is not to be resolved by an impossible quest to determine the "true intentions" of moderate Islamists, but by critical scrutiny of their relationship to their political environments.

Suspicion of moderate Islamists' commitment to democracy often stems from a perceived ambiguity in their policy positions. Such perceived ambiguity obtains importance when scholars examine moderate Islamist movements and parties' documents, statements, policies, and past behaviour, to determine whether they

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[207] Clark, "Islamist Movements and Democratic Politics," 124.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Adeed I. Dawisha, *The Second Arab Awakening : Revolution, Democracy, and the Islamist Challenge from Tunis to Damascus*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013); Hamid, *Temptations of Power: Islamists and Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East*; Krämer, "Islamist Notions of Democracy."; Tauseef Ahmad PARRAY, "Global Muslim Voices on Islam–Democracy Compatibility and Co-Existence: A Study of the Views of Sadek Sulaiman, Louay Safi, Radwan Masmoudi, and Muqtedar Khan," *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia) Vol* 6, no. 1 (2012); Abdolkarim Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam : Essential Writings of Abdulkarim Soroush*, trans. Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Bassam Tibi, *The Sharia State : Arab Spring and Democratization* (Abingdon, Oxon: New York, 2013); Rex Brynen et al., *Beyond the Arab Spring: Authoritarianism & Democratization in the Arab World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012).

are really moderate.[210] For example, scholars from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace have identified a number of so-called "grey zones" or ambiguous areas in moderate Islamists' policy to do with sharia, violence, political pluralism, individual freedoms, minorities, and women's rights.[211] However, such inquiries are not necessarily without Western bias. For example, in the Carnegie report the authors posit that moderate Islamists' support for Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation makes their position on nonviolence ambiguous.[212] Even though the report states that "most of the region's electorally oriented major Islamist movements have never been involved in violence political activities or have repudiated them if they were", it concludes that the "issue of Israel and Palestine is likely to keep Islamist groups in the grey zone on the issue of violence for the foreseeable future". [213] In our earlier discussion of the term "moderate", we saw that the use of violence as a criterion for radicalism is highly contextualised.   The Carnegie reports' assessment that violence constitutes a "grey zone" in the policy of moderate Islamists, based on their support for Palestinian resistance, demonstrates the potential pitfall of seeking to discover whether moderate Islamists' are really moderate, without considering the political context.

However, we can also find examples of differences between the democratic rhetoric of moderate Islamists and democratic principles as employed in liberal democracies. Earlier, in our discussion of the term "moderate", we saw that when

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[210] Francesco Cavatorta, "Neither Participation nor Revolution: The Strategy of the Moroccan Jamiat Al-Adl Wal-Ihsan," *Mediterranean Politics* 12, no. 3 (2007): 383.

[211] See Brown, Hamzawy, and Ottaway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring Gray Zones"; Amr Hamzawy, Marina Ottaway, and Nathan J. Brown, "What Islamists Need to Be Clear About: The Case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," *Carnegie Policy Outlook* (2007), http://carnegieendowment.org/files/ottaway_brown_hamzawy_islamists_final.pdf; Abdul Monem Abul Futouh, "The Muslim Brotherhood Comments on ''Gray Zones'' Carnegie Paper," *Carnegie Middle East Program* (2006), http://carnegieendowment.org/2006/07/13/muslim-brotherhood-comments-on-gray-zones-carnegie-paper-pub-18525.

[212] Brown, Hamzawy, and Ottaway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring Gray Zones". 11.

[213] Ibid., 10 & 12.

moderate Islamists equate *shura* with democracy, it brings a different meaning to democracy than what is commonly understood in the context of a Western-style democracy. We also saw that moderate Islamists use an "Islamic frame of reference", which can cast doubt on their commitment to ideological and political pluralism. Thus, a difference can be found between moderate Islamists' democratic rhetoric and the way in which democratic principles are understood and implemented in liberal democracies.

Scholars have tried to explain the discrepancy between moderate Islamists' democratic rhetoric and liberal democracy by focusing on Islamists' identity. We have seen that Kramer explains the difference between moderate Islamists' use of *shura* as equal to democracy, on the one hand, and a Western-style democracy, on the other, as due to Islamists' engagement with a moral discourse, as opposed to a political one. The Carnegie scholars, in contrast, ascribe Islamists' ambiguity as due to a dual identity, that is to say, as resulting from the fact that they are at once religious movements and political actors.[214] Tension results in both instances, that is when Islamists, as political actors, are expected to be flexible and pragmatic, while these movements' religious constituencies respond to "dogmatic, absolutist language…that focus on moral issues of good and evil".[215] However, though Islamists' religious identity, or dual identity, explain some of the challenges that Islamist movements face, sceptics of Islamist movements view this as confirmation that these movements are not really democratic.[216] Thus, attempts to explain the difference between moderate Islamist rhetoric and liberal democracy bring us no closer to objectively determine whether Islamists are really moderate.

The next question that logically follows from our unresolved challenge is: Even if the SMB has consistently espoused a rhetoric of commitment to democracy since its inception in 1946, what evidence is there, outside the assertions of the group itself, that that commitment is authentic in its commitment to a moderate policy

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[214] Hamzawy, Ottaway, and Brown, "What Islamists Need to Be Clear About: The Case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood".
[215] Clark, "Islamist Movements and Democratic Politics," 128.
[216] Ibid.

on governance? However, Brumberg and Cavatorta suggest that this is the wrong question to ask, and therefore, that any attempt to determine the "true nature" of moderate Islamists is in principle flawed.

Brumberg posits that the challenge is not to determine if Islamists are "essentially" democratic rather than autocratic, or liberal rather than illiberal, but rather whether an Islamist movement functions in a hegemonic or a competitive political arena.[217] For example, in Syria, we are dealing with a hegemonic political arena, devoid of any authentic opposition. Hafez al-Asad created a National Progressive Front (NPF) in 1972, which accommodated political parties other than the Ba`th party. However, the NPF did not introduce political pluralism, but served to confirm the Ba`th party's dominance.[218] Similarly, political reforms under Bashar al-Asad served to strengthen the government's control of the political arena.[219] Based on Brumberg's argument, the SMB will not have any possibility of participating in the Syrian hegemonic political arena. This means that policy makers should rather than encourage moderate Islamists to clarify the finer details of their ideological commitment to democracy, encourage autocratic governments such as the Bashar al-Asad government to open up the political system.

Cavatorta elaborates on Brumberg's argument by explaining why we should focus on the political environment. He posits that it is impossible to accurately pin down a democratic or authoritarian "*ethos*", because political movements are limited by "institutional constraints such as electoral and constitutional rules, the presence of other political parties or the decisions of the courts".[220] Thus, the political environment matters, as it influences the "choices that Islamist

[217] Daniel Brumberg, "Islamists and the Politics of Consensus," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 3 (2002): 112.
[218] Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (University of California Press, 1990), 176.
[219] See Ellen Lust-Okar, "Reform in Syria: Steering between the Chinese Model and Regime Change," *Carnegie Papers: Midddle East Series* 69 (July 2006), http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CEIP_CP_69_final1.pdf.
[220] Cavatorta, "Neither Participation nor Revolution: The Strategy of the Moroccan Jamiat Al-Adl Wal-Ihsan," 382.

movements make and the strategies they adopt".[221] Cavatorta therefore argues that it is preferable to analyse Islamist behaviour in a framework of rational behaviour, based on cost and benefit analysis, and not on the limited basis of ideology alone.[222] This approach does not underestimate the importance of religion in an Islamist agenda, but rather suggests that analysis through a singular religious or ideological lens will disregard the political environment, which is as relevant to Islamists' behaviour as to the actions of non-religious political actors.[223] Thus, by focusing on the political environment with its tangible benefits and constrains, researchers ultimately have a better chance of estimating whether the empowerment of moderate Islamists' will enhance democratisation, as opposed to perusing their democratic rhetoric to determine where moderate Islamists' most basic inclinations lie.

In sum, in discussing the paradox of democracy in the Middle East, we have seen that some scholars and policy makers in the West view certain policy positions of moderate Islamists' as ambiguous. We have also seen that there are certain differences between the democratic rhetoric of moderate Islamists and a liberal democracy. Sceptics take such ambiguity, whether objectively determined or not, as further proof of these movements' undemocratic intentions. However, I have showed that rather than only focusing on moderate Islamist movements' policies and statements to determine whether they will contribute positively to democratisation in the MENA region, one should instead consider their relationships to their political environments. Thus, we have seen that it is not necessary, and even irrelevant, to attempt to determine the true intentions of Islamists, and that it is more productive, rather, to view Islamists as rational political actors, and on that basis, to ask what costs and benefits they face, and what contexts they operate in. In this context, we should consider that the political environment influence behaviour, as opposed to moderate Islamists' so-called true intentions.

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[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid.; Clark, "Islamist Movements and Democratic Politics," 124-125.
[223] Cavatorta, "Neither Participation nor Revolution: The Strategy of the Moroccan Jamiat Al-Adl Wal-Ihsan," 383.

1.4   Chapter Outline

This study consists of six chapters: this introduction (Chapter One); Chapter Two that explains the methodology; Chapters Three, Four, and Five, which form the body of the dissertation; a conclusion (Chapter Six).

In **Chapter Two**, I will explain my methodology, grounded in qualitative data analysis. My research rests on textual sources, supplemented by data generated through personal interviews. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how I coded the data, and its subsequent analysis. Thus, I will show how I obtained the information and gained the insights that I will put to use in my pursuit to explain the SMB's moderate policy on governance.

In **Chapter Three**, I will show that the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy in 1980 was driven by the Brotherhood's ambition to mobilise the broadest segment of the Syrian opposition against the Hafez al-Asad government. We will also see that this diverse target audience explains the apparent paradox between the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy and its call for an Islamic revolution. The policy document relevant to this chapter is the Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria (1980).

Chapter Four will argue that the SMB's exclusion from Syria after 1982 drove the Brotherhood's moderation. I will show that at least for the SMB, exclusion does not lead to radicalisation, nor is its moderation subject to inclusion, as the inclusion-moderation hypothesis would have us believe. The policy documents relevant to this chapter are the Draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity (2001), and the SMB's Political Project for the Future Syria (2004). They were directed at the Bashar al-Asad government, and the secularist opposition, respectively.

Chapter Five will show that the SMB acted upon the 2011 Syrian uprising as an opportunity to return to the Syrian political arena. We will see that the internationalisation of the conflict coincided with yet another change in the

SMB's primary target audience, namely from the secularist opposition to its sponsors. The policy document relevant to this chapter is the Pledge and Charter (2012).

Chapter Six is the conclusion, and will therefore provide a summary of the argument. I will also show how my work might contribute to scholarship on moderate Islamism, and to scholarship on the SMB. Finally, I will identify areas for further research that developed from the thesis.

1.5   Contributions of this Thesis

It is worth briefly considering what the contributions of this thesis might be, though I will discuss this in more detail in the conclusion.

The distinct history of the SMB allows this study to make a contribution to existing research on "moderate Islamists". First, the SMB's early parliamentary experience contrasts with the much later political inclusion of the Muslim Brotherhoods in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen.[224] Second, the SMB's political exclusion after the Ba`th takeover in 1963, excludes the SMB from the popular notion that moderation might result from the inclusion of Islamists in pluralist political processes.[225] Third, few of the studies on Islamist moderation look at organisations that might actually have used violence to bring about political change.[226] The SMB, however, pursued political change in Syria through an Islamic revolution in 1979-1982, and announced its support for armed jihad in 2012, notwithstanding a consistent commitment to parliamentary politics. While the SMB's early parliamentary experience and subsequent adoption of violence therefore set the Brotherhood apart in the MENA region, its political exclusion

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[224] See Janine A. Clark, "The Conditions of Islamist Moderation: Unpacking Cross-Ideological Cooperation in Jordan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 4 (2006); Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*; Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*; Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (2004).
[225] See Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis," 348.
[226] Ibid., 366.

after 1963 disqualifies the SMB from the most popular theory on Islamist moderation, namely the inclusion-moderation hypothesis.

This study further differs from existing scholarship on the moderation of Islamists, based on its approach to moderation. In contrast to most studies that deal with a trajectory of increased moderation, I will focus on the SMB's ongoing commitment to democratic principles. This commitment remained unaffected during the Islamic insurgency (1979-1982), and again in the wake of the Syrian uprising in 2011.

Finally, this study proposes that the SMB's persistent moderation can be explained by identifying the Brotherhood's primary target audience. This idea has not been tested previously, and this thesis therefore contributes to the existing scholarship on Islamist moderation.

Chapter 2 Methods of Data Gathering and Analysis

In this chapter, I will outline my methodology, which is rooted in qualitative data analysis. In doing so, I will a) restate the question that inspired my subject of study, b) briefly describe my textual sources, c) give an overview of the interview process, and d) demonstrate my use of thematic analysis.

2.1   Research Topic: The SMB's Policy on Governance

My interview questions, and subsequent thematic analysis, were informed by my central research question about the SMB's policy on governance. To reiterate, as we saw in the first chapter, the SMB has been committed to democratic principles since the Brotherhood's inception in 1946. This commitment was also evident in 2012, even after the Syrian uprising has taken on a violent character. Thus, the SMB has maintained a persistent commitment to democratic principles.

2.2   Textual Sources

Four main policy documents by the SMB are central to my research, because they tell the story of the movement's persistent commitment to democratic principles. Those documents are: The Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria (1980) (*bayan al-thawrat al-Islamiyya fi Suriyya wa-minhajuha*);[227] the draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity (2001) (*al-mashru` mithaq sharaf watani lil-`amal al-siyasi*);[228] the Political Project for Future Syria (2004) (*al-mashru` al-siyasi l-Suriyat al-mustaqbal*);[229] and the Communiqué of the Pledge and Charter (2012) (*bayan al-`ahd wal-mithaq*).[230] I accessed all four documents in English. As background to the analysis to come, I will briefly characterise each document in turn.

[227] An English translation of the Manifesto is available in Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 201-267.
[228] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity: Interim Papers Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Released in London, 3 May 2001."
[229] A copy of *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, was handed to me during my fieldwork in 2015. The full document is available at www.ikhwansyria.com under the Political Project (*al-mashrū` al-siyāsī*).
[230] Translation available at: "Syrian Muslim Brotherhood: Pledge and Charter on Syria".

The Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria (hereafter: Statement and Program) was the SMB's first detailed political program. It was written in the context of the 1979 Islamic insurgency, and served as a template for the Charter of the Islamic Front, the political partnership that the SMB established in October 1980.[231] Three prominent members of the SMB signed the Statement and Program on 9 November 1980, namely ideologue Sa`id Hawwa, future head `Ali al-Bayanouni, and Adnan Sa`d al-Din, who headed the SMB from 1975 – 1980.[232] An English translation of the document was published with the Arabic original, of which an edited copy is available in Abdallah's book.[233]

The second document, the 2001 Draft Charter of National Honour (hereafter: Draft Charter) is a political framework, rather than a political platform. However, it is relevant to my research, because the SMB produced the Draft Charter in reaction to the Damascus Spring (more later). In other words, the Draft Charter was the SMB's response to the political opportunity, which the leadership succession in Syria, in 2000, created. The Draft Charter is available in English.

The third document is the 127-pages Political Project for Future Syria (hereafter: Political Project), published in 2004. The SMB has published a summary of the 2004 Political Project, in English. One of the interviewees presented me with a copy of the Summary in January 2015. As the 2004 document has been analysed in detail in secondary sources,[234] I did not invest in the translation thereof, but primarily relied on the SMB's summary. The Carnegie Middle East Centre has also published a summary in English, which I used in addition to the SMB's summary. I only used the original Arabic document, available on the SMB's official website, for clarification purposes.

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[231] The Islamic Front's Charter was published on 17 January 1981.
[232] Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 131.
[233] Ibid., 201-267.
[234] Pierret, "The Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Flexibility, and Its Limits."; "Syria's Unusual "Islamic Trend": Political Reformists, the Ulema, and Democracy."

The fourth policy document is the Pledge and Charter. This document was published in March 2012, one year after the start of the Syrian uprising. The two-page document is widely available in English, including on the Carnegie Middle East Centre's website.

I augmented these four textual sources, which I accessed in English, with SMB press statements in Arabic, and electronic media interviews with members of the SMB executive, also in Arabic. I also used two books (in Arabic) by the SMB's founder and first head, Mustafa al-Siba`i. They are: *al-din wa al-dawla fi al-Islam* (Religion and State in Islam), 1953, and *al-ahzab al-siyasiyah fi Suriya* (Political Parties in Syria), 1954.

In sum, my textual sources consisted of four policy documents, which I accessed in English. These sources were supplemented with print and electronic media sources in Arabic, as well as two books written by Mustafa al-Siba`i.

2.3   Interview Process

I conducted personal interviews to supplement my textual sources. In this section, I will review the interview process, my interview sample, and challenges to the interview process.

I conducted two rounds of interviews, and in total interviewed seven members of the SMB, only one of whom at the time was not a member of the executive council.[235] In the first round, in January 2015, I conducted two interviews in London, and three in Istanbul.[236] All the interviews were one-on-one, except one interview in Istanbul in which I interviewed two interviewees concurrently.

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[235] Elections for the SMB executive occur every four years when local committees elect the *shura* council, which in turn elects the leader, who then nominates the executive council, to be approved by the *shura* council.

[236] I was not able to conduct any interviews in Syria, as membership of the SMB has been a capital offence since 1980. However, I lived and worked as a diplomat in Syria from March 2009 to August 2012, which afforded me an opportunity to acquaint myself with the Syrian political environment.

In June 2015, I conducted two additional interviews in London, one of which was with an interviewee from the January 2015 round of interviews. In this second round of interviews, I pursued a slightly different line of questioning. Though I did not plan my interviews to follow a "sequential approach",[237] the study benefitted from this opportunity, i.e. to conduct two additional interviews in London, in June 2015. In utilising the opportunity, I shifted my focus to pursue information that the January 2015 data lacked. (Please see Appendix A and Appendix B for copies of my two interview guides.)

A gatekeeper facilitated my access to the SMB leadership. I initially approached the gatekeeper through a letter of introduction, authored by my supervisor. After the gatekeeper acknowledged receipt of the letter, I established direct contact with him through an exchange of emails, followed by a Skype meeting. The gatekeeper was easily accessible, and of great value to my project. Though I did not have much influence over the number of interviews, nor the selection of the interviewees, the gatekeeper did not fail me. He facilitated the personal interviews in both London and Istanbul, and also granted me an interview.

My interviews were semi-structured,[238] i.e. they were based on specific topics, which I identified from my textual sources and the secondary literature. I therefore used interview guides, but also allowed the discussion to flow when relevant. The duration of the interviews was between an hour and two hours. Three interviews were conducted at the interviewees' homes, two at restaurants, and two were conducted in offices.

I recorded all the interviews, but had a technical glitch during the first. I also made some notes during, and after the interviews. Upon my return home, I transcribed the five interviews from round one, and coded them. The final two interviews were subsequently transcribed and coded. In transcribing the

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[237] Juliet M. Corbin and Anselm L. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publications, Inc., 2008), 57.
[238] Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 4 ed. (California: SAGE Publications, 2015), 39.

interviews I remained true to the words of the interviewees and the two interpreters, as much as possible. Transcripts were only edited when the meaning was obscured, due to English not being the interviewees' mother tongue. In remaining true to the recordings, the two interpreters' words were captured in the third person. For example, when one of the interpreters said: "He insists, the MB is the only one capable of leading the people in Syria to a civil, democratic country", I transcribed it as: "He insists", and did not change it to "I insist".

My interview sample does not include any women or youth, which reflects both the gender and generational imbalance in the SMB's leadership.[239] In recent years, the SMB has made an attempt to adjust the generational imbalance,[240] but my experience was that the older generation still controls the executive. My interviewees were all male, from an older generation, and included the current head or controller (*al-muraqib al-`amm*) as well as two former heads. They were also all current members of the SMB's executive, except one.

To comply with ethical guidelines and protect the identities of my interviewees, I will identify them by numbers, namely as participant 1, participant 2, participant 3, etc. In addition, I will specify whether the interview took place in January or June 2015.

In the interview process, I faced two challenges, namely the Arabic language, and the political-security context. Five of the seven interviewees preferred to use Arabic, which meant that I had to make use of an interpreter, as my Arabic proficiency does not allow me to conduct interviews in Arabic. I made use of two different interpreters, one in London, and one in Istanbul. I met my London-based interpreter through one of the interviewees, while the interpreter in Istanbul was an employee of the gatekeeper. Both these interpreters were very able, but I am mindful that some nuance of the interviews may have been lost in

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[239] In future, I would endeavor to include youth and women in my interview sample.
[240] See Raphaël Lefèvre, "Islamism within a Civil War: The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's Struggle for Survival," (Working Paper, Brookings, 2015), 4-7.

the process of translation. I dealt with this possibility by taking notes during the interviews, which I consulted when I transcribed them.

Syria's political-security context in 2015 also impacted on the project. Though I conducted my interviews some distance from Syria, I accept that the high political stakes in the Syrian conflict might have influenced the interviewees' ability to be candid. Secondly, as a banned organisation in Syria, the SMB has to practice a measure of caution in its public engagements. Given the special circumstances, I followed the gatekeeper's cues on whom to interview, rather than present him with a list of my own.

In sum, I conducted personal interviews with seven members of the SMB, inclusive of one current and two former heads. My interview sample reflects the gender and generational imbalance in the leadership. I further highlighted the Arabic language and the political-security context as two challenges, which influenced the interview process.

2.4   Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis enables the researcher to examine and interpret the data, gain insight, and thereby construct knowledge.[241] In this section, I will proceed in two main steps. First, I will demonstrate how I coded and managed the data, and second, how I analysed it.

2.4.1   Coding and Managing the Data

I will now demonstrate how I managed the data. First, I coded the data into concepts or nodes. Then, I managed the coded data by grouping and regrouping the data into themes, primary-themes, sub-themes, and categories.

Initially, I coded and analysed the data from the first five interviews, but later added data from the two additional interviews, i.e. conducted in June 2015. I

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[241] See Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 4-5.

therefore used the same thematic method of analysis for all the raw data, as follows:

With the assistance of NVivo – a qualitative research software package – I coded the interviews into concepts or nodes, which are words or ideas relevant to my research topic. To code is to give interpreted meaning to the data, and it also allows the researcher to group data together that share "a common meaning or characteristic". [242] For example, I used the node "international community" to capture the ideas expressed in the following texts:

> "Also the international community's reaction to the events of 1979 to 1980 had an effect. There were many massacres, many in prison, but the international community was silent."
>
> "If the Western authorities had a good understanding of reality they would have supported the [S]MB who represents moderate Islam, but unfortunately they did not have a good knowledge about the structure of Syria and therefore tried to weaken the [S]MB."
>
> "He added, the international community is not really serious in finishing this conflict. There was a meeting of the UNSC, Russia used its veto to stop the intervention. So the Qatari Foreign Minister said [that] usually, the international community never listens to the UNSC, when they went to the war in Iraq, they just went."
>
> "We do not think the Western governments, including France, the United Kingdom and the United States, we do not think they want or would allow the Syrian revolution to overcome Bashar's militia."
>
> "We feel in general the movement has been under heavy pressure from the West and from the region."

I started off with 34 nodes, such as "Friends of Syria (group)", "international community", "democratic discourse", "political system", etc. A full list these nodes are shown in Table 1.

Once I have coded the data, I compared and grouped the coded data according to eight themes (Table 2). They are: "allies", "biographic information", "conflict",

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[242] Ibid., 220.

"cooperation with others", "external actors", "governance", "Islam", and "organisational structure".

Next, I merged some themes, and discarded others, to regroup the data under five primary themes, namely: "political system", "Syrian uprising", "cooperate with others", "allies", and "organisational structure". Nine sub-themes were generated to bring detail into my analysis. (Table 3 shows the five primary themes and nine sub-themes.) I then grouped the primary themes and sub-themes into four categories, to address: a) the SMB's policy on governance (Governance); b) the SMB's political strategy (Political Strategy); c) the influence of the Syrian uprising on the SMB's policy and actions (Conflict); and d) the SMB's organisational capacity (Capacity). Figure 2 offers a visual presentation of these four categories.

In reducing the initial eight themes to five, I considered the hierarchy of the nodes, based on the number of references in the data that correspond with a particular node, as shown in figure 1. For example, the nodes "democratic discourse" and "political system" have the highest number of references, while "sharia" and "caliphate" received only five and three coding references, respectively. However, the hierarchy of nodes did not play a decisive role in my regrouping of the nodes and themes, as I retained "sharia" as a sub-theme, due to the importance of this concept for my research topic (more later), while "caliphate" (political system in Muslim polity) was discarded.

In sum, first I coded the data, after which I identified various levels of themes, to eventually group the coded data in four categories. They are: "Governance", "Political Strategy"; "Conflict"; "Capacity".

Table 1: The SMB's policy on Governance – Nodes

NODES
Allies
Friends of Syria (group)
International Community
Biographic Information
SMB Membership
Conflict
Ba`th Party Rule
Fatah Army
ISIS
Nusra Front
Political Reform
Sectarian Identification
Cooperation with Others
Secular Opposition
Syrian National Coalition
External Actors
France
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Turkey
United Kingdom
United States
Democratic Discourse
Islamic State (governance)
Caliphate
Political System
Sharia
Islam
Organisational Structure
Establishment of SMB
Exile
MB Constituency
Relationship with International MB
Organisational Split

Table 2: The SMB's policy on Governance – Initial Eight Themes and Nodes

Themes	Nodes
Allies	Friends of Syria (group)
	International Community
Biographic Information	SMB Membership
Conflict	Ba`th Party Rule
	Fatah Army
	ISIS
	Nusra Front
	Political Reform
	Sectarian Identification
Cooperation with Others	Secular Opposition
	Syrian National Coalition
External Actors	France
	Qatar
	Saudi Arabia
	Turkey
	United Kingdom
	United States
Governance	Democratic Discourse
	Islamic State (IS)
	Caliphate
	Political System
	Sharia
Islam	
Organisational Structure	Establishment of SMB
	Exile
	MB Constituency
	Relationship with International MB
	Organisational Split
	Establishment of SMB

Table 3: The SMB's policy on Governance – Five Primary Themes and Sub-Themes

Primary Themes	Sub-Themes
Political System	Democratic Discourse
	Sharia
	Mission Statement
Syrian Uprising	Islamic State (previously ISIS)
Cooperate with Others	
Allies	
Organisational Structure	Establishment of SMB
	Exile
	SMB Constituency
	Relationship with EMB
	Organisational Split
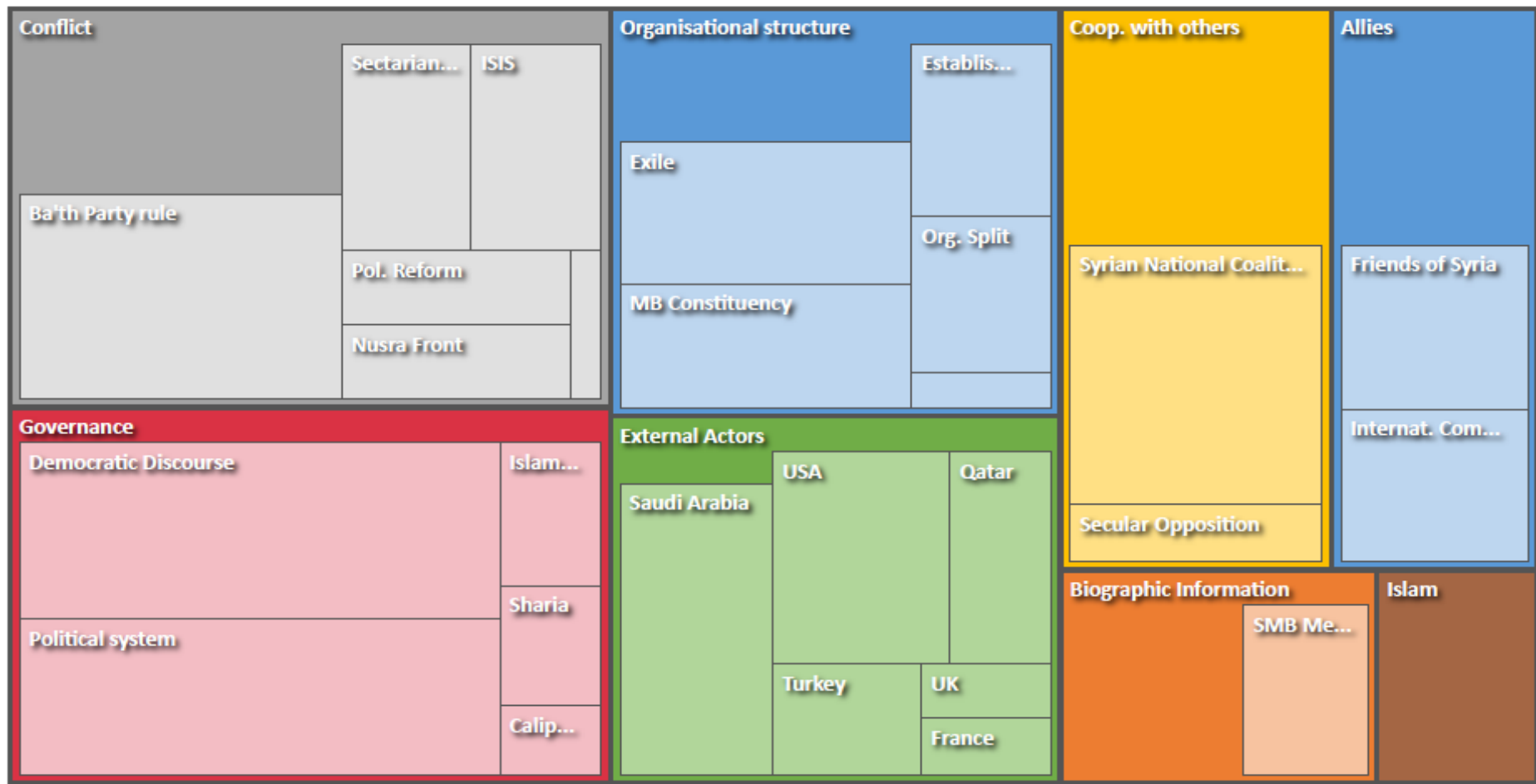
Figure 1: NVivo Screenshot of Initial Eight Themes and Nodes Compared by Number of Coding References
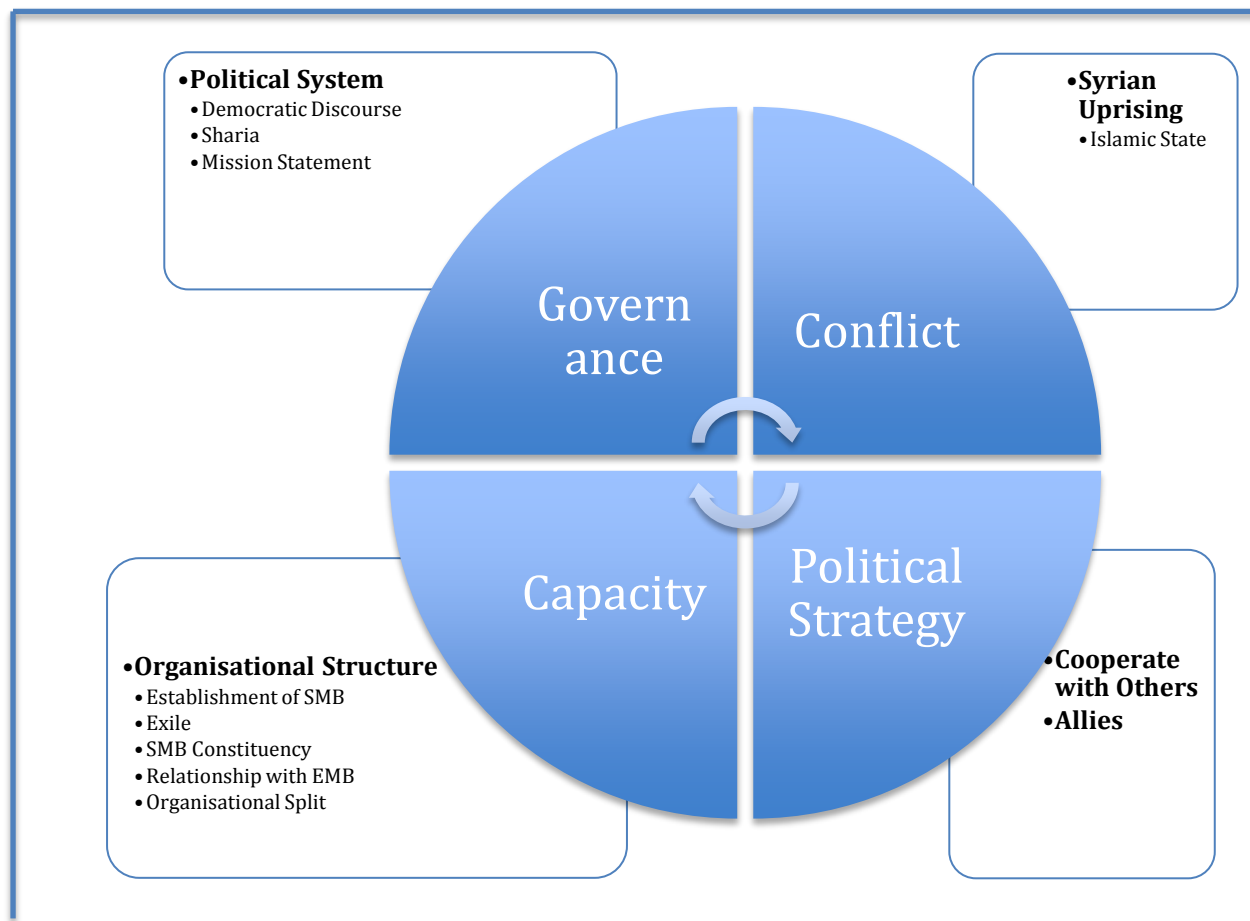
Figure 2: The SMB's policy on Governance – Four Categories

2.4.2   Analysing the Data

In the previous section, I grouped the data in four categories, namely: "Governance", "Conflict", "Political Strategy", and "Capacity". In this section, I will analyse the primary themes and sub-themes in these four categories.

Next, I will explain by turns the meanings of the respective primary themes, or sub-themes, after which, I will offer my best quotes in support of the said primary theme or sub-theme. I will not necessarily use these quotes in full later, but kept them mostly intact for the purposes of this section.

2.4.2.1 Primary Theme: Political System

The primary theme "political system" groups my interviewees' comments on what they regard as good or ideal governance. It is no surprise that this proved to be a strong theme in my analysis, as I focused on the SMB's policy and practice on governance in my interview questions. In this section, I will also analyse three sub-themes: "Democratic discourse", "sharia", and "mission statement".

What follows is my interpretation of the interviewees' comments and opinions, which were coded under the primary theme "political system":

- The Muslim community's understanding of Islamic principles must continually be renewed to be relevant in the modern world;
- The interpretations of the Qur'an by previous generations of Muslim scholars are relevant to another time and place, and can therefore be questioned (i.e. *taqlid*, or a rejection of the strict adherence to the schools of law);
- The Qur'an and Sunna provide guidelines, such as equality and freedom, but have no literal application to the modern world;
- The SMB draws on the early era of Islam to explain the concept of *bay'a* (an oath of allegiance), or the relationship between the people and their political representative(s);
- The SMB pays special attention to the early Islamic period, as shown in the previous bullet point, but does not consider the caliphate or *khilafa* as a compulsory political system;
- Legitimacy lies in the benefit that legislation has for society (the principle of *maslaha,* or the common good, is relevant here);
- Decision-making power lies in two structures, the one will be based on consensus or *shura,* and the other is a legal body;
- The 2004 *Political Project* represents a major revision in the SMB's thinking (it was under discussion for four to five years);

- The SMB supports a parliamentary system, but differs from secular parties due to its "Islamic reference";
- There is no difference between the SMB's "modern state", and its "Islamic state";
- The 2012 Pledge and Charter was produced to address Western suspicion of the SMB's political agenda; and
- Different language is used depending on the SMB's target audience.

Relevant quotes in support of the above ideas are:

"These terms [such as *khilafa*] are abused by extreme Salafis – nothing in Islam obliges a burka or a beard. These issues in the Qur'an give a general guidance, other issues change with time and place."

"We need the renewal of the understanding of Islamic principles to fit society. So Islamic society improves as political and cultural society improves. We don't want to go backwards, we want to bring Islam into a modern world."

"The Qur'an is valid. The interpretation of the Qur'an is relevant to the interpreter. Everything should therefore be seen in context, [the] time plays a role."

[Researcher: What would make the SMB's rule Islamic?] "Islam did not come with detailed rules for modern lifestyle, only with general rules, such as equality and freedom. It insists that satisfaction is the principle of any contract. [To have an] Islamic state insists that government is [based on] *shura*, based on agreement. How to reach these principles is for the people to understand."

"If it [legislation] benefits society then it is legitimate. A month ago I published an article that says the Qur'an is our constitution. This does not mean that we do not want a civil constitution. However, the Qur'an is the source for a civil constitution."

"There will be two levels of decision making, the one is *shura* [consultation] where issues will be debated, the other is a legal body. This [legal] body will not be comprised of only ulama, or scholars as such, both ulama and scholars are part of society, but they will be voted in like everybody else - their participation is not automatic."

"He [interviewee] insists, the MB is the only one capable of leading the people in Syria to a civil, democratic country."

"There was a revision [of policy], you know, the MB in Syria did a revision which lasted 4 to 5 years of writing a document about the new project, Political Project for Syria."

"And we feel that the new modern state in essence….well it is compatible with Islamic principles."

"If we actually look at the very early era of Islam, immediately after the Prophet (PBUH) died…you can see some hints, some basic principles which are honestly compatible with a modern state. I'll give you an example. Abu Bakr said: I am now your *khalifa*, but I'm not the best of you. So, it's a contract between me and you. If you think I'm right support me, if you think I am not right – you do not have to support me. The concept of contract between the government and the people who are governed, this was a very, very early mention that the rule of Islam, is not a dictatorship, it is not a tyranny. This is why, when we talk about a modern state, we think it is compatible with our principles."

"You know in the Qur'an – the Qur'an did not mention any particular form [of political system], the Qur'an only mentions principles. As far as you apply those principles in governance, well it is an Islamic state, it is Islamic governance. It does not have to be a *khilafa* (caliphate), it does not have to be a kingdom, it [the state] can have a president in a Republic and still be an Islamic state. So people now in Daesh [Islamic State] and the rest [of the radical Islamists], they wanted *khalifa* [a caliph], to restore *khalifa* [a caliph], even the MB in its early days in Egypt wanted to restore *khalifa* [a caliph]. Okay, *khilafa* [caliphate] is a historical form, but in essence it is not the only form in Islam. This is a historical form, which can be replaced by any other form, provided the principles are there. The principle of justice [Researcher: and morality?]….and morality yes."

"You know, [what we understand from] democracy, we resort to the ballet box, but we still have a reference, an Islamic reference. Our basic principles are Islamic. So, suppose if an issue come *sic* in a parliament, imagining Syria will have a parliament in future, if it ever happens, *inshallah* it will happen. If an issue is brought to the ballot box, we will vote for what we think [is] right Islamically. People would say, what about it if that issue is voted for [and it is] against your principles. Would you accept that? The answer is yes we do accept it, because we believe in democracy. But we will never meet that in any violence. We accept a democratic rule of people. And [when] we think we did not bring our message properly to our people [for them] to vote for our principles, so our role would [then] be to talk to people to try to convince them with *sic* our principles. So that in the next ballot we can have better results."

"[Researcher asked about the 2012 Pledge and Charter] Yes, I think that document was made to talk to our people and to talk to the West also. To talk to the West, not only to our people…..by the way, that document has not been published properly. It did not reach everybody. The old

impressions were still there. So we made that document to make an emphasis on two points, number 1, that we believe in moderation and a civic state, and number 2, to the West, we [were saying that we] really believe those principles, call them secular, call them human, humanitarian, equal, whatever, I think that document made *sic* a good reception – it was received – you know – nicely."

"There was a conference: Syria – the Day After. About 52 Syrians, me too, participated. The Pledge and Charter was triggered by one of these workshops in Europe. They wanted my answer more formally. This document [Pledge and Charter] was subsequently approved by the [SMB's] General Assembly."

"We started in 1997 and it [Political Project] was published in 2004. Serious debate occurred on this work – it was not just agreed upon."

"You have to differentiate – when the MB publish a document, they are publishing this document either to MB members or if it is for all Syrians, they would use different language."

"Two points: MB, our priority is democracy, we will accept whatever people vote for – even if we don't like it. If the Syrian people voted for liberals, socialists, we have to accept it – this is the national opinion. But when we say Islamic state, it has never been but a civil state. So whether you call for Islamic state or civilised state, both are the same. They go for the same, freedom, democracy, etc."

"He thinks that democratic values, that applying law, democracy, freedom, the separation of the authorities, these are Islamic rules before it was *sic* adopted as civil rules or democratic rules."

"As Muslim we do not accept that you force people to follow Islam. In our Quran, which is the highest authority, God says you are not allowed to force people to enter the religion. And He [God] addresses, our Prophet, in some words: 'Do you force people to enter this religion, or to be believers'. This means it [God] is discouraging him [Prophet Muhammad] to do so. So they [SMB] think[s] it is peoples' right to choose the best way for them to be ruled."

"Sheikh Mustafa Qaradawi has written a book explaining an Islamic state is a civil state and in that book he explains exactly that an Islamic state is a civil state."

"There are two main points, first of all, we believe in spreading Islam or applying Islam gradually, depending on the acceptance of society. Again, the other point is that we will not allow our program to be enforced on the people. And we think, we believe, to get to an ideal situation, which is an Islamic system, would take tens of years. And this is if we are successful – this is if we succeed to convince people of this position."

"We are part of a centrist form of Islam, which calls for building a modern Syria based on citizenship and equality of rights and responsibilities."

<u>Sub-Themes: Democratic Discourse, Sharia, and Mission Statement</u>

I added three sub-themes, namely "democratic discourse", "sharia", and "mission statement" to the primary theme "political system".

<u>Democratic discourse</u>: I coded "democratic discourse" separately from "political system" to focus on what the SMB identifies as the characteristics of a democracy. My intention was not to discuss the compatibility of Islam and democracy, which is predetermined by definitions of "democracy" and "Islam".[243] I was also mindful of the "infatuation with democracy and democratisation as surrogates for good governance".[244] However, in the absence of a neutral concept to denote a good system of governance, democracy will suffice for the purposes of this study.[245] The following ideas are from the data coded under the sub-theme "democratic discourse":

- The SMB prefers coalition politics to governing alone;
- Citizenship, based on the idea that all citizens have equal rights, is the criteria for a democratic state;
- Any person is eligible to participate in elections for "social committees that will serve society". Neither education nor religious affiliation will be used as criteria to preclude individuals' participation in such elections;

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[243] John O Voll, "Islam and Democracy: Is Modernization a Barrier?," *Religion compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 174.

[244] Thomas G Weiss, "Governance, Good Governance and Global Governance: Conceptual and Actual Challenges," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 5 (2000): 805.

[245] Political competition is the most basic characteristic of a democracy, and competitive elections therefore distinguish a democracy from an autocracy. A liberal democracy is characterised by free elections, political liberties, and rule of law ("the regular and impartial administration of public rules"). For a typology of various forms of democracy, see Møller and Skaaning, *Democracy and Democratization in Comparative Perspective: Conceptions, Conjunctures, Causes and Consequences*, 42 - 45.

- The SMB will not change its moderate policies, because militancy was gaining ground in Syria. The SMB further views Syrian society as intrinsically moderate;

- Secular values are not rejected out of hand. The area of commonality between the SMB and the secular 'other' is broader than the area of conflict;

- The SMB will accept defeat at the ballot box;

- An Islamic state and a civil or civilised state are the same in that both are based on freedom, democracy, etc.; and

- The SMB targeted the West when it published its political vision for a post-Asad Syria, i.e. the Pledge and Charter."

Relevant quotes from which I deduced these ideas are:

"I don't think the MB should govern Syria or have a majority position. We want to be part of the democratic scene. We want free and democratic elections, and a civil, not military state. Citizenship is the criteria – to be equal, no discrimination."

"He replied, we as the SMB, we do not have members inside Syria. We are too weak to control the whole country. So this person replied to him: I might agree with you, but I think most of the Syrian people would support your program inside Syria, and secondly, your brothers in Tunisia were less than you and they managed to win the first elections after the uprising. So he said, if I would agree with you on this, I would like to insist that we as the MB is too weak to control Syria as a country and our political program for the past ten years insist that we should contribute in leading the country in a coalition government, which includes every other party or political movement in Syria."

"A month ago, I published an article that says the Qur'an is our constitution. This does not mean that we do not want a civil constitution. However, the Qur'an is the source for a civil constitution."

"In Western society, democracy is controlled by the media and big business. Not in our own countries. Social committees will be formed – their members will be elected by society and they will serve society. When voting for these people, all are eligible [to stand], not just religious people – you might even include less educated people with some influence in society."

"Syrian people are people of moderation. They have never been militant like some other nations in the Islamic world. So that militancy, that

tendency to militancy will end. Perhaps not immediately after the revolution comes to an end, it might take some time [for society to rid itself of this militancy]. I think that kind of militancy will never gain consistent ground in Syria. We find this [militancy] a challenge. The ideas I'm talking about now are a real challenge for [our] constituencies. However, although the difficulties are there, we in the Brotherhood feel this is the right way. This is the way Syria should go. We will not change our views because militancy is gaining ground now. This is a period which will run out, it will end."

"By the way, secularism is not all evil...I think they have certain concepts that are really compatible. [What I mean, is] to have human rights, to have free speech, to have the ballot box for everybody, one-man-one-vote, to have the concept of citizenship with equal rights and duties, these are secular principles. What I would call them is human principles, which is *sic* compatible with human values. Islam has a lot of care for human values. They might have been labelled as secular now, but in essence they are human. I mean, who can tell that justice is not good. Well justice in Islam and in the West has the same value. We think a lot of secular values are good values. Although we might not agree with all of it, still we are Muslims, we have a Muslim background, Muslim education, Muslim religion. By the way, the common area is much broader than the area of conflict."

"The SMB's priority is democracy, we will accept whatever people vote for – even if we don't like it. If the Syrian people vote for liberals, socialists, we have to accept it – this is the national opinion. But when we say Islamic state, it has never been but a civil state. So whether you call it an Islamic state or a civilised state, both are the same. They go for the same, freedom, democracy, etc."

"So if there is real voting or elections and people did not vote for the MB program, it means it is the MB's mistake, because they did not convince people with their book."

"There is a document published by the SMB in 2012, its name is Pledge and Charter, so that document summarise[s] their vision for Syria. After that document was published, there was a meeting in Vienna with many foreign ministers of Western governments, and they all agreed to say thank you, and said that [the] document was clear, and very much advances [a vision for a future Syria], even compared to some secular parties' documents."

"The movement leaders argue...that they represent "the moderate face of Islam", and have called for the establishment of a modern, democratic and pluralistic civil state, as outlined in a document the movement issued in March 2012, titled: 'The Covenant and Pact' [Pledge and Charter], which outlined concepts for a post-Asad Syria."

<u>Sharia</u>: "Sharia" was an important concept to code, because of its popular use in Islamist discourse as integral to what constitutes an Islamic state.[246]

Sharia is a difficult concept to translate. The word "sharia" is commonly translated as Islamic law, but this does not mean it is a "single, well-defined legal code".[247] "Islamic law is a complex body of rules and interpretations that spans many centuries and follows different [legal] schools".[248] But even this understanding is not universal, as many Muslims understand sharia as "the infinite...path to God".[249] For our purposes, I will distinguish between the concept sharia as the "path to God", and the content of sharia (*fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence), which is based on "a specific human methodology of interpretation of the Quran and Sunna in a particular context of time and place".[250] Thus, in the first instance sharia is seen as an all-encompassing way of life, while narrower conceptualisations of *fiqh* are limited to acts of worship and/or aspects of family law, punishments for certain crimes as described in the Qur'an (*hudud*), and legal aspects relevant to financial products and services.

In my first round of interviews, I found only two references to sharia, which motivated me to focus on sharia in the second round. Ideas, based on both rounds of interviews, are as follows:

- Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) will play a role in the SMB's Islamic state;
- A parliamentary vote will be upheld, even if it contradicts sharia; and

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[246] Brown, Hamzawy, and Ottaway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring Gray Zones".
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Abdullahi Ahmed An‐Na'im, "Human Rights, Universality and Sovereignty: The Irrelevance and Relevance of Sharia," *Global Policy* 4, no. 4 (2013): 402.
[250] Ibid.

- Sharia will not be enforced under an SMB-led government.

The quotes relevant to the sub-theme 'sharia' are:

> "[Researcher: Who decides what is to society's benefit?] Two levels – you have *shura* (consultation), which brings discussion on different levels. You also have the legal level [and] people will be elected to this body…This body will not be comprised of only ulama, or scholars as such, both ulama and scholars are part of society, but they will be voted in like everybody else - their participation is not automatic."

> "We consider [it necessary for] Islamic jurisprudence to be taken into consideration."

> "[Researcher asked whether the SMB would support a vote for same-sex marriages in Parliament.] First, it is a virtual question, but even in sharia there are some virtual questions, so he will answer it. He insists, the MB will not stop a democratic law or a democratic decision taken by the Syrian people. Because we trust the Syrian people and we know them and we know their vision, which is what make such a question really irrelevant."

> "We are not afraid that people might support gay marriages or not. We are afraid of religious extremism, the other side. We are here in the UK [United Kingdom], or other Western states, when the parliament rules, or any rules that disagree with our sharia, what shall we do about it? As well as we accept that when we go to the polls and elections that means that we must accept whatever the result is."

> "So during the Syrian revolution he went to Syria many times and went into Syria many times, and the main point of these visits was to convince people to be moderate. He found it a bit difficult; he faced some difficulties to convince people that you as Syrians are not allowed to apply our rules, or our program, or agenda by forcing people to follow it. So he was insisting that yes we have our vision, our political agenda, which is based on sharia, but our main aim is to convince people to follow it or to adopt it – and the main test to see if we were successful or not is the voting or elections."

<u>Mission statement</u>: I used the concept "mission statement" in my questions to mean the SMB's main, but also all-embracing objective. I think the interviewees fully understood my use of this concept, and appreciated the meaning thereof. The SMB's mission statement (sub-theme) is also important for the Brotherhood's notion of a preferred political system (primary theme). This linkage is captured in the scope of

the mission statement, which over and above a return to Syria includes the Brotherhood's wish to build a new and democratic country. The following ideas, collected from the data, further clarify this sub-theme:

- The Syrian uprising created an opportunity for the SMB to return to the Syrian political arena, after being politically irrelevant of more than 30 years;
- The uprising presented an opportunity for members of the SMB to envision their physical return to their homeland at some point in future;
- The possibilities outlined in the preceding two bullet points reminded the leadership that the next generation of leaders need to be cultivated;
- The SMB's objective to return to Syria entails that the movement cooperates with other opposition forces. Cooperation with 'the other' is captured in the concept "national project";
- This "national project" further entails that the interest of the country or all Syrians, is placed above the SMB's agenda; and
- The "national project" entails the building of a democratic Syria.

Relevant quotes in support of the above ideas are:

"[Researcher: What is your immediate goal? What is your mission statement?] We are a movement in exile for decades now and we feel there is this sort of a barrier between us and the Syrian people. For a long time we tried to go back to Syria, but there were real, real difficulties. After the revolution we thought that that closed door has been opened – I would not say we started to infiltrate, but we started to go back to our homeland, which is our natural right. So, since the revolution and the four years since, that has been our priority… That does not necessarily mean all expatriates outside should now go inside, but at least [we should use this opportunity] to make close contact with the people, these are our people, they are our constituency, as you said…So our main goal now is to have close contact with the people inside Syria, that is number one. Number two, because of the exile situation there was also a generation gap between the elders and the newcomers. There was some frustration in that the new generation have not had a chance of having the sort of training, the sort of responsibilities that we had. Our thinking is also to really put the young generation in the proper channel and [give them]

proper responsibilities, because after all, the elders will finish sooner or later, the future is the future for the young people. Maybe these are the two aims for the future."

"[The interviewee's assistant or office manager volunteered the following:] Also the national project, [i.e.] to work together with the other parties, [and] movements. So the MB will not go and move alone, Syria is bigger than the MB, so we work together with all groups in one project to serve Syria as a country and as [our] mission, [this is for all Syrians] apart from ourselves *sic.* [Interviewee responded:] This is a good point."

"We will dissolve the MB if this means an end to the Syrian crisis."

"After March 2011 they [SMB] have changed their strategy, all their resources and all of their efforts would be under the national project. All their own objectives would be secondary to the national project. In other words, a civil state, where everybody will enjoy the same justice [and] equality, regardless of religion, race, etc."

"Our political programme aims to build a new Syria after a transitional period where we have transitional justice and national reconciliation."

2.4.2.2 *Primary Theme: Syrian Uprising*

The Syrian uprising is a broad primary theme that represents interviewees' positions on various aspects to the Syrian uprising, such as the militarisation of the uprising, the inclusion or exclusion of Bashar al-Asad in a negotiated solution, the evolution in the SMB's political demands, developments related to the various opposition conferences, and the role of sectarianism in the conflict. Islamic State (previously ISIS) will be discussed in this section as a sub-theme.

What follows is my interpretation of the interviewees' comments and opinions to do with the Syrian uprising, in bullet form:

- The SMB engaged in the armed conflict in response to the al-Asad government's brutalisation of Syrian civilians. The SMB was not in favour of armed conflict at the onset of the uprising;
- The SMB initially supported other militias, but a year after the start of the uprising took part in the formation of an armed group;

- Bashar al-Asad cannot be part of a negotiated solution, due to the atrocities committed by his security forces;

- Externally sponsored political initiatives that include a role for Bashar al-Asad are buying time for al-Asad to strengthen himself;

- Neither the SMB, nor any other political party or movement can claim responsibility for the uprising;

- The SMB is linked to people inside Syria through personal relations (this is relevant to the SMB's constituency, but does not tell us anything about its size);

- The SMB was initially prepared to cooperate with the Bashar al-Asad government on condition that the government implement political reforms. This position is reflected in the Istanbul conference's press statement (26 April 2011), and was still maintained at the time of the Antalya conference, i.e. at the end of May 2011. It changed thereafter due to the increase in civilian casualties; and

- The SMB does not recognise the Syrian conflict as a civil war, but accuse the al-Asad government of killing civilians based on their sectarian identity, or "because they are living in a certain area".

Relevant quotes in support of the deductions above are:

> "The MB was always pro-peace, they were not in favour of the revolution to be armed. [The SMB opposed the militarisation of the uprising] Until the regime kept massacring the people and [the] people lost their tolerance – so they [SMB] were unable to stop them."

> "Unfortunately, because of the atrocities committed, militancy is gaining ground in Syria today. And that will remain for some time to come."

> "After the atrocities he made *sic*, the criminality which he committed, it is unthinkable for him [to be part of the solution], and this is what Moscow is about. In other words, we feel those energies, the political trials, which are being done either in Moscow, even in Geneva, or in Cairo now [January 2015], they are not true, because the regime still believes that he can win militarily. Still, nobody pressurised him [al-Asad] to accept the political solution. We talk about [a] negotiated settlement, which will never happen, because whatever settlement is proposed, he will just destroy it, because he feels that still he can win. And that ….. is dragging on, the stalemate is dragging on. I think they are buying time, buying time for Assad to try to win."

"He [interviewee] stressed that the MB did not start the revolution and that nobody did – nobody can claim that honour."

"Early January 2011 Tunisia was over, then Egypt was settled. We [SMB Executive] had a regular monthly meeting. The question was asked: What might happen in Syria? I was requested to draft a vision. I prepared three pages – from this came the project charter (Pledge and Charter). I said – *misrua irqil* Bashar! (Accelerate kicking out Bashar!)"

"Things were piling up over time. For instance, in 2011 some of my nephews from Homs were leaders on the ground. People became involved because they had relatives who were killed or in exile. The new generation were linked to the previous events at a personal level."

"March 14 or 18 [2011], the [SMB] executive met to discuss what to do. They called for a Syrian conference. I was assigned to do that. We formed a team of 5 people. The conference took place on 26-27 April 2011 – we invited key scholars and key figures from Syria and Turkey [to participate]."

"We as Syrians were calling for reform and calling for Bashar to lead that reform. Give freedom to Syrians and allow the constitution to be rewritten. [Allow] for political parties to be formed and for a democratic life. If he does this, we will vote for him. If he refuses – he will be held accountable for all that has happened and all that will happen."

"This was about six weeks before Antalya. Even in Antalya we were prepared to work with him. Between April and May 2011 – 3000 Syrians were killed. We do not accept him to lead the reforms any more. We called on him to step down and to hand his power/duties to his deputy."

"In the beginning of the revolution there was *sic* no arms. Bashar released some Salafis from Sidnaya prison who formed Jabhat al-Nusra, Jaysh al-Islam, Ahrar al-Sham, etc. [These are radical Islamist groups.] We knew what he was doing, he wanted a military struggle so that he has an excuse to crack down [on the uprising]."

"Inside Syria, those extremists are targeting the MB's members and figures, and they managed to kill tens of them inside Syria, in Aleppo at least."

"We started to support others, we did not form our own force. A year later we helped to form *Duru'* [*Duru` al-thawra* (Shields of the Revolution)]– not organic – closer, they believed in our ideology. We had two guidelines, they had to be good Muslims and comply with international law on military conflicts."

"The MB was always pro-peace, they [SMB] were not in favour of the revolution to be armed. Until the regime kept massacring the people and

people lost their tolerance – so they were unable to stop them [people on the ground in Syria]."

"The West insists talking about minorities in Syria – this started to provoke the feelings of the majority. This message was a very bad one, it was saying the only value we have in the East is the minorities and you the majority has no value. Look at Ma`loula and Kubane (Ain al-Arab), two very small areas, became an international interest – but nothing was said about Homs or Aleppo, nobody cares. If a civil war were to start in Syria, these kinds of dealings would be the reasons for that. The meaning of civil war is killing the other, because of sect – [un]till now Syrians reject this. Just Bashar al-Asad is killing with barrel bombs and if this is [a] civil war, Bashar is killing civilians in a city just because they are living in a certain area."

"But the Syrian regime, from the first moment accused the MB of perpetrating this plot [Syrian uprising]."

"He insists that based on the facts, that after the collapse of the Syrian regime, there should be the kind of government or body to rule Syria that includes every single party, [all] thoughts, to cover all the people of Syria."

Sub-Theme: Islamic State

Islamic State: I used "Islamic State" as a sub-theme of the primary theme "Syrian Uprising", because of the prominent position that Islamic State (previously called ISIS) had in the Syrian conflict. I also used this sub-theme to examine what the SMB thinks about the group, and its conduct.

The main ideas that I took from the data under this sub-theme are:

- Western powers gambled on the secularist opposition to replace the al-Asad government, and failed;
- The West is ultimately responsible for the success with which Islamic State and other radical Islamists filled the political void in Syria.

A quote relevant to this sub-theme is:

"Those who prevented the role of the MB inside and even outside Syria, [the sponsors of the secularist opposition] thought liberal parties would take that role. In thinking like this they gave sectarian and extremist

groups like ISIS an opportunity to make advances inside Syria, since the liberals are too weak [to do so]."

2.4.2.3 Primary Theme: Cooperate with Others

The primary theme "cooperate with others" examines the SMB's relationship with the first opposition coalition, namely the Syrian National Council (SNC), the subsequent National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (NC), and the political party Waad.

As under previous primary themes, points of interest are in bullet form:

- The SMB supports political structures, which serve its objectives;
- The SMB established the SNC, but presents itself as only one component of the Syrian opposition;
- The party Waad is part of the "national project" in that it is not the SMB's party, and it is not an Islamist party, it is "a national party with an Islamist reference". The SMB was, however, clearly instrumental in the launch of Waad;
- The SMB considers cooperation with groups that are ideologically different as necessary to secure Syria's future;
- Waad is a tangible example of the SMB's commitment to cooperate with groups that are ideologically different; and
- When Waad was launched, the SMB did not foresee that the conflict would continue for much longer. A political party that represents different currents is relevant in the context of the "national project", even more so in a post-al-Asad Syria.

Relevant quotes in support of these deductions are:

"Understanding the role of the SMB [in other political structures] needs an internal understanding. If you look at the MB as a party – [you will realise that] they do not see any benefit for them to be a member of the SNC (Syrian National Council) or the NC (National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces/*i'tilaf*). The MB entered these organisations to strengthen them for the benefit of the Syrian people."

"Even before the revolution started they [the SMB] were giving money to support some non-Muslim figures who are against the Syrian regime, because they want to support those working against the regime, [in doing so] they worked as one body."

"They [SMB] wanted the SNC to be strong [and] that is why they contributed to it. They tried to unite many figures, but many of them [these figures] have personal ambitions. The SNC was not allowed to do what it was supposed to do or what it could do."

"The era of [Ahmad] Jarba [president of the NC from July 2013 to July 2014] was a failure and we lost trust. The term of [Ahmad M] Khatib [first president of the NC, November 2012 to April 2013] was when we were at our height, 112 countries saw us as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Now we are trying – the new leaders are handcuffed, the [National] Coalition lost power on the ground and internationally."

"[About Waad political party] The general assembly was held about two years ago, there was *sic* about 105 delegates. There were MB members and there were Muslims, Islamists...there were secular people, Christians, and there were nationalists. And when the elections were done, you know, they elected the executive committee for the party. Nine members [were elected and] I was elected president then. The vice president was a Christian, Mr Nabil Kasis. We called it, you know, not an Islamist party, it is a national party with an Islamist reference."

"We thought the future of Syria is a very difficult future and it is beyond the capacity of any particular group, the MB alone cannot cope [with these difficulties]. So we have to join hands with other sects, with other religions, with other people of different walks of life. And this was the idea why we should make a party, which is not only Islamist. Hoping – we didn't think at that time that the Syrian issue will take that long. So we thought maybe a couple of years, maybe three years, so we have to join and act together, all Syrians, so we can work together for a future Syria, so this was the idea behind the party."

"[Researcher: This is how I understand Waad and the role of Waad – as part of the national project?] Yes, but we do not consider Waad as our party – this is a national party, which [allowed us to] we *sic* join hands with others."

"Waad is not a political party for the MB; rather it is a national party with an Islamic background that uses democratic means. Other patriotic groups that represent the different segments of the Syrian society also participated to establish it [Waad]."

"A day later another group called for a conference in Brussels. [The interviewee smiled when the researcher asked who they were, and responded:] "Another opposition formation." [I got the impression that

the Brussels conference was in competition with the SMB's Istanbul conference.] "Both the conferences in Antalya and Brussels were some people showing their muscles – trying to show who among the opposition can lead the opposition."

"The MB established the SNC – I [interviewee] was leading a committee of three to do so."

"The MB was and still is only one component of the Syrian opposition. We played a major role. We want to unite the Syrian opposition. Willingly, on many occasions, we took a back seat – we took less *sic* seats to bring buy-in [from others]. We did so [took fewer seats] for *i`tilaf* [NC]."

"There are some who struggle for power in the opposition. We will compete later."

"They [two interviewees] said, yes, they still believe in the National Coalition because the SMB has no project other than the national project, and the two structures are the SNC and the National Coalition (*i`tilaf*). They consider themselves [SMB] as a main component of each structure." [Farouk Taifour was the deputy president of the SNC and the deputy head of the SMB at the same time. However, this is not the case any longer. The MB is included in i`tilaf (since Nov 2012) as a member of the SNC, but does not currently hold any of the top five positions in *i`tilaf*.]

2.4.2.4 Primary Theme: Allies

The fourth primary theme "allies" differs from the previous primary theme, "cooperate with others", in that "allies" refer to external powers, as opposed to national forces, which are supportive of, or cooperate with the SMB. I selected the United States and the so-called Friends of Syria group under this theme, because they are seen as sponsors of the Syrian moderate opposition. The United States is a member of the Friends of Syria group, but its prominent role in the MENA region, and the fact that the interviewees treated the United States separately from the Friends of Syria group, motivated me to consider the United States as a separate entity. The Syrian opposition in this instance is seen as represented by the NC, of which the SMB, through the SNC, is a member.

I found that the Justice and Development party (AKP) in Turkey is seen as a strong ally, while the United States and so-called Friends of Syria group are not trusted. This mistrust is, however, managed in order not to encourage rapprochement between either one of the mentioned parties and the al-Asad

government. Qatar is also recognised as an ally, while the SMB's relationship with Saudi Arabia is more ambiguous.

Further inferences, based on the data collected under the primary theme "allies", are:

- The SMB views the AKP and the Tunisian Ennahda party as ideologically close to the Brotherhood;
- Turkey plays an important role as a political model, an ideological reference, and a host to millions of Syrian refugees. The SMB has also benefitted from opening an office in Turkey, and hosting various opposition conferences and meetings in Turkey;
- Major Western powers do not support the military defeat of the Syrian government;
- The SMB accuses (if not resents) the United States and the so-called Friends of Syria for creating expectations, without the political will to realise them; and
- The SMB does not welcome foreign interference in Syria.

Relevant quotes in support of these ideas are:

> "For instance, AKP [Justice and Development Party] in Turkey, we believe this is a group, another example of a party, which have *sic* brought a good blend of tradition and modernity [to the political arena]. It is really very good, a unique combination. We feel also that Ennahda, in Tunisia, has got almost *sic* a similar blend, which is really good. Ideologically, maybe these two parties are the nearest to our hopes, our ambitions."

> "The role of the United States is worse than that of Russia. Robert Ford [former US Ambassador to Damascus] told us [SMB]: "We will not allow you to win [the battle on the ground], the route is political." The Friends of Syria said [that] they will help us, just go to [the] Geneva [conference] – but there was no real help. There was a secret agreement with France to give the [National] Coalition (*i`tilaf*) weapons. [The] United States got to hear about this and stopped it."

> "Among the Friends of Syria, among the 105 friends of Syria, the true friends unfortunately are very scarce. Maybe less than the fingers of one hand only. They [Friends of Syria] shrank so much. Those who are really

supporting the Syrian cause are very limited now – the good examples are Turkey and Qatar. Do not tell the Saudis this [laughter]."

"The [SMB's first] conference [in Istanbul] took place on 26-27 April 2011 – we invited key scholars and key figures from Syria and Turkey."

"Politically, we do not have permanent allies, nor [do we have] permanent enemies. Those who support the Syrian cause, we are allies with them. Today, Turkey and Qatar are supporting the Syrian cause, honestly, and we are with them. I suppose, if the Qataris or the Turks have changed their minds, I think we will change also."

"We do not think the Western governments, including France, the United Kingdom, the United States, we do not think they want or would allow the Syrian revolution to overcome Bashar's militia."

"If America is serious to fight Daesh, it would not take more than one week [for the United States to defeat the Islamic State organisation]."

"Syria is very strategic geo-politically, this is why you would see most of the countries that have interests in Syria, they have agendas in Syria, this is why they take positions and want influence inside Syria. This is why they used the Arab Spring to gain more influence inside Syria."

2.4.2.5 Primary Theme: Organisational Structure

The fifth primary theme "organisational structure" describes the SMB's organisation, and includes its makeup, culture, and rules. Five sub-themes will also be discussed in this section, namely: "establishment of SMB", "exile", "SMB constituency", "relationship with EMB", and "organisational split"

Based on the data grouped under the primary theme "organisational structure", I made the following deductions:

- Based on its constitution, the SMB has elections every four years. Local committees elect the *shura* council, which elects a new leader. The leader then nominates an executive council, to be approved by the *shura* council;
- In the 2014 elections, the SMB youth (unsuccessfully) demanded to elect the leader directly;
- The SMB leadership is aware that the SMB youth is not satisfied with the power imbalance in the organisation. The leadership wants to increase

the responsibilities of the younger generation, and create more opportunities for them in the organisation;

- The SMB has its own internal culture, and support structures for members; and

- The SMB was recruiting members during the Syrian uprising;

Relevant quotes that support these ideas are:

"The constitution demands elections are held every four years. Local committees elect the *shura* council, which elects the leader. The leader then nominates the executive bureau, which the *shura* council approves. There was a heated debate from the youth – they wanted to elect the leader directly, they thought we undermined them. They are not old enough to have good representation."

"In late November (2014) the *shura* convened to elect Dr Walid [head of the SMB]. Dr Walid and his Deputy nominated the executive bureau. The *shura* convened again and approved the nominations."

"Number two, because of the exile situation, there was also a generation gap between the elders and the newcomers. There was some frustration in that the new generation would not take its chance of having the sort of training, the sort of responsibilities…Our thinking is also to really put the young generation in the proper channel and proper responsibilities, because after all the elders will finish sooner or later, the future is the future for the young people."

"If anybody joins the MB they have to get the culture through weekly meetings (*usra*) family, through this everybody got the culture, goals, and financially, members were supported."

"Of course inside Syria, there are people who like to come and to join the SMB. And this happen whether in Idleb or Aleppo or other places. I heard even some centres were opened in the liberated areas. The membership, I do not know exactly what are the requirements now. But I know the requirement was that you have to be a good man, a good Muslim, to agree to commit yourself to the movement. I have no special or particular details about this. You can ask the people in Istanbul who are in charge of recruiting people."

"The elections that took place were ordinary and routine after the end of Mr Riyad al-Shaqfah's (former head of the SMB) term. The result of this election shows the real democracy within the group, and that any member can reach any position regardless of his background."

<u>Sub-Themes: Establishment of SMB, Exile, SMB Constituency, Relationship with EMB, and Organisational Split</u>

I added five sub-themes to the primary theme "organisational structure". They are: "establishment of SMB", "exile", "SMB constituency", "relationship with EMB", and "organisational split".

<u>Establishment of the SMB</u>: This sub-theme covers the SMB's establishment, and the early SMB's relationship with the EMB.

The main ideas that I took from the data under this sub-theme are:

- Mustafa al-Siba`i united a number of Muslim organisations in the mid-1940s to form the SMB;
- The ideological principles of the early SMB were present in local Muslim societies, before the formation of the movement;
- Different MB chapters function independently, i.e. with minimum coordination;
- Hassan al-Banna did not object to elections in principal, but 'the Palace' prevented him from participating in Egypt's constitutional politics;
- The SMB's ideological principles did not change between 1946 and 1980; and
- The early SMB supported a Christian president, based on merit.

Quotes relevant to this sub-theme are:

"Siba`i was influenced by Hasan al-Banna when he [Siba`i] was in Egypt. In each Syrian city, were one or two organisations that were mainstream Muslim organisations, in other words, they saw Islam as a system for life. Siba`i approached these societies. In the mid-1940s he brought them together under one name."

"The MB in Syria, or in Egypt is not a new idea. The idea existed and then followed a party. There were many groups in Syria with similar ideas as Hasan al-Banna – but they did not know what was the next step. These people were very well educated; they were doctors, etc. and were well known in society. That is why some people say the MB was just for the

elite. With regards to relations with the EMB – there are many MB groups but none followed or owned each other. They share some policy positions, so they would often meet to discuss these ideas, but there is no instruction from anybody. He insisted there is no organic organisation in the MB – he would personally love to see more coordination."

"Hasan al-Banna wanted to participate in elections, but the Palace forced him to withdraw his name. In Syria, the SMB got seats and contributed to political life."

"Since the launching of the MB by Sheikh Siba'i – there is no change in the message, just in the way they have configured it according to the recent circumstances. In documents of the 1980s they are calling for modernisation, for justice, for accepting others. These are the main ideas."

"Since the early years of Sheikh Siba'i, the MB was a strong supporter of the first President of Syria, he was a Christian, and Siba'i was a strong supporter of his. He supported him because of his qualifications and commitment to the country. So they [SMB] would support the most effective leader..."

<u>Exile</u>: The sub-theme "exile" focuses on when and how members of the SMB left Syria.

My deductions, based on data relevant to the sub-theme "exile", are:

- Some members of the executive left Syria during the Islamic insurgency (1979) to seek "democracy and freedom";
- The Syrian uprising created an opportunity for members of the SMB to return to Syria;
- Members of the SMB who went into exile, went to Iraq and Jordan;
- In exile, the SMB continued to abide by its constitution, and maintain its organisational culture;
- The SMB's rhetoric changed in 1980, due to its interaction with other Syrian opposition parties in Iraq;
- Members of the SMB survived, after their exile from Syria, because the Brotherhood supported them financially; and
- The SMB was financially independent from the countries that hosted members of the Brotherhood in exile.

The following quotes support my deductions under the sub-theme "exile":

"He was born in Aleppo in 1947. He was introduced to the SMB in 1963 when the Ba`th party took power. He says he can divide his life into two parts, namely: 1) Ba`th party rule and repression, and 2) 1979 – when he left Syria to seek democracy and freedom."

"We are a movement in exile for decades now and we feel there is this sort of a barrier between us and the Syrian people. For a long time we tried to go back to Syria, but there were real real difficulties. After the revolution we thought that that closed door has been opened – I would not say we started to infiltrate, but we started to go back to our homeland, which is our natural right."

"In 1980 Syrians who left went to Iraq and Jordan – later they dispersed to other places in the region."

"After 1982 things slowed down and those in exile pursued their own studies, careers, etc. Those in exile also started to compliment each other financially – i.e. money from Jordan to Iraq, or from Iraq to Jordan. During this time the MB had chapters in different countries, they stayed in touch, they had elections, *shura* council meetings, etc."

"Between 1990 and 2000 their activities slowed down even more. But it picked up in 2010."

"Earlier, other opponents [to the Syrian government] saw the SMB as just looking for power, so they were not open [to the SMB] to each other. In the 1980s everybody went to Iraq, so they sat on the same table – they found that the MB were just like them, calling for a free Syria, accepting democracy, then accepting an understanding of 'the other'. That is why the message was slightly changed."

"Main reason for the MB to have survived after they all fled from Syria: There was an amazing structure of financial help. MB helped their members – so everyone were connected. Rich businessmen paid for those with less money, etc."

"There was a decision wherever MB members go, they were not to involve themselves in the countries' political issues. So they were financially self-sufficient, and they did not get involved in other countries' politics. So they were welcomed. Their members travelled to up to 30 countries. First only to neighbouring countries, but later further."

SMB Constituency: This sub-theme is meant to cover information on the SMB's access to its existing members, and its outreach to potentially new members.

My deductions, based on data covered by this sub-theme, are:

- Inadvertently, by blaming everything on the SMB, the al-Asads increased the prominence of the SMB in Syria;

- The 1970s Islamic awakening supports Islamism;

- The SMB has a long history of engaging in politics, which enhances its profile in Syria;

- External forces support liberal political parties, which limits the role of the SMB;

- The Syrian uprising erupted spontaneously. Neither the SMB, nor any other political party started the Syrian uprising; and

- Moderate Islamists are a threat to autocratic governments, because their ideas have significant public support.

Relevant quotes in support of these ideas are:

"Black stands out against white. Over the last 50 years Asad's family was black and the MB white. In blaming the MB for everything, Asad provided it with free advertising. Based on this idea you will have huge support for the MB in Syria."

"Secondly, there was the Islamic awakening since the 1970s, in Syria and all over the world, and this supported the idea of the MB. Thirdly, due to the banning of political parties in Syria, the MB is the only one who have been working in politics at that time and for all Syrians since 1979 - and this makes them more trusted by the Syrian people…He would like to insist, he thinks the MB would have a bigger role than what is reflected in the revolution. But unfortunately, internal and external forces are trying to prevent them from taking the role that they should be doing and that they are capable of doing. Those who prevented the role of the MB inside and even outside Syria thought liberal parties would take that role."

"What happened at the beginning of the revolution is that everything that happened was related to the MB, and this was not correct. When the revolution erupted, it erupted by the normal people, not by the MB, not by any political party, and not by even those who are fighting now. It was by the normal people and it started as a peaceful uprising, peaceful demonstrations and this carried on for around six months or more."

"He says, he was detained for two years from 1975-77, and he along with his colleagues, and he had a discussion with the head of the prison. And he mentioned to that person, you had the chance to read our publications –

do you see anything that would affect the peace of the country? And he said, no, I would agree with you, and this is why you are more dangerous that the extremist groups. You will be able to easily spread your ideas between people, your thoughts will enter the hearts of people, and this is more dangerous than extremism. He thinks this is why some Muslim governments do not allow the moderate Islam to enter or to spread."

<u>Relationship with the International MB</u>: This sub-theme examines the SMB's relationship with the international MB.

There is very little information available on the international MB, and neither did my interviewees offer much insight on this issue. The single quote indicates that there is little if any coordination between the Muslim Brotherhood movements in different countries.

The relevant quote is:

> The SMB and the EMB have the same rhetoric, but not the same organisation. Until now, they are different from each other. The MB says it is one organisation, but in practice they are many. They lack coordination on even the most basic issues. The do not give each other major [significant] help [assistance]."

<u>Organisational Split</u>: This sub-theme describes the divisions in the SMB organisation, in the 1970s and 1980s.

My deductions, based on data relevant to the sub-theme "organisational split", are:

- Marwan Hadid's membership was suspended, because he led a uprising in Hama;
- Sa`id Hawwa was seen as an ideologue to the radical Islamists;
- Divisions in the SMB in the 1980s occurred, based on a dispute on how to engage with the Syrian government;
- Geographical differences played a role in the divisions in the SMB; and
- Bashar al-Asad's reprehensible actions during the Syrian uprising strengthened unity in the SMB.

Relevant quotes in support of these deductions are:

> "Marwan Hadid led the Hamawi parts [followers from the city of Hama] to military confrontation. His membership was suspended. Had huge influence in Hama – his followers cause 1979 massacre. Sheikh Sa`id Hawwa was their ideologist."

> "The second split came in 1986 between the Hammawi and Aleppo sides – not all were from either area, but the bosses represented either Hama or Aleppo. The Hammawis accused Aleppo people that they wanted to reconcile with the regime. The Aleppo people said they just wanted to find a solution."

> "The split that happened before you mean? This happened long before the document. It has nothing to do, really, with ideological thinking. It happened about the approach how to deal with the Syrian government. To deal with it through negotiation, through revolution, to deal with it through opposition, or work under the Ba`th, under the umbrella of the regime, something like that, rather than ideology."

> "After the revolution this was not there. No more birds, pigeons and…[doves and hawks]. All are together, the crimes of Bashar are beyond anything – those killed, the millions of refugees."

2.4.2.6 Summary of Thematic Analysis

In this section (2.4), I grouped the data in four categories, to answer questions about the SMB's governance, political strategy, the (2011 Syrian) conflict, and the SMB's capacity. Then, I analysed the data in these four categories, and came to conclusions, which can be summarised as follows:

The category "Governance" defined the SMB as a reformist movement that seeks guidance in the early Islamic period, but does not support a literal interpretation of the Qur'an. I also found that the SMB considers legislation that supports the common good (*maslaha*), as that which bestows legitimacy on governance. The SMB undertook a serious revision of policy in the early 2000s to publish a detailed political platform in 2004. Henceforth, the SMB professed a "modern state" as equal to its ideal Islamic state. In March 2012, a year after the start of the Syrian uprising, the SMB published its Pledge and Charter in an attempt to convince Western powers of its commitment to a civil state.

In the category on Governance, we have also seen that the SMB's criteria for a democracy are: equal citizenship, universal suffrage, and the observance of election outcomes. My most interesting finding was that a parliamentary vote would be upheld, even if it contradicts sharia. In addition, I learned that the SMB does not reject secular values out of hand; prefers a coalition government, even in a scenario where the Brotherhood secures the majority of votes; and that sharia would not be enforced under a SMB-led government. Democracy will be pursued through the "national project", which entails the SMB's cooperation with other political forces in Syria.

The category "Conflict" showed that at the onset of the Syrian uprising the SMB was not in favour of armed jihad, and called for political reforms. However, we learned that a year into the uprising, the SMB formed an armed group. The SMB further holds the sponsors of the secularist opposition responsible for the gains made by radical Islamists, such as Islamic State (previously ISIS), in Syria.

The category "Political Strategy" showed that the SMB established the Syrian National Council (SNC), and formed the political party Waad. We learned that the SMB was influential in opposition politics at the start of the Syrian uprising, based on its leading role in the establishment of the SNC. In forming the political party Waad, the SMB demonstrated its commitment to cooperate with political actors who are ideologically different from the Brotherhood.

The category "Political Strategy" also showed that interviewees singled out the United States and the so-called Friends of Syria group for scorn, based on the expectations created by these political actors, which came to nothing. In contrast, the SMB views the Turkish AKP and Tunisian Ennahda party are ideological allies.

The category "Capacity" delivered the following insights and observations: It showed that Mustafa Siba`i united a number of ideologically like-minded organisations to form the SMB in 1946. In exile, the SMB supported its members financially. Members in exile also continued to abide by the SMB's constitution,

and maintained its organisational culture. Further, whilst in exile, the SMB met other Syrian opposition parties in Iraq, with whom they shared political interests. This interaction influenced the SMB's rhetoric. The SMB had significant support inside Syria, based on its history and moderate policy. However, in the wake of the Syrian uprising, external parties supported the liberal opposition, which limited the role of the SMB. Little, if any coordination occurs between the MB organisations in different countries. Geographical differences and disagreement on how to engage the Syrian government further led to divisions in the SMB, in the 1970s and 1980s, which disappeared during the Syrian uprising, due to Bashar al-Asad's reprehensible actions.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, I outlined my methods of data gathering and analysis.

First, I restated the SMB's policy on governance as my research topic.

Second, I briefly discussed my main textual sources, which are four SMB policy documents. I also mentioned that I will supplement these policy documents with SMB press statements, electronic media interviews, and two books authored by the SMB's founder and first head Mustafa al-Siba`i.

Third, I offered an overview of the interview process, in which I conducted personal interviews with seven members of the SMB, only one of whom at the time was not a member of the executive council. I also discussed my interview sample, and highlighted the Arabic language and Syria's political-security context as two challenges.

Fourth, I demonstrated how I used thematic analysis to manage and analyse the data. I showed how the raw data were coded, grouped into eight primary themes, and then regrouped into five primary themes and nine sub-themes. By organising the primary themes into four categories, I showed that the five primary themes relevant to my research topic are: "political system", "Syrian uprising", "cooperate with others", "allies", and "organisational structure". I then

proceeded to analyse these primary themes and sub-themes, based on their meaning, and with quotes to support my interpretations.

I will use the insight and knowledge gained through this process to supplement my textual sources, and to explain the SMB's moderate policy on governance, as will be evident in the chapters to follow.

Chapter 3 Moderation in the 1979 - 1982 Islamic Revolution

The policy document relevant to this chapter is the Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria *(Bayan al-thawrat al-Islamiyya fi Suriyya wa-minhajuha)*, published on 9 November 1980.[251]

This chapter deals with an apparent paradox: In the 1980 Statement and Program, the SMB maintains its commitment to a parliamentary democracy, but simultaneously calls for an Islamic revolution to overthrow the Hafez al-Asad government. At the time, Hafez al-Asad's one-party police state targeted the SMB in its military campaign against the Islamic insurgency turned uprising. This explains at least partially the SMB's adoption of armed jihad, but not the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy in the middle of a violent standoff between the Syrian state and the SMB. It is my main purpose here to elucidate this puzzle.

I will argue that the SMB aimed to mobilise the broadest segment of the Syrian opposition against the Hafez al-Asad government, and this drove its commitment to a parliamentary democracy in 1980. I will also show that the Brotherhood demonstrated continuity in its moderate policy on governance, notwithstanding a political environment that was intolerant and increasingly exclusive.

I will build my argument in four parts. First, I will show the SMB's ongoing moderation, based on its ideological commitment to a moderate policy on governance, and the Brotherhood's avoidance of sectarian rhetoric. Next, I will place the 1980 document in context by showing that the SMB's political environment in 1980 was one of violent contention, and not one that appreciates democratic principles. In the remainder of the chapter, I will then work my way towards identification of the reason for the puzzling stance of this document, that is the SMB's ongoing moderation in an intolerant and increasingly exclusive

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[251] "The Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/Bayan al-thawrat al-Islamiyya fi Suriyya wa-minhajuha" is an appendix to Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 201-267.

political environment. I will first demonstrate that Islamist discourse at the time does not accommodate the 1980 document's moderate stance. Next, I will identify the 1980 document's primary target audience as comprising three main groups: the jihadi Fighting Vanguard, Syrian ulama (Muslim scholars), and the secularist opposition. Thus, I will conclude that the SMB's moderation in the 1980 document is due to the Brotherhood targeting the secularist opposition as a component of its primary target audience in 1980.

3.1 Moderation in the 1980 Statement and Program

In this section, I will demonstrate the SMB's moderation, as articulated in the 1980 document, in two parts. First, I will show the SMB is ideologically committed to a moderate policy on governance, based on three concepts as they appear in the 1980 document. They are: reformism, Islam as a comprehensive system (*din wa-dawla*), and an Islamic state. Second, I will show that the SMB avoided the derogatory term "Nusayri", which jihadi Islamists such as the Fighting Vanguard used for Syria's Alawis. We will also see that the absence of sectarian rhetoric in the SMB's 1980 document is not due to the socio-political character of the SMB, and neither can it be explained as based on the SMB's pragmatism. Rather, it signals a target audience, which would have been impressed by the Brotherhood's non-sectarian rhetoric.

3.1.1 Ideological Commitment to a Moderate Policy on Governance

In this section, I will show the SMB's ongoing moderation, based on its ideological commitment to a moderate policy on governance. In doing so, I will show that the 1980 document a) defines the SMB as a reformist organisation, b) describes Islam as a comprehensive system (*din wa-dawla*), and c) calls for an Islamic state, based on a parliamentary political system, *hizbah*, *shura*, and sharia.

3.1.1.1 Reformism

The SMB, as a reformist movement, uses *ijtihad* to make "universal" Islamic values and principles applicable to the contemporary world. In this section, we

will see that *ijtihad* facilitates the SMB's commitment to democratic principles, which in turn makes the SMB's policy on governance moderate.

Before we continue our discussion on the SMB as a reformist movement, we need to consider the difference between reformism and revivalism. Though these two terms are often used interchangeably, for the purposes of my argument, I will distinguish between them, and use reformism to refer to ideology. Revivalism, in contrast, refers to behaviour. For example, revivalism in Syria in the late 1970s is characterised by the fact that more females started wearing the *hijab* or headscarf, and mosque attendance increased markedly.[252]

In Chapter 2, we saw that the SMB's founding ideology identifies the Brotherhood as a reformist movement. Reformism here refers to a "particular ideology",[253] based on a return to Islam as practiced by the first three generations of Muslims or *salaf al-saleh*.[254] The SMB's 1980 document says of the early Muslim community: "Those Muslims were able to achieve miracles which will remain as the ideal example to be followed along the path of perfection".[255] This does not mean that the Brotherhood strives to recreate seventh-century Arabia. What reformists strive for in this context is "to create a society in accord with the principles which were revealed in that earlier society".[256] Thus, as a reformist movement the SMB is ideologically committed to reform Muslim society in accordance with the Islamic principles, which the first three generations of Muslims advocated.

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[252] *Middle East Contemporary Survey, 1978-79*, ed. Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon, vol. 3 (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), 805-806.

[253] A "particular ideology" has meaning in relation to other ideologies. See Jan Blommaert, *Discourse: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 166.

[254] Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 104, notes that only the Damascene branch of the SMB was characterised by a Salafi orientation, while the Aleppo and Hama branches were more traditional in terms of religious doctrine.

[255] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 202-203.

[256] John O Voll, "Revivalism and Social Transformations in Islamic History," *The Muslim World* 76, no. 3‐4 (1986): 169.

A common misconception about reformism is that such movements are anti-modern and conservative, because they follow the example of the early Muslim community. Anti-modern and "conservative" in a political context imply a preference for tradition, for example, the caliphate in opposition to the nation-state. In a religious context, we would take "conservative" to imply a literal or narrow interpretation of the text. However, the SMB is not conservative, and neither is it anti-modern, even though the Brotherhood takes the early Muslim community as its "ideal example".[257] In the 1980 document the SMB does not question the nation-state, but rather the colonial powers' drawing of "artificial boundaries".[258] The Brotherhood's positive engagement with the contemporary world can also be seen in the secular education and professional career paths of its early leadership. The founding members of the SMB included some religious scholars, but also lawyers, university lecturers, doctors, and schoolteachers.[259] Thus, although SMB as a reformist movement revere the example of the first three generations of Muslims, the SMB, at least, is not conservative, nor is it anti-modern in a political context.

Reformists, such as the SMB, further use *ijtihad* (or independent reasoning) to reinterpret the foundations texts in order to meet society's contemporary challenges.[260] *Ijtihad* here refers to "consistent intellectual endeavours to relate universal Islamic values and principles to changing socio-political circumstances."[261] *Ijtihad* therefore goes beyond the boundaries of jurisprudence

[257] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 202-203.
[258] Ibid., 252.
[259] Reissner, *Ideologie Und Politik Der Muslimbrüder Syriens: Von Den Wahlen 1947 Bis Zum Verbot Unter Adib Ash-Shishakli*, 422-428, shows that the three members of the SMB who won parliamentary seats in the 1947 election practiced, respectively, as an attorney and university lecturer; a secondary school teacher and university lecturer; and an Islamic scholar and teacher. A member of the Brotherhood further said in a January 2015 interview that there were medical doctors amongst the SMB's founding members.
[260] Interview conducted with participant 2, in January 2015.
[261] Louay M Safi, "Reflections on Ijtihad and Moderate Islam: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West," in *Debating Moderate Islam*, ed. M.A.M. Khan (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2007), 112.

to address contemporary challenges.[262] A member of the SMB confirmed that this approach to contemporary challenges is also applicable to the movement. He said: "We need the renewal of the understanding of Islamic principles to fit society, so that Islamic society improves as political and cultural society improves…We do not want to go backwards, we want to bring Islam into a modern world."[263] The SMB therefore uses *ijtihad* to form new interpretations in response to contemporary challenges, as opposed to blindly following sharia.

In sum, the SMB is ideologically a reformist movement, based on its respect for the example of the early Muslim community, and its use of *ijtihad* to make "universal" Islamic values and principles applicable to the contemporary world. In other words, *ijtihad* facilitates the SMB's commitment to democratic principles, which in turn makes its policy on governance moderate.

3.1.1.2 Comprehensive Islam

In the previous section, we saw that as a reformist movement the SMB uses *ijtihad* to commit to a moderate policy on governance. In this section, we will continue our analysis of the SMB's moderate policy on governance. First, I will show that in the 1980 document the SMB views Islam as a comprehensive system or *din wa-dawla.* Second, I will show that in 1980, in contrast to two other Islamist movements, the SMB did not single-out the West and its political system for critique, nor did the Brotherhood reject secular values.

The 1980 document views Islam as a comprehensive system that includes religion and state, or din wa-dawla. The document suggests that a state of *jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic ignorance) developed after the rule of the rightly guided caliphs,[264] also known as the "golden age" in Muslim history.[265] It further posits

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[262] Ibid.

[263] Interview conducted with participant 2, in January 2015.

[264] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 202-203.

[265] The Syrian ulama shares in the SMB's aspiration for an Islamic state, but not the SMB's dim view of the Ottoman era. In contrast, the ulama described the Ottoman era in positive terms, which according to them was followed by a

that Muslims in the 20th century tried to reverse their misfortunes by either resorting to Muslim unity, or depended on the "spread of science", but then stresses that it is only through recognising Islam as a comprehensive system that Muslims will regain their former glory.[266]

Islamists in general view Islam as comprehensive, and therefore see Islam as including politics. The SMB's founder Mustafa Siba`i described Islam as comprehensive and relevant to all people and all aspects of life.[267] A member of the Brotherhood echoed the same principle in 2015 when he described Islam as "a way of life" that incorporates "everything".[268] The comprehensive nature of Islam also had wide currency in the 1970s among Islamists in their conception of Islamic governance. It is evident in the rhetoric of the Iranian (Shi`a) Islamic (Student) Association (*al-jama'a al-islamiyya*), which in 1979 presented Islam as religion and state or *din wa-dawla*,[269] but also in the founding statement of the Tunisian (Sunni) Islamic Tendency Movement (ITM)/*al-harikat al-ittijah al-Islami* (later Ennahda).[270] Thus, Mustafa al-Siba`i viewed politics as part of Islam (*din wa-dawla*),[271] which is also the view of Islamists in general.

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decline. See Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 25.

[266] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 204.

[267] Al-Siba`i, *Al-Ahzab Al-Siyasiyah Fi Suriya*, 40; see also: Pargeter, "From Diplomacy to Arms and Back to Diplomacy: The Evolution of the Syrian Ikhwan," 64.

[268] Interview conducted with participant 7, in June 2015.

[269] al-jama'a[t] al-Islamiyyah, "Lessons from Iran ", in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, ed. John L Donohue and John L Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[270] Available in Arabic at:
http://www.ikhwanwiki.com/index.php?title=بيان_الـتأسيسي_لـحركة_الاتجاه_الإسلامي_بـتونس_الـنهضة22%الـ22%
[271] Mustafa Al-Siba`i, *Al-Dīn Wa-Al-Dawlah Fi Al-Islam* (Beirut: publisher not known, 1953), 95.

The 1980 document further commends the founder of the EMB Hasan Al-Banna for establishing a movement that embodies the comprehensive nature of Islam.[272] Al-Banna is quoted to have said:

> "We believe the provisions of Islam and its teachings are all inclusive, encompassing the affairs of the people in this world and the hereafter. And those who think that these teachings are concerned only with the spiritual or ritualistic are mistaken in this belief because Islam is a faith and a ritual, a nation (*watan*) and a nationality, a religion and a state, spirit and deed, holy text and sword..."[273]

Given the 1980 document's mention of Al-Banna and his conceptualisation of the comprehensive nature of Islam, it is worth pursuing the EMB's position further.[274] Central to the EMB's notion of the comprehensive nature of Islam (*din wa-dawla*) was an understanding that Islamic values and governance were superior to secular Western political systems.[275] There is however no real contradiction here with Islamists' quest to present democratic values in an Islamic context (to be discussed a little later), because Islamists' quarrel is not with democratic values, but with how democracy is implemented by the West. For example, Hasan al-Banna rejected party politics in Egypt as "artificial", driven by "personal" reasons, and said that political parties were "the greatest obstacle to our [their] development".[276] This criticism should however be seen in the context of Egyptian politics in the late 1930s, when political parties were subject to British influence, and according to the EMB, served as the "imperialists' most reliable lackeys".[277] Thus, the EMB thought that Islamic governance (inclusive of democratic principles) was superior to secular Western political systems, based on the West's implementation of democracy.

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[272] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 204.

[273] Al-Banna in Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 232-233.

[274] The SMB was established independently from the EMB, notwithstanding the two organisations' ideological similarities.

[275] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, 23.

[276] Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*, 203.

[277] Ibid., 204.

In contrast to the early EMB, the 1980 document makes no negative reference to the West and its political system. However, colonialism is singled out for severe criticism, as is the "false democratic regime", which "the colonial power established in its place".[278] Democracy, as a political system, was therefore not the problem, but rather colonialism and its legacy. This openness to democracy as a political system was of course most prominently supported by the early SMB as witnessed in the Brotherhood's participation in parliamentary politics.

The 1980 document further does not reject secular values, in contrast to the Tunisian ITM's founding statement. In its founding statement, the ITM called on its followers to adopt a comprehensive vision of Islam, and political action away from secularism and opportunism.[279] In contrast, the 1980 document does not reject secular values. During my interviews, a member of the executive said that secular values are human values. He explained as follows: "The concept of citizenship with equal rights and duties, these are secular principles...I would call them human principles, which is compatible with human values".[280] He further said that the SMB does not reject secular values out of hand, because the area of commonality between the SMB and the secular 'other' is broader than the area of conflict between them.[281] Thus, in contrast to the Tunisian ITM, the SMB does not reject secular values.

In sum, Islamist movements, including the SMB, view Islam as a comprehensive system that includes politics. However, in the 1980 document, the SMB's position on the West and secular values appears moderate compared to the positions of the early EMB, and the Tunisian ITM, respectively.

3.1.1.3 An Islamic State
Thus far, we have considered two concepts as they appear in the 1980 document, namely reformism, and Islam as a comprehensive system. We have seen that

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[278] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 206.
[279] My translation of the ITM's founding statement.
[280] Interview conducted with participant 3, in January 2015.
[281] Interview conducted with participant 3, in January 2015.

both concepts contribute to the moderate character of the SMB's policy on governance. In this section, we will examine the third and final concept, namely an Islamic state. However, the early SMB did not describe an Islamic state in a systematic or comprehensive manner.[282] Their earliest program in 1954 consisted only of general objectives to bring about "a virtuous policy which would carry out the rules and teaching of Islam".[283] Against this, the 1980 document is historic, not only does it critique Syria's former political systems, but provides us with details of the SMB's political ideal.[284] Thus, we will see that the 1980 document confirms the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary political system, even though, at the time, the Syrian state and the SMB were engaged in a violent standoff.

In line with reformist movements' juxtaposition of "the problem" with Islam as "the solution", the 1980 document critiques all former political systems in Syria: the French Mandate (1920-1946), the early nationalist governments, unity with Egypt (1958 – 1961), and the secular Arab Socialist Ba`th party's domination from 1963.[285] Logically, an Islamic state remains as the only solution to the country's political misfortunes.

In what is to follow, I will describe the main features of the 1980 document's Islamic state in four steps:

First, the Statement and Program describes a pluralist political system with "direct" elections, freedom of expression, trade unions, rights for "ethnic and religious minorities" (but not atheists), and the rule of law.[286] In other words, the document describes a parliamentary political system.

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[282] Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 128.
[283] Hanna Batatu, "Syria's Muslim Brethren," *Merip Reports*, no. 110 (1982): 1.
[284] The 1980 document consists of two parts, namely a) the Statement that captures the SMB's ideology, and b) a Program that provides the reader with the details of how the Islamic revolution would lead to a new political system, and the details of this system.
[285] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 206-210.
[286] Ibid., 214-220.

Second, the document invites its audience to a "type of Islam".[287] This is an Islam that "enjoin the good and forbid the wrong", "abolish...oppression...establish justice" and guarantee the citizen's essential needs.[288] Qur'an (3:104) commands Muslims to enjoin the good and forbid the wrong. This command, also known as *hizbah*, infers legitimate authority in an Islamic context.[289] The SMB's "type of Islam" therefore ensures that Islamic governance delivers an ethical or moral society.

Third, the 1980 document equates *shura* with the term "democracy" in the sub-section's title, and states that in an Islamic context, *shura* is "the basis of good government".[290] Early Muslim reformer Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) compared *shura* with democracy in an attempt to reconcile Islam and Western ideas,[291] as do many contemporary Islamists,[292] including the SMB. The 1980 document further presents *shura* as the opposite of "domination and tyranny".[293] Thus, the equation of *shura* and democracy in the 1980 document provides the SMB's Islamic state with a value that the secularist Syrian opposition would associate with good governance.

However, *shura* also gives democracy an Islamic character. During my interviews, I asked a member of the executive: What would make the SMB's rule Islamic? He responded: "Islam did not come with detailed rules for [a] modern lifestyle...only with general rules...such as equality and freedom".[294] But he also emphasized that the government should be based on *shura*. In a subsequent

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[287] Ibid., 205-206.

[288] Ibid., 206.

[289] M. Cook, "Al-Nahy 'an Al-Munkar," in *Encyclopeadia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. Th. Bianquis P. Bearman, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2012).

[290] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 215-216.

[291] Azzam Tamimi, "Islam and Democracy from Tahtawi to Ghannouchi," *Theory, culture & society* 24, no. 2 (2007): 46.

[292] Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*, 154.

[293] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 215-216.

[294] Interview conducted with participant 2, in January 2015.

attempt to clarify the SMB's thinking on the concept of *shura*, I was told that *shura* is "the cornerstone for an Islamic life on all social and political levels".[295] Thus, the SMB not only uses *shura* to reconcile Islam with Western ideas, but also views *shura* as contributing to that which makes a democratic political system Islamic. Thus, *shura* can be utilised to appeal to two different, and even two opposing target audiences.

Fourth, the document suggests that sharia makes governance Islamic.[296] The 1980 document does not explicitly mention an Islamic system or *al-nizam al-Islami*, but mentions sharia as follows: "the Islamic Revolution will rely on Allah alone, adhere to His laws [sharia]"; "What distinguishes our state...is its adherence to the Islamic doctrine and its bondage to the laws [sharia]"; and "Islam, with its doctrine, laws [sharia], discipline, and morals ... this is indeed the essence of the message of Islam."[297]

The 1980 Statement and Program further lists the "oneness of God", which gives "unity of doctrine", and "Shari`ah", which "guarantees unity of system", as the first two elements of the Islamic nation.[298] The other unifying elements are: the Arabic language, a shared history, territory, and customs.[299] Earlier, we have seen that the SMB supports the modern nation-state. While elements such as a shared language, history, territory, and customs are common to most nation-states, it is clearly the oneness of God and sharia that distinguish the SMB's Islamic nation (state). But what does sharia mean for an Islamic state?

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[295] Return correspondence from an executive member of the SMB, dated 3 March 2016.
[296] For other examples, see Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 235; Euben and Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden*, 11.
[297] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*." 213, 262 and 264.
[298] The Statement and Program in Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 254.
[299] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 254.

Mitchell posits that the centrality of sharia to an Islamic state or system means that Islamic governance rests on a set of legal, and not political principles.[300] Kramer concurs with this position, but notes that the debate on sharia has shifted to ask whether sharia provides "a comprehensive set of norms and values regulating human life down to the minutest detail, or a set of general rules of good life and moral behaviour".[301] The 1980 document does not provide an answer. The Political Project for the Future Syria (2004) confirms that laws will be Islamised, based on sharia,[302] and identify equality, justice, and consultation (*shura*) as "the most prominent features...of the Shari`ah".[303] We will therefore further explore Kramer's question in the next chapter when we discuss the 2004 Political Project.

Notable, is the fact that the existing personal status law in Syria is already based on sharia.[304] This has been the case since 1953, when Syria's personal status law was enacted.[305] At the time, Mustafa al-Siba`i applauded the fact that "Islamic *fiqh*/jurisprudence" was the primary source "for ruling".[306] He saw this as evidence that religion and state cannot be separated.[307] However, what was unforseen in the 1950s is that sharia as the primary source of Syria's personal status law does not make Syria's one-party Ba`th state Islamic.

In sum, we have seen that the main features of the SMB's Islamic state, as set forth in the 1980 document, are a parliamentary political system, *hizbah*, *shura*,

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[300] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 235.

[301] Krämer, "Islamist Notions of Democracy," 4.

[302] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, 34.

[303] Ibid., 27.

[304] Personal status law (qanun al-awal al-shakhsiyya) regulates family affairs to do with marriage, divorce, inheritance, custody over children, maintenance, and adoption. See Rania Maktabi, "Female Citizenship in Syria - Framing the 2009 Controversy over Personal Status Law," in *Syria from Reform to Revolt: Volume 1: Political Economy and International Relations*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Tina Zintl (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 176.

[305] James Norman Dalrymple Anderson, "The Syrian Law of Personal Status," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 17, no. 1 (1955): 34.

[306] Al-Siba`i, *Al-Dīn Wa-Al-Dawlah Fi Al-Islam*, 95.

[307] Ibid.

and sharia. However, we have also seen that the 1980 document does not provide a clear answer on how comprehensive the position of sharia might be in the Brotherhood's notion of an Islamic state. The example of Syria shows that an Islamic state does not necessarily result when sharia becomes the primary source for a country's personal status law, as opposed to all its laws. However, sharia remains a key feature of an Islamic state, and will therefore be explored further when we examine the SMB's 2004 political platform, in Chapter 4, as a continuation of our quest to explain the SMB's moderate policy on governance.

In this section, we have seen that the 1980 document ideologically commits the SMB to a moderate policy on governance, based on three concepts: reformism, Islam as a comprehensive system (*din wa-dawla*), and an Islamic state. Thus, as a reformist movement, the SMB uses *ijtihad* to accommodate democratic principles in its notion of an Islamic state. The Brotherhood further views Islam as a comprehensive system that includes politics, and which is not necessarily in conflict with secular values when they are seen as human values. Finally, we saw that the SMB's Islamic state is characterised by a parliamentary political system, *hizbah*, *shura*, and sharia.

3.1.2   Sectarian Rhetoric

In this section, I will demonstrate the SMB's moderation, based on its avoidance of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document. Significant in the 1980 document is the SMB's avoidance of sectarian rhetoric, even though Syria's minority Alawis controlled the government, and sectarian rhetoric was common among the jihadi Fighting Vanguard (*al-Tali`at al-Muqatila*).[308] In doing so, I will show that a) the document does not utilise the derogatory term for Alawis, that is "Nusayri", which means that the SMB refrained from using sectarian rhetoric, b) the notion that the SMB refrained from sectarian rhetoric because it functioned more as a socio-political than a religious-political actor from the mid-1970s does not stand up to scrutiny, and c) the SMB's pragmatism in itself does not adequately explain the absence of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document. This leaves us with the

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[308] The fighting Vanguard will be discussed in detail in the next section.

following question, which will be answered in the final section: Who is the target audience that might explain the SMB's avoidance of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document?

In the 1980 document, the SMB emphasizes the al-Asad government's sectarianism, based on the prominent role of Alawis, [309] a branch of Shia Islam, in the Syrian government. The sectarian nature of the Syrian government is further framed as a "dangerous development", and the reader is warned that sectarianism in early Islamic history foretold subsequent "fall and collapse".[310] The 1980 document also asks: "How can 9 or 10 percent of the population…be allowed to dominate the majority"?[311] To which it replies: "that is against the logic of things".[312] Thus, although the 1980 document places the minority al-Asad government in a sectarian context, it does not utilise the derogatory term for Alawis, that is "Nusayri".

In 1980 and even earlier, the Fighting Vanguard used the term "Nusayri" to depict Syria's Alawis as heretics. Muhammad ibn Nusayer was the Alawi branch's forerunner, but Alawis generally consider the term "Nusayri" offensive.[313] The offensive meaning of the term originated with three fatwas by the 14th century Hanbali scholar Ibn Taymiyyah. Ibn Taymiyyah viewed "Nusayris" as non-

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[309] For a discussion of Syria's Alawis, see Leon Goldsmith, *Cycle of Fear: Syria's Alawites in War and Peace* (London: Hurst, 2015); Aslam Farouk-Alli, "Sectarianism in Alawi Syria: Exploring the Paradoxes of Politics and Religion," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 34, no. 3 (2014); Mahmud A Faksh, "The Alawi Community of Syria: A New Dominant Political Force," *Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 2 (1984): 135-136.

[310] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 209.

[311] Statistics for Syria's population make-up can only be seen as an approximation as a) no reliable statistics are available, and b) due to the large population displacement after the outbreak of the Syrian uprising in March 2011. Alawis constitute Syria's biggest minority of around 11-12%, with Christians at 11%, and Druze and Isma'ilis at 3.4% and 1.59%, against a Sunni majority of around 70%.

[312] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 211.

[313] Leon Goldsmith, "'God Wanted Diversity': Alawite Pluralist Ideals and Their Integration into Syrian Society 1832–1973," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 4 (2013): 392 fn. 1.

believers: "they…are more heretical…than the Jews and the Christians and even more heretical than many of the polytheists…in truth they do not believe in God, or in his Messenger".[314] It is therefore notable that the 1980 document does not use the term "Nusayri", even though jihadi Islamists such as the Fighting Vanguard make use of the term to label the Alawis as heretics.

In Chapter 1, we saw that Lobmeyer posits that the SMB changed from a religious-political movement to a socio-political movement in the mid-1970s, based on the alteration of the SMB's discourse, namely from a religious discourse to a secular one.[315] The reference to the al-Asad government's minority rule in the1980 document, and not the contested religious status of the Alawi branch in Islam, thus seem to suggest that Lobmeyers theory might also useful to explain the SMB's avoidance of sectarian rhetoric in 1980. But this is not true for the SMB's position on the Palestine issue in the 1980 document, i.e.: "Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans (Qur'an, 5:85)(*sic*)."[316] Jews (and pagans) are therefore identified as the primary nemesis of Muslims, due to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The "Palestinian case" is further said not to be "a case of stolen land, but rather a case of religion and doctrine".[317] Thus, the SMB's rhetoric in the 1980 document is not only political, but in places, is also highly religious, which challenges the notion that Lobmeyer's theory might explain the SMB's avoidance of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document.

However, the SMB is a pragmatic political actor, which leads us to ask next whether the absence of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document might be due to its pragmatism. The SMB's political pragmatism has been evident from the start.

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[314] Yvette Talhamy, "The Fatwas and the Nusayri/Alawis of Syria," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 2 (2010): 179.
[315] Lobmeyer, "Islamic Ideology and Secular Discourse: The Islamists of Syria," 401 - 412.
[316] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 256. The correct reference is 5:82 and an alternative translation is: "You will surely find the most intense of the people in animosity toward the believers [to be] the Jews and those who associate others with Allah…"
[317] Ibid.

For example, in 1950 Mustafa Siba`i compromised on a clause in a new draft constitution that would have afforded Islam the status of state religion (*din al-dawla*).[318] Siba`i did so to protect the Brotherhood's political influence. At the time, the SMB had a Minister in government whom might have lost his cabinet's position if the secularist parties and churches, which opposed the clause, forced the government to fall.[319] In order to prevent this from happening, the SMB compromised and accepted as an alternative that "the religion of the President of the Republic is Islam" and "Islamic Fiqh is the main source of legislation".[320] This example shows that in 1950, the SMB, as a pragmatic political actor, compromised its religious agenda in aid of political interests.

Based on the above example, we might posit that the 1980 document appears to address Syria's Alawi community with the same political pragmatism, that is in full recognition of Syria's demographic diversity. But in 1980, the SMB was involved in an Islamic insurgency against the minority Alawi government, as will be further discussed in the next section (3.2). The SMB's main competitor for supporters and ideological control, the Fighting Vanguard, further employed an overly sectarian discourse, as mentioned. Thus, based on pragmatism alone, we would expect the SMB to adopt sectarian rhetoric. But against our expectation, the SMB did not adopt sectarian rhetoric. The SMB's political pragmatism is therefore not disputed, but in the given political context, political pragmatism does not stand as a satisfactory explanation for the absence of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document. Instead we should ask: Whom did the SMB want to impress as a respectable political actor? Or, who is the target audience that might explain the SMB's avoidance of sectarian rhetoric? We will return to this question in the final section of this chapter.

In sum, the SMB avoided sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document, even though the document labels the al-Asad government a minority government, based on the predominance of Alawis in government; and its political competitor, the

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[318] Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 174.
[319] Ibid., 175.
[320] Ibid., 174.

Fighting Vanguard, used sectarian rhetoric. We also saw that the notion that the SMB avoided sectarian rhetoric, because the movement changed from a religious-political movement to a socio-political movement did not stand up to scrutiny, and we were also not able to explain the absence of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document as due to the SMB's political pragmatism, given the political context. Thus, the absence of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document confirms the SMB's moderation, which in turn leads to the question: Who is the target audience that might explain the SMB's avoidance of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document?

In this section, I showed the SMB's moderation as articulated in the 1980 document. In the first part, we saw that the document defines the SMB ideologically as a reformist movement, which utilises *ijtihad* to accommodate democratic principles. It also describes Islam as a comprehensive system that includes religion and state (*din wa-dawla*), and that does not reject secular values when they are seen as human values. Finally, the document describes an Islamic state as based on a parliamentary political system, *hizbah, shura*, and sharia. The second part demonstrated that several lines of explanation, in line with analyses of the SMB and like movements in the literature, cannot explain the absence of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document. This leads us to pose a key question: Who did the 1980 document try to impress with its absence of sectarian rhetoric?

3.2   Political Environment

In this section, I will place the 1980 document in context by showing that the SMB's political environment in 1980 was one of violent contention, and not one that appreciates democratic principles. In doing so, I will show that a) the Iranian revolution in 1979 gave Islamists a model for revolution, as opposed to one for a parliamentary democracy; b) Hafez al-Asad monopolised power to create an authoritarian and repressive political system; and c) the Syrian government blamed the SMB for the worst instances of violence in the 1979 – 1982 conflict, which motivated the SMB's to adopt armed jihad. We will see that the ensuing political environment was politically intolerant, and increasingly exclusive, and

therefore not open to the SMB's moderate policy on governance, studied in the previous section. This also shows that at least for the SMB, exclusion did not lead to radicalisation.

3.2.1 Iranian Revolution

The Iranian revolution gave Islamists a model for revolution in 1979, as opposed to one for a parliamentary democracy. The Iranian Islamic revolution is one of the milestones of the twentieth century, because it offers us a new revolutionary model, different from the revolutionary tradition established in 1789 and 1917.[321] It also led to the formation of an Islamic government, as conceptualised by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.[322] However, it was not the Iranian (Shi`a) model of Islamic governance that inspired Sunni Islamists,[323] but rather the "popular uprisings as a tactic to topple the regime".[324] Previously, such tactics were seen as the prerogative of "leftist and Marxist groups". [325] Thus, the Iranian revolution gave Muslims a local model to bring about revolutionary change.

However, in the 1980 document, the SMB's emphasizes the Islamic revival, and not the violent character of the revolution: "Nowadays, Islam is showing a strong revival and a universal upsurge…".[326] The 1980 document's reference to the Iranian revolution therefore hints at the influence of the revolution on Islamists at the time. But instead of emphasising the violent overthrow of the Shah's autocratic and secular regime–a regime very similar to the one against which the 1980 document incited, it highlights the Islamic revival. Thus, another paradox appears when we compare the influence of the Iranian revolution on Islamists

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[321] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1994), 455.

[322] http://www.imam-khomeini.com/web1/english/showitem.aspx?cid= 1794&pid=2108&h=13&f=14 .

[323] For an overview of the doctrinal differences between Sunni and Shi'a militants see: Emmanuel Sivan, "Sunni Radicalism in the Middle East and the Iranian Revolution," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21, no. 1 (1989): 1-30.

[324] Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Egypt's Islamic Militants," *Merip Reports* (1982): 13.

[325] Ibid.

[326] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 204.

with the 1980 document's emphasis on the Islamic revival. From this example, we can conclude that the 1980 document advocated a moderate stance, notwithstanding the profound influence of the Iranian revolution on Islamists at the time. This means that the 1980 document was not in line with the political sentiment that the Iranian revolution exported.

3.2.2 Syria's Authoritarian Ascent

In Syria, Hafez al-Asad monopolised power to create an authoritarian and repressive political system. Under Mustafa al-Siba`i, the Brotherhood was able to pursue an Islamic state through parliamentary politics, which were intermittently interrupted by military coups. The political environment of the late 1970s and early 1980s was in contrast intolerant and increasingly exclusive.[327] Next, we will consider Syria's authoritarian ascent.

Syria's first Alawi President Hafez al-Asad used two interrelated processes to monopolise political power, namely a political process, and a sectarian `asabiyya process. The political process found expression in the consolidation of power by the Ba`th party, which was supported by the military. The sectarian `asabiyya process found expression in the political and economic empowerment of the Alawis.[328] These two processes delivered a new urban elite, which was first and foremost loyal to Hafez al-Asad.[329]

The Ba`th party was therefore the foundation of Hafez al-Asad's Syria,[330] but it was through the military that Hafez al-Asad and his fellow officers consolidated their takeover of the state. The officers who took power through a military coup

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[327] For an overview of how state institutions, namely the parliament, Ba'th party and security organs were utilised to control society in aid of one-party rule, see Radwan Ziadeh, *Power and Policy in Syria: Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations and Democracy in the Modern Middle East* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 10 - 25.

[328] For an anaysis of Syrian Alawis' ascent in the framework of Ibn Khaldun's concept of `asabiyya, see Leon Goldsmith, "Syria's Alawites and the Politics of Sectarian Insecurity: A Khaldunian Perspective," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 3, no. 1 (July 2011): 33-60; Michel Seurat, *L'etat De Barbarie* (Ed. du Seuil, 1989).

[329] Hinnebusch, "The Islamic Movement in Syria: Sectarian Conflict and Urban Rebellion in an Authoritarian-Populist Regime," 140.

[330] Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 174.

on 8 March 1963 were Ba`thists, Nasserists, and Independents. However, within a few months the Ba`thists purged the Nasserists and Independents from the powerful Military Committee, and the National Council for the Revolutionary Command (NCRC), through which the Military Committee ruled.[331] Next, in February 1966, the Military Committee, which controlled the Regional Command in Syria, and the Ba`th party's National Command came to a violent standoff.[332] The resultant inter-party coup left the Military Committee stronger, and ended Ba`th party founder Michel `Aflaq's leadership of the party.[333] The Military Committee and the NCRC subsequently disappeared when the Ba`th party became the public face of power in Syria. Hafez al-Asad's internal coup (presented inside Syria as "the corrective movement") in 1970 paved the way for Asad, using the Ba`th party, to consolidate his monopoly on power. This came about, based on the notorious article 8 of the 1973 constitution, which declared the Ba`th party as "the leading party in State and society".[334]

Hafez al-Asad's journey from the politically insignificant village of Qurdaha in the Coastal/Alawi Mountains to the capital Damascus signified for Alawis a break with their history as the underdog.[335] Like many other Alawis, Hafez al-Asad's ascent came through the military. This relationship between the military and Alawis in Syria can be traced back to the French occupation in 1921. In an attempt to contain the mainly urban nationalists, the French commissioned

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[331] Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba`Th Party*, 31-33. Also see the official Ba'th Party document in Van Dam, Appendix C, page 159, in which purging non-party comrades were explained as follows: "because there is nothing more lethal to the revolution than mutual contradiction and irresolution" ; Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 82.

[332] Michel `Aflaq envisioned the National Command, which comprised of different Regional Commands, to have the ultimate authority, but the Syrian Regional Command turned `Aflaq's model on its head. See *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 98-99.

[333] Ibid., 101-103.

[334] Uri Davis, "Citizenship Legislation in the Syrian Arab Republic," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (1996): 33.

[335] Faksh, "The Alawi Community of Syria: A New Dominant Political Force," 133, notes that it was not unusual for urban Sunnis in the 1950s to have Alawi servants.

minorities for its local paramilitary force, the *Troupes Spèciales du Levant*.[336] The Alawis' disproportionate representation in the *Troupes Spèciales du Levant* therefore started a trend that continued long after the French mandate came to an end in 1946.

The political and economic empowerment of Alawis in Syria did however not lead to a clear case of minority-rule, as we witnessed in South Africa under the Apartheid system. Phillips perceptively posits that "some Alawis" – who can further be linked to the al-Asad family, clan and tribe – ran government.[337] Still, the perception was that governance was based on minority privilege, as reflected in the anti-Alawi rhetoric of the government's local and foreign enemies.[338] The Alawis' political ascension further caused an undeniable political and social transformation in Syria, which invited criticism, as reflected in the 1980 document's comments on the sectarian nature of the Hafez al-Asad government.

In sum, Hafez al-Asad created a political system in which political power was concentrated in the Ba`th party, supported by the military, with Alawis in key positions.[339] This led to a repressive and authoritarian political system, which did not invite democratic principles, and neither was it open to the SMB's moderate policy on governance. However, the SMB's remained committed to a moderate policy on governance, which shows that at least for the SMB, exclusion did not lead to radicalisation.

3.2.3   Scapegoat: The SMB
In the previous section, we saw that in 1980 Syria was characterised by a repressive and authoritarian political system. Here, I will argue that the Syrian government blamed the SMB for the worst instances of violence in the 1979 –

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[336] Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 18.

[337] Christopher Phillips, "Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria," *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (2015): 365; Also see Goldsmith, "Syria's Alawites and the Politics of Sectarian Insecurity: A Khaldunian Perspective," 40-41.

[338] Phillips, "Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria," 366.

[339] Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba`Th Party*, 78-79.

1982 conflict. The 1980 document posits that this led to the SMB's adoption of armed jihad, which added to the volatility of the political environment.

At first, the Syrian government did not blame the Islamic insurgency on the SMB. For example, two Syrians were hanged in the central square of Damascus in June 1977 for belonging to a "gang" that allegedly assassinated four individuals with Iraq's "instigation and financial support".[340] The Syrian government also accused the rival Ba`th government in Baghdad, when a car bomb near the Syrian Air Force Command headquarters in Damascus killed six in July 1977.[341] The same happened when, a few days later, another bomb explosion in the centre of Damascus killed two more and injured 53.[342]

It was not until 1979, when the Fighting Vanguard killed 83 Alawi cadets at the Artillery School in Aleppo that the government blamed the Brotherhood. [343] This event unleashed a brutal military campaign against the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood denied responsibility for the attack, but to no avail.[344] Fifteen Muslim Brothers in jail were immediately executed,[345] after which a further 6000 were arrested.[346] Four months later, the SMB adopted armed jihad in response to the government's 'declaration of war'.[347]

After the attack on the Artillery school in 1979, the unrest in Syria escalated. The state's military response to the Aleppo Artillery School attack did not immediately crush the unrest, but fuelled its escalation. March 1980 brought mass demonstrations and strikes to most major cities, with more non-Islamist

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[340] "Two Syrians, Rami Deeb Turkawi and Mohammed Munir Hourani, Are Publicly Hanged...", in *The New York Times* (14 June 1977).
[341] "Car Apparently Packed with Explosives Explodes in St between Syrian Air...", in *The New York Times* (5 July 1077).
[342] "Bomb Explodes in Central Damascus. 2 Killed, 53 Hurt. Syria Blames Iraq (S).", in *The New York Times* (11 July 1977).
[343] Khatib, *Islamic Revivalism in Syria: The Rise and Fall of Ba`Thist Secularism*, 74.
[344] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 111.
[345] Khatib, *Islamic Revivalism in Syria: The Rise and Fall of Ba`Thist Secularism*, 74-75.
[346] Interview conducted with participant 1, in January 2015.
[347] Interview conducted with a member of the SMB in January 2015.

opposition elements joining the uprising.[348] This escalation also drew more civilians into the conflict. For example, a military operation against civil unrest in Aleppo in April 1980 caused hundreds of civilian deaths. Large-scale arrests required a prison camp in the citadel, in the old part of Aleppo, as all Aleppo's detention centres and prisons were full.[349] Similar military operations occurred in Jisr al-Shughur, Ma'arrat al-Nu`man, and Idlib.[350] This was, in hindsight, a dark forecast of events still to come in the wake of the 2011 Syrian uprising. In response to the escalating unrest, Ba`th affiliated "popular organisations" – students, peasants, teachers, writers, sportsmen etc. – were armed to destroy "the venom of the Muslim Brotherhood".[351]

The Hafez al-Asad government therefore singled out the SMB as its main scapegoat, even though others in society were also punished. Defiant professional associations, such as the lawyers, were disbanded, while leftists and critics within the Ba`th and the security forces were expelled.[352] However, the SMB bore the brunt of the government's scorn, as reflected in Hafez al-Asad's statement on 9 March 1980: "…the enemies of Islam who traffic in religion will be swept away".[353]

The 1980 document posits that the SMB broke with tradition and adopted armed jihad in 1979, in response to the Syrian government's violence against the movement.[354] This was a clear departure from the Brotherhood's initial non-violent approach to domestic political change.[355] Scholars differ on the main reason(s) for the SMB's decision to adopt armed jihad. Some scholars point to

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[348] Lia, "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 8.

[349] *Syria Unmasked: The Suppression of Human Rights by the Asad Regime*, Human Rights Watch Books (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 15.

[350] Ibid., 12-21.

[351] Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 327-328.

[352] *Syria Unmasked: The Suppression of Human Rights by the Asad Regime*, 9 and 14.

[353] *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 328.

[354] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 201-202.

[355] The SMB adopted armed jihad in 1948, but that was part of its external policy in defence of Palestinian sovereignty.

the al-Asad government's repression of the SMB,[356] while others blame ideological change, due to a change in leadership,[357] as discussed in the first chapter. The SMB justifies its decision as based on self-defence,[358] which is in line with the 1980 document's testimony that armed jihad was "a last resort".[359] Thus, the 1980 document holds that the SMB adopted armed jihad in 1979 in response to state violence, which increased further the volatility of the political environment.

In sum, though the Syrian government did not initially blame the Islamic insurgency on the SMB, it found it convenient to blame the Brotherhood for the Fighting Vanguard's attack on the Artillery School in Aleppo. This led to the SMB's adoption of armed jihad as a "last resort" in 1979, which contributed to the volatility of the political environment.

In this section, we have seen that the Iranian revolution in 1979 gave Islamists a model for revolution, rather than for parliamentary democracy. We have also seen that Hafez al-Asad exploited political power through an Alawi sectarian `asabiyya` process, and the one-party rule of the Ba`th party, supported by the military. The result was an authoritarian and repressive political system. The Syrian government further held the SMB responsible for the (1979-1982) Islamic insurgency, even though the Brotherhood's commitment and actual contribution to armed jihad is considered to have been far less than that of its competitor, the

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[356] Ziadeh, *Power and Policy in Syria: Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations and Democracy in the Modern Middle East*, 138-139.

[357] Pargeter, "From Diplomacy to Arms and Back to Diplomacy: The Evolution of the Syrian Ikhwan," 66-67; Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 96-98; Lia, "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 4; Lobmeyer, "Islamic Ideology and Secular Discourse: The Islamists of Syria," 398.

[358] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 115.

[359] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 265.

Fighting Vanguard.[360] Nevertheless, the resultant political environment was one of violent contention,[361] and not one that appreciates democratic principles.

3.3   Islamist Discourse

In the first section, I showed the SMB's ongoing commitment to a moderate policy on governance. In the second section, I placed the document in context, by showing that the political environment in 1980 did not appreciate democratic principles.   Thus, we have seen that in 1980 the SMB was functioning in an environment which, in the each of the several respects outlined above, was inimical to democratic principles and rhetoric, and yet the Brotherhood nonetheless, for the most part, continued to espouse democracy. Therefore, the environment cannot explain their stance in the 1980 document, and we need to look elsewhere for the explanation.

In this section, I will continue my quest to elucidate the apparent contradiction between the 1980 document's moderate policy on governance and an inhospitable environment, characterised by a violent standoff between an Islamic insurgency (later to become an uprising) and the Hafez al-Asad government. I will now show that the Islamist discourse of the late 1970s and 1980 does not accommodate, and therefore, does not explain the SMB's moderate stance in the 1980 document.

In chapter 1, I defined Islamists as a "discursive community", to highlight the diversity of the political actors included in the term. This diversity challenges my aim of defining Islamist points of comparison against which I can measure the 1980 document. Therefore, I will compare three features of the 1980 document, namely the espousal of a democratic political system, civil law, and minority rights, with the Islamist discourse of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

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[360] See Lia, "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 17.

[361] With hindsight, the Syrian government's response to the 1979-1982 Islamic insurgency was a dire warning of events to follow the 2011 Syrian uprising, to be discussed in Chapter 5.

First, we will compare the SMB's democratic political system with God's sovereignty or *hakimiyya*. Some Islamists in the 1970s followed Qutb in rejecting democracy as incompatible with God's sovereignty. For example, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad adopted this notion in the 1970s. Ayman al-Zawahiri, a former ideologue of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and currently the head of al-Qaeda, described democracy as "shirk-u-billah" (*sic*) (assigning partners with God) in the early 1990s.[362] His thesis is that democracy as 'rule by the people for the people' takes the power to legislate away from God and places it in the hands of the people.[363] In this context, members of parliament are idols (partners with God) and the electorate commits idolatry or *shirk* in voting for them. The Fighting Vanguard, the SMB's Islamist competitors in 1980, also viewed God's sovereignty as incompatible with democracy, as we will see in the next section.

In contrast to the Fighting Vanguard, the SMB supported and participated in a parliamentary democracy from its inception in the mid-1940s. In the 1980 document the SMB further equates *shura* with good governance. Qutb's influence from the 1960s onwards questioned support for a parliamentary democracy, only to be challenged in the 1990s by scholar and ideologue of the EMB Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Qaradawi affords us a different position than Zawahiri on the compatibility of democracy and God's sovereignty. Qaradawi accepts Qutb's conception of *hakimiyya,* but his application differs from that of al-Zawahiri. Qaradawi posits that *hakimiyya* does not negate human agency, because it is humans who have to read the text and devise rulings on issues for which there are no authoritative textual evidence.[364] Qaradawi's approach is therefore similar to that of the SMB who in 1980, and even earlier, used *ijtihad* to deal with contemporary challenges.[365]

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[362] Tamimi, "Islam and Democracy from Tahtawi to Ghannouchi," 51.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Gudrun Krämer, "Drawing Boundaries Yusuf Al-Qaradawi on Apostasy," in *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*, ed. Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 205.
[365] Rashid Ghannouchi holds a similar view on ijtihad, see Azzam S. Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat within Islamism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 187-188.

Second, we will compare the SMB's use of "civil law" with sharia. Earlier we have seen that the implementation of sharia is fundamental to an Islamic state. Sharia in the 1970s, as is the case today, became a rallying cry for Islamists of different orientations. The Brotherhood's support for a judiciary that enforces both "*fiqh* (Islamic law)" and civil "law",[366] once again sets the SMB apart from other Islamist movements. From the 19th century, most Muslim majority states have had secular legal systems, borrowed from Europe.[367] Notwithstanding this reality, Islamist discourse in the 1970s did not allow for the application of civil law.

Third, neither minority rights, nor equal citizenship were core elements of Islamist discourse in the 1970s and 1980s. The norm was and still is that minority rights are ensured based on the traditional sharia principle of *dhimma.* This affords non-Muslims protection in an Islamic state, but not equal citizenship.

In 1980, the SMB highlighted minority rights and citizenship, based on equality before the law.[368] Ideologue and signatory to the 1980 document Sa`id Hawwa said in an interview to a German newspaper: "The protection of minorities is stipulated in the law".[369] The 1980 document also specifically makes provision for minority rights: "The civil and legal rights of all ethnic and religious minorities will be protected and their personal liberties guaranteed".[370] Though the document is not as clear on equal citizenship as the 2012 Pledge and Charter, it says: "all mankind come [*sic*] from Adam…and they are all held equal in front of

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[366] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 219.

[367] Nathan J. Brown, "Sharia and State in the Modern Muslim Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 3 (1997): 360.

[368] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 214.

[369] Bienfait Claus, "Moslem-Brüder Nennen Ihren Führer Im Kampf Gegen Das Reginie Asad (Muslim Brothers Call Their Leader in the Battle against the Asad Regime)," *Die Welt* 23 December 1980.

[370] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 218.

the law".[371] In addition, equal citizenship was one of the SMB's demands in the Brotherhood's negotiations with the Syrian government in 1987.[372]

The 1980 document criticised Alawi minority rule, as discussed earlier. The Tunisian Islamic Tendency Movement's (ITM) founding statement also blamed minorities for Tunisia's troubles: "Tunisia is part of the Islamic world, but has developed for the benefit of imperialism and internal minorities".[373] The Fighting Vanguard made no provision for the protection of minority rights, and even said that non-Muslims could not be part of a new Syrian administration.

Thus, the SMB's moderate stance in the 1980 document cannot be explained as a result of the influence of the Islamist movements of the late 1970s and 1980.

In sum, I have argued that the SMB was not bound by the discourse of analogous movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In fact, the SMB challenged the Islamist discourse of the day with its commitment to a democratic political system, equal citizenship, and civil law. The Islamist discourse of the day therefore does not explain the SMB's moderation as reflected in the 1980 document.

I have now confirmed the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy, and the absence of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document. I have also sketched a political environment that does not encourage democratic principles, and certainly not a parliamentary democracy. Then I showed that the 1980 document's commitment to a democratic political system, equal citizenship, and civil law challenges Islamist discourse prevalent in the 1970s and early 1980s, meaning that the SMB position in the 1980 document also cannot be explained as due to the influence of that discourse. Thus, while we have confirmed that the 1980 document features a paradoxical juxtaposition of the SMB's commitment to

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[371] Ibid., 214.
[372] Al-Jazeera interview with Ali Sadr al-Din al- Bayanouni, 5 December 2005 (Part 2).
[373] My translation of the ITM's founding statement, which is available at ikhwanwiki.com.

a moderate policy on governance and a political environment that is inhospitable to the Brotherhood's moderate stance, we have been able to eliminate a number of alternate explanations for the SMB's moderation in 1980, even though those explanations looked plausible at first sight. Next, I will show that the SMB's primary target audience offers an explanation for its moderate stance in the 1980 document.

3.4 The Statement and Program's Primary Target Audience

In this section, I will argue that the SMB's target audience explains its democratic commitment, and thereby solves the document's puzzling stance. In doing so, I will show that in 1980, for the first time, the SMB targeted a wider audience than its traditionally small and urban support base. This audience included the jihadi Fighting Vanguard and their supporters, the conservative religious scholars (ulama), and vitally, the secularist opposition, which explains that SMB's democratic rhetoric in the 1980 document. I will proceed in three broad steps to focus on each of these groups.

3.4.1 Fighting Vanguard

The document's most obvious target audience was the main proponents of armed jihad in Syria, that is the jihadi Fighting Vanguard (*al-Tal`at al-Muqatila*). However, as we will see next, in targeting the Fighting Vanguard the SMB had to contend with challenging ideological positions on armed jihad, sectarianism, and an Islamic state. We will also see that the SMB's actual relationship with the Fighting Vanguard was varied, at best. However, I will argue that the SMB included the Fighting Vanguard in its target audience, because the Fighting Vanguard competed with the SMB for support and ideological control, but more important, in 1980, the SMB attempted to mobilise the broadest possible sector of the opposition against the al-Asad government.

Even thought a member of the SMB established the Fighting Vanguard, these militants functioned as outliers in relation to the Brotherhood. In the 1960s, Marwan Hadid, a member of the SMB in Hama, established the Fighting

Vanguard,[374] which was initially called 'The Fighting Vanguard of the Muslim Brotherhood' (*al-Tal`at al-Muqatila lil-Ikhwan al-Muslimin)*.[375] However, the name was not based on a subordinate relationship or official affiliation with the SMB. For example, the SMB leadership in 1964, which at the time was controlled by the "Damascus branch",[376] did not hesitate to sideline Hadid when he called for armed jihad against the authorities in Hama.[377] The reason for the jihadi group's initial inclusion of *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* in its name was because they saw themselves as the "real disciples" of the EMB's founder Hasan al Banna, and important EMB ideologue Sayyid Qutb.[378] Hadid was therefore not a mainstream member of the Brotherhood, and the Fighting Vanguard existed outside of the Brotherhood's control.

The influence of Sayyid Qutb on the Fighting Vanguard explains the ideological distance between the jihadis and the SMB. Qutb's seminal work *Ma'alim fi'l-tariq*/Signposts along the way, also translated as "Milestones", and published in 1964, featured prominently in Islamist discourse, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. The two concepts central to Qutb's philosophy, namely God's sovereignty or *hakimiyya* and pre-Islamic ignorance or *jahiliyya*, originated with Abu al-A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979) the founder and long-time leader of the *Jama'at-i-Islami* (The Islamic Association).[379] However, it was Qutb who shaped Islamist discourse in the Arabic speaking world with his use of *hakimiyya* versus sovereignty of the people, and *jahiliyya,* as opposed to an Islamic state or society.[380]

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[374] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 101-102.
[375] Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri*, 38.
[376] Internal differences after the death of al-Siba`i, mainly on armed jihad, led to a split in the SMB between the Damascus branch, led by Issam al-`Attar, and the northern branches, inclusive of Hama and Aleppo, and under the leadership of Adnan Sa`d al-Din. For a comprehensive overview, see: Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 88-96.
[377] Ibid., 101.
[378] Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri*, 38.
[379] Tamimi, "Islam and Democracy from Tahtawi to Ghannouchi," 51.
[380] Ibid.

Qutb posited that in an Islamic society or state, sovereignty (*hakimiyya*) belongs to God alone, as opposed to sovereignty invested in the people that would see some individuals serving others.[381] Qutb's Islamic society further necessitates obedience to sharia or divine law.[382] Sharia in this context must be applied exclusively and in its entirety.[383] Those who obstructed an Islamic society were to face jihad or struggle. Qutb postulated that the agency of such jihad or struggle could be "argument and persuasion" or "physical power", depending on the circumstances.[384] He concluded that armed jihad was necessary for "abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *jahili* system which...makes them (people) serve human overlords instead of God".[385]

Marwan Hadid befriended Qutb whilst studying in Egypt, and came to support Qutb's views on the incompatibility between Islamic societies and pre-Islamic or *jahiliyyah* societies.[386] To Hadid, the secular Ba`th government qualified as *jahiliyyah,* which based on Qutb's understanding thereof necessitated an armed struggle.[387] This commitment to armed struggle against the "apostate" al-Asad government set Hadid apart from the SMB leadership, which he wanted to "revolutionize", in the words of another prominent member from Hama.[388]

Thus, where armed jihad defined the Fighting Vanguard from the outset, the SMB adopted an armed struggle only some 30 years after its formation, and under ideological and physical attack. Furthermore, the SMB's adoption of armed jihad in 1979 was based on political considerations, as opposed to branding the Hafez al-Asad government apostates or *murtadin*.

Further differences between the SMB and the Fighting Vanguard were based on sectarianism, and what each group considered to be an ideal political system. A

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[381] Qutb, *Milestones*, 95.
[382] Ibid.
[383] Krämer, "Drawing Boundaries Yusuf Al-Qaradawi on Apostasy," 183.
[384] Qutb, *Milestones*, 55.
[385] Ibid.
[386] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 99-100.
[387] See Qutb, *Milestones*, 55.
[388] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 102.

sectarian perspective was fundamental to the Fighting Vanguard's worldview, as shown in the group's sectarian-based violence. The Fighting Vanguard also suggested that Syrian Alawis would have "the choice of conversion or exile".[389] The SMB, in contrast, highlighted the Hafez al-Asad government's sectarianism to demonstrate the absence thereof in the Brotherhood's policy. For example, in October 1979 the SMB issued a statement that emphasized that "it was not calling for the downfall of one sect in order that another rule in its place".[390] Thus, though sectarianism might have influenced individual members of the Brotherhood,[391] it was not official policy.

The Fighting Vanguard's Islamic state further made no provision for multi-party politics, a parliamentary democracy, or minority rights.[392] Based on Qutb's understanding of *hakimiyya*, as discussed earlier, the fighting Vanguard viewed God's government as superior to democracy.[393] The Fighting Vanguard also wanted an Islamic state in which the ulama would write the constitution, and rejected cooperation with non-Islamists, who they thought might jeopardise their Islamic state.[394]

The SMB also differs from the Fighting Vanguard on the role of the ulama. The SMB cooperated with the ulama in 1980, but the Statement and Program made no special provision for the ulama to write the constitution. In contrast to the Fighting Vanguard's position, the Secretary General of the Islamic Front,[395] which was formed by the SMB and members of the ulama in 1980, specified that after

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[389] Philippe Gazed, "Muslim Brotherhood Leader on Past Actions, Plans," *LE MATIN in Near East/North Africa Report, No. 2631*, 7 September 1982.

[390] Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 138.

[391] Itzchak Weismann, "Sa'id Hawwa and Islamic Revivalism in Ba`Thist Syria," *Studia Islamica* 85 (1997): 152.

[392] Philippe Gazed, "Muslim Brotherhood Leader on Past Actions, Plans," in *Near East/North Africa Report* (United States of America: [Executive Office of the President], Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Joint Publications Research Service, 1982).

[393] Ibid.

[394] Chris Kutschera, "Syria: Muslim Brothers, the Question of Alliances," *The Middle East magazine* (May 1983), http://www.chris-kutschera.com/A/syrian_muslims.htm.

[395] To be discussed in detail later.

the revolution, a constituent assembly would be elected to write a new constitution.[396] No vanguard party was therefore destined to take power after the revolution. Instead, the Islamic Front proposed to establish a provisional government, which would facilitate general elections, after which it would disband.[397]

However, Qutb's influence was not strictly limited to the jihadi Islamists. Some members of the SMB were also influenced by Qutb, as evident in the demand to boycott the second round of elections in 1974.[398] We saw in Chapter 1 that the SMB actively participated in parliamentary politics up until the Ba`th takeover in 1963. The SMB's subsequent political exclusion was gradual, as opposed to immediate. When the Hafez al-Asad government allowed relatively free elections for governorate (regional) councils in 1972, the SMB supported some (successful) conservative candidates.[399] The SMB also supported 5 (successful) independents in the 1974 general elections.[400] The boycott in 1974 was therefore in contrast to the SMB's history as well as its relative success in maintaining some influence in the Ba`th controlled electoral politics. Zuhair Salem, a member of the executive, explained further that the boycott in 1974 had noting to do with the Independent candidates' parliamentary record, but reflected a hard-line opinion based on the writings of Qutb.[401] Another member of the SMB confirmed this notion in an interview in 2015, when he proposed that it was a combination of pressure from the "regime", and pressure from the "extremists who wanted to Islamise everything", which caused the crisis in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[402]

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[396] Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 133.
[397] Ibid., 137.
[398] Zuhair Salem, "*Safhat Min Tarikh Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin Fi Suriyya* [a Page from the History of the Muslim Brothers in Syria]," (19 September 2010), www.levantnews.com.
[399] Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 184.
[400] Salem, "*Safhat Min Tarikh Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin Fi Suriyya* [a Page from the History of the Muslim Brothers in Syria]".
[401] Ibid.
[402] Interview conducted with participant 1, in January 2015.

Notwithstanding the ideological differences, cooperation did occur between members of the SMB and the Fighting Vanguard. However, such cooperation was ambiguous up until March 1981. Ali Sadr a-Din al-Bayanouni explained that as deputy-head in the late 1970s, neither he nor the rest of the leadership knew that the Fighting Vanguard was behind the campaign of assassinations in Syria.[403] He further said that the SMB only discovered one of its executive members (Eng. Riyad Jamur) had ties with the Fighting Vanguard, after the person in question was arrested, and revealed the information under interrogation.[404] But Al-Bayanouni also acknowledged that relations between the two groups in the city of Hama were far more uncertain, if not indistinct.[405]

The ambiguity that existed between the two organisations is also evident in the story of al-Qaeda strategist Abu Mus`ab al-Suri. Al-Suri joined the Fighting Vanguard in 1980, after which he became a member of the SMB.[406] Al-Suri, in his own words, joined the SMB "on the premise that they were among the people of jihad".[407] Al-Suri however distanced himself from the SMB after the Hama debacle in 1982, which he blames on the SMB leadership.[408] Still, the SMB and the fighting Vanguard formed a joint command in March 1981.[409] The official cooperation was however short-lived, and the Fighting Vanguard withdrew from the joint command by December of that year, exactly because of ideological differences with the SMB.[410]

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[403] Al-Jazeera interview with Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni, 29 November 2005 (Part 1).

[404] Al-Jazeera interview with Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni, 29 November 2005 (Part 1).

[405] Raphaël Lefèvre, "Between Pragmatism and Radicalism: The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Ba'ath Regime," in *Islamist Radicalisation in Europe and the Middle East: Reassessing the Causes of Terrorism*, ed. George Joffé (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 171.

[406] Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri*, 38 and 40.

[407] Ibid., 40.

[408] "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 17.

[409] Al-Jazeera interview with Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni, 5 December 2005 (Part 2).

[410] Lia, "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 7; Thomas Pierret, "Islamist-Secular Cooperation: Accounting for

For the purposes of this study, I consider the SMB's relationship with the Fighting Vanguard as well represented by Ali al-Bayanouni in his 2005 comment to Al-Jazeera: "when you take a group of people who are being repressed, what distinguishes a moderate person from an extremist person?"[411] The SMB and the Fighting Vanguard were clearly two separate organisations, with different ideologies and strategies, but this did not prevent their short-lived cooperation in 1981.

However, it is more relevant for the purpose of my argument to consider the Fighting Vanguard's challenge to the SMB, both for supporters and ideological control. The Fighting Vanguard gained in popularity, compared to the SMB in 1980.[412] Divisions within the SMB and the exile of leaders, such as Siba`i's successor `Isam al-`Attar, diminished the Brotherhood's influence.[413] The Fighting Vanguard's clear ideological commitment to armed jihad, further contrasted with the SMB's reluctance to engage in armed struggle. For example, after the Fighting Vanguard's attack on the Artillery School in Aleppo, the SMB's leadership in exile issued a statement to deny any involvement in the attack, and Muslim leaders from Aleppo, traditionally a SMB stronghold, held demonstrations against the incident.[414] Thus, other than organisation problems in the Brotherhood, its reluctant commitment to jihad possibly cost the SMB support in comparison to the Fighting Vanguard.

Competing historical narratives have also developed on the Islamic insurgency, and the SMB's role therein.[415] We have seen above that the SMB found itself in competition with the Fighting Vanguard for popular support. The short-lived

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the Syrian Exception," in *The Dynamics of Opposition Cooperation in the Arab World: Contentious Politics in Times of Change*, ed. H.J. Kraetzschmar (Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2012), 91.

[411] Al-Jazeera interview with `Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni, 5 December 2005 (Part 2).

[412] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 119.

[413] Lia, "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 3.

[414] Ibid., 6.

[415] Ibid., 17.

joint command occurred in the context of bridging divisions within the SMB, and thus to unify the SMB under `Adnan Sa`d al-Din's leadership with the so-called Damascus-wing of Issam al-`Attar.[416] It is also plausible that the SMB cooperated with the Fighting Vanguard to contain radical elements within the Brotherhood and/or the Fighting Vanguard.

In sum, notwithstanding clear ideological differences, the SMB cooperated with the Fighting Vanguard for a limited period, as evident in the short-lived joint command. However, this cooperation was not based on an ideological connection, but rather on the challenge that the Fighting Vanguard posed to the SMB for supporters and ideological control. Significantly, it also served the SMB's objective to mobilise the broadest possible spectrum of the opposition against the Syrian government. The Fighting Vanguard was therefore not the only, but the 1980 document's most obvious target audience.

3.4.2 Ulama

In the previous section, I identified the Fighting Vanguard as the first of three main constituents in the SMB's target audience in 1980. In this section, I will show that the Syrian ulama is the second main constituent.

The importance of the Syrian ulama, in 1980, lies in its ability to mobilise public support, and to legitimise the Islamic revolution. The Iranian revolution and the parallel increase of religiosity in the public sphere gave the Syrian ulama an added ability to mobilise public support. Pierret further notes the role of the ulama as "secondary protagonists in the crisis", because the Fighting Vanguard recruited some of its leaders from the ulama's study circles.[417] However, other than acting as educators to the middle-class youth who joined the insurgency, the ulama also gave legitimacy to the SMB's Islamic revolution through their membership of the Islamic Front in Syria (*al-Jabha al-Islamiyya fi Suriyya*).

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[416] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 117.
[417] Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 66.

In establishing the Islamic Front in Syria (hereafter the Islamic Front), the SMB defeated the al-Asad government in its objective to prevent any cooperation between Islamists and the Syrian ulama.[418] The SMB and about 100 members of the Syrian ulama established the Islamic Front in Syria in Saudi Arabia in October 1980.[419] This was the SMB's initiative, as evident in 'The Charter of the Islamic Front in Syria', which is almost a duplicate of the SMB's 1980 Statement and Program.[420] The secretary-general of the Islamic Front was Abu al-Nasr al-Bayanouni, a prominent member of the ulama from Aleppo, and the older brother of 'Ali al-Bayanouni, the Brotherhood's controller from 1996 to 2000. In 1980, the SMB therefore succeeded to establish an alliance with an important sector of Syrian society, which added legitimacy to the SMB's project by the fact that prominent members of the ulama across the country endorsed the initiative.[421]

In sum, by establishing the Islamic Front, the SMB defeated the al-Asad government in its objective to foil any cooperation between the SMB and the ulama. The Islamic Front also reflected the SMB's success to obtain support for its Islamic revolution from an important sector of society. Thus, the Syrian ulama is the second main constituent in the SMB's target audience in 1980.

3.4.3 Secularist Opposition
In the previous two sections, we saw that with the 1980 document, the SMB targeted the Fighting Vanguard and the Syrian ulama. Cooperation with the Fighting Vanguard and the Syrian ulama, respectively, was established thought the joint command, on the one hand, and the Islamic Front, on the other. In this section, notwithstanding the absence of such institutional evidence, I will argue that the secularist opposition is the third component to the SMB's primary target audience in 1980.

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[418] Ibid., 188.
[419] Ibid., 189.
[420] Ibid., 190.
[421] For a name list of prominent ulama included in the Islamic Front, see ibid., 189-190.

At first glance, one could think that the secularist opposition was excluded from the SMB's target audience by the 1980 document's benchmark of an Islamic state. The secularist opposition further had very little influence on developments in the 1980s, because it embodied individuals and ideas, as opposed to a movement.[422] But the 1980 Statement and Program clearly called for a pluralist political system, as discussed. The Islamic Front's Charter, which was based on the SMB's 1980 Statement and Program, further emphasized that cooperation is desired "with all political and religious groups within Syria, both Islamic and non-Islamic…to establish a constitutional government that will be acceptable to and will benefit all segments of the Syrian population and preserve their freedom, dignity, and fundamental human rights".[423]

The SMB used the 1980 document to also target the secularist opposition, even though such cooperation was not institutionalised before March 1982 when the Baghdad-based National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria (NALS) was formed. Though we have no evidence for the contact between the SMB and the secularist opposition before 1982, we have seen that the Fighting Vanguard withdrew from its cooperation with the SMB, that is from the joint command, in December 1981. Ideological differences with the SMB motivated the Fighting Vanguard's withdrawal, especially the Brotherhood's willingness to form an alliance with the "secular Syrian nationalist and communist opposition".[424] The Fighting Vanguard's distaste for the secularist opposition, and more importantly, its withdrawal from the joint command, therefore confirm that the SMB made contact with the secularist opposition some time before the establishment of the NALS in March 1982, and possibly even before the Fighting Vanguard's withdrawal from the joint command in December 1981. Based on this, we can appreciate that in 1980, the SMB supported a parliamentary political system, because the Brotherhood intended to form an alliance with the secularist opposition.

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[422] *Middle East Contemporary Survey, 1979-1980*, ed. Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon, vol. 4 (New York: Lynne Rienner Pub, 1982), 764.
[423] Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 121.
[424] Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri*, 47-49.

In sum, in 1980, the SMB targeted a wider audience than its traditionally small and urban support base. This audience comprised the Fighting Vanguard, the Syrian ulama, and the secularist opposition. We have also seen that in targeting the Fighting Vanguard the SMB had to contend with a conflicting ideology. The relationship between the SMB and the Fighting Vanguard was at best varied, and often ambiguous, while the SMB's alliance with the Syrian ulama was an affront to the Syrian government, and therefore a rare of success for the Brotherhood. We also saw that the 1980 document's commitment to a parliamentary democracy targeted the secularist opposition. Ultimately, it is this diverse target audience that best explains the seeming contradiction in the 1980 document, namely between the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy in the middle of a violent standoff between the Syrian state and the Brotherhood.

3.5   Summary

In this chapter, I have argued that the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy in the 1980 document was motivated by the Brotherhood's ambition to mobilise the broadest segment of the Syrian opposition against the Hafez al-Asad government. I built my argument as follows:

First, I showed that the 1980 document does indeed commit the SMB to a moderate policy on governance, and that the political system in question was envisioned as based on a parliamentary political system, *hizbah*, *shura*, and sharia. Then I showed that although the 1980 document addresses the al-Asad government in sectarian terms, it does not employ the derogatory sectarian term "Nusayri" that was common amongst the Fighting Vanguard. We further saw that the SMB's rhetoric in the 1980 document is not only political, but also religious, which challenges the notion that the SMB's political nature might explain its avoidance of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document. Given the political circumstances, neither does pragmatism in itself explain the absence of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document.

Thus, I suggested it would be more pertinent to ask: Whom did the SMB want to impress as a respectable political actor? Or, who is the target audience that might explain the SMB's avoidance of sectarian rhetoric?

Then, when we considered the political environment to place the 1980 document in context, we saw that the 1980 document remained true to the SMB's moderate policy on governance, even though the political environment of the 1970s and early 1980s was politically intolerant, and increasingly exclusive. This shows that at least for the SMB, exclusion did not lead to radicalisation.

The political environment in which the 1980 document was conceived was further not one that lent itself to free and fair elections, and by implication, to democratic governance. It is therefore clear that it was also not the political environment that motivated the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy in 1980.

Neither was the SMB constrained by the Islamist discourse of the 1970s and 1980. Although the 1980 document was grounded in the universal applicability and comprehensive nature of Islam, it challenged the Islamist discourse with its clear commitment to a parliamentary democracy, equal citizenship, and civil law.

Therefore, based on the elimination of other elements that might have motivated the absence of sectarian rhetoric in the 1980 document, on the one hand, and the SMB's commitment to democratic principles, on the other, I concluded that the Brotherhood's ongoing commitment to a moderate policy on governance was driven by the SMB's ambition in 1980 to mobilise the broadest segment of the Syrian opposition to its cause. The 1980 document therefore targeted three different audiences, namely the Fighting Vanguard, the Syrian ulama, and the secularist opposition. These three different target audiences explain the apparent contradiction in the 1980 document, namely the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy amidst an Islamic insurgency turned uprising, while the Brotherhood's targeting of the secularist opposition explains its moderate stance.

The SMB's persistent commitment to a moderate policy on governance will be further investigated in the next chapter, namely after the Brotherhood's final exclusion from Syria in 1982.

Chapter 4 Moderation in Exclusion

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the SMB remained moderate even after its final exclusion from Syria in 1982. I will show that at least for the SMB, exclusion does not lead to radicalisation, nor is its moderation subject to inclusion, as the inclusion-moderation hypothesis would have us belief. In fact, I will argue that the SMB's ultimate exclusion from the Syrian political arena was an important driver of its moderate policy, as reflected in its 2001 and 2004 policy documents. I will proceed in three main steps, after which, in the fourth section, I will address the conflict between popular and divine sovereignty.

First, I will sketch the SMB's decisive exclusion from Syria in 1982, and its subsequent engagement with the Hafez al-Asad government.

Second, I will discuss the Brotherhood's unsuccessful attempt to reconcile with the Bashar al-Asad government (primary target audience) during the Damascus Spring, which paradoxically accentuated its exclusion.

Third, I will show that international pressure on the Bashar al-Asad government created another opportunity for political change, the first opportunity being the Damascus Spring. This time, the SMB was well placed to optimise the opportunity, based on its political revision, and a change in its target audience. The success of these strategic changes reflects in the cooperation between the SMB and the secularist opposition that led to the signing of the Damascus Declaration in October 2005.

Fourth, I will show that the SMB's Islamic State allows a parliamentary political system, and dependent on the political environment, might even accommodate popular sovereignty. I will do so in three parts. First I will show that the 2004 document understates sharia to demonstrate the compatibility between the SMB's "modern state" and democratic principles. Then I will highlight the conflict between divine and popular sovereignty, based on the SMB's commitment to a secular state in the Damascus Declaration. This begs the question: How does the

SMB reconcile its "modern state" and its religious agenda? In answering this question, I hope to persuade the reader that the SMB's official stance on sovereignty is as much a consequence of its political environment, as of its ideology, based on the notion that the SMB is a rational political actor.

The two policy documents relevant to this chapter are: the 2001 Draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity/*al-mashru` mithaq sharaf watani lil-`amal al-siyasi* (hereafter Draft Charter), and the 2004 Political Project for the Future Syria/a*l-mashru` al-siyasi l-Suriyat al-mustaqbal* (hereafter Political Project)*.*

4.1 Excluded from Hafez al-Asad's Syria

In this section, I will discuss the SMB's unsuccessful attempts to reconcile with the government of Hafez al-Asad. First, we will consider the SMB's expulsion from Syria, and the prisoner issue that developed as a consequence thereof. Then I will show that engagement with the Syrian government enhanced internal divisions in the SMB. We will also see that the SMB's return to the Syrian political arena was never part of the government's considerations.

After 1963, the SMB was progressively excluded from Syria. Most of the SMB leadership left Syria after the Ba`th takeover in 1963, [425] while the SMB's second controller `Isam al-`Attar was exiled in 1964.[426] However, the SMB's ultimate expulsion from Syria came in the early 1980s. In July 1980 the government promulgated Law no 49, which demanded the death penalty for membership of the Brotherhood.[427] But it was the Ba`th party's Seventh Regional Congress (23/12/1979 – 6/01/1980) that set the tone for the SMB's ultimate expulsion. During the proceedings Hafez's younger brother and head of a 50 000 strong

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[425] Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 179.

[426] `Isam al-`Attar was prevented from entering the country upon his return from a meeting with the International MB in Saudi Arabia in April 1964. See Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 101; Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 93.

[427] The Syrian government practiced a carrot and stick approach, and simultaneously offered full amnesty to those members who turned themselves in, see Lia, "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 11.

special force, Rif`at al-Asad,[428] is said to have threatened: "The Ba`th state had to be defended, in blood if necessary. Stalin had sacrificed ten million to preserve the Bolshevik revolution and Syria should be prepared to do likewise".[429] Parts of the city of Hama, and between 10 000 and 30 000 of its inhabitants, including 1000 soldiers,[430] were indeed sacrificed in February 1982,[431] allegedly on the orders of Rif`at al-Asad.[432] After Hama, members of the SMB were either in exile, in prison, or dead.[433] Thus started the SMB's perilous journey to return to the Syrian political arena.

After the Hama carnage, the SMB was in a state of disarray. Uprooted from their country in large numbers, members settled primarily in Jordan and Iraq, with smaller numbers in Saudi Arabia and Turkey.[434] Even more distressing was the large number of political prisoners who remained behind in Syrian prisons.[435] The Brotherhood's return to Syria and the release of political prisoners were therefore the primary reasons that the SMB leadership entered into dialogue with the Hafez al-Asad government, just over two years after the Hama operation,[436] as we will see a little further on.

Exile, however, offered the SMB certain opportunities, such as membership of the Baghdad-based National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria (NALS). NALS,

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[428] Yahya M Sadowski, "Cadres, Guns, and Money: The Eighth Regional Congress of the Syrian Ba`Th," *Merip reports*, no. 134 (1985): 7.
[429] Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 327.
[430] Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri*, 37.
[431] Details of the events in Hama in 1982 have been well covered in secondary literature. See "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 13-15; Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 122-128.
[432] "Between Pragmatism and Radicalism: The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Ba'ath Regime," 159.
[433] Pierret, "Islamist-Secular Cooperation: Accounting for the Syrian Exception," 92.
[434] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 165.
[435] Chris Kutschera, "L'éclipse Des Frères Musulmans Syriens," *Cahiers de l'Orient*, no. 7 (1987), http://www.chris-kutschera.com/syrie_eclipse_fm.htm.
[436] Ibid.

formed in March 1982,[437] brought together opposition groups in exile, under Saddam Hussein's patronage.[438] These groups were ideologically diverse, but shared a commitment to overthrow the al-Asad government. Saddam Hussein also supported this commitment, based on Hafez al-Asad's support for Iran in the Iran-Iraq war.[439] However, NALS had little success other than as a symbolic opposition, and posed no actual threat to the Syrian government. Its formation in March 1982 was too late to influence the Syrian insurgency/uprising,[440] but NALS' liberal political platform, based on political pluralism, the separation of powers, and equal citizenship, challenged the one-party Ba`th state.[441] This challenge was amplified by the Syrian government's aversion to cooperation between the SMB and any other element of the Syrian opposition.[442] However, NALS was not sustainable. The Brotherhood's split in 1986 made its membership of NALS obsolete, and also weakened the SMB, as we will see next.

The SMB's political strategy towards the Hafez al-Asad government caused internal divisions, which weakened the Brotherhood in its engagement with the Syrian government. Although such divisions existed before the Hama disaster in 1982, they grew in the aftermath of Hama.[443] Negotiations with the al-Asad government were of course a highly contentious issue in the context of Hama, and therefore enhanced existing tensions. The SMB's controller at the time Hassan Houeidi and future leader Ali Bayanuni supported negotiations, because

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[437] The other members of the NALS were a group led by long-time Syrian dissident Akram al-Hawrani, a Nasserite movement led by Jasim `Alwan, and Michel Aflaq and Shibli `Aysami's pro-Iraqi Ba`th faction. See Pierret, "Islamist-Secular Cooperation: Accounting for the Syrian Exception," 92.

[438] SMB controller Sa`d al-Din kept the Abu Ghudda-led opposing faction out of the NALS, based on its support for negotiations with the al-Asad government. See Kutschera, "L'éclipse Des Frères Musulmans Syriens".

[439] Pierret, "Islamist-Secular Cooperation: Accounting for the Syrian Exception," 92.

[440] Ibid.

[441] Ibid.

[442] For example, in 2005, independent Islamist Ali Abdullah was arrested after he read a letter penned by the head of the SMB, while at the same time, a Kurdish Sheikh was murdered after he secretly met the SMB's head. See *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 193.

[443] For an overview of divisions in the SMB, see Alison Pargeter, *The Muslim Brotherhood: From Opposition to Power* (Saqi Books, 2013), 71-88.

they were of the opinion that the Brotherhood was unable to influence events in Syria from exile.[444] The former controller `Adnan Sa`d al-Din and ideologue Sa`id Hawwa, by contrast, rejected negotiations in favour of continued armed struggle.[445]

When the pro-negotiators won the day to meet with the government's emissary and head of Military Intelligence Ali Duba in Frankfurt, Germany, in February 1985, their demands—a general amnesty, the release of all political prisoners, the abolition of martial law, and free and fair elections—were summarily dismissed.[446] Instead, they were informed that the purpose of the meeting was for Duba to dictate to them the conditions for their return.[447] Neither was any prisoners released before December 1991, when a presidential amnesty allowed for the release of 2,864 prisoners.[448] The failure of the pro-negotiators caused a major crisis. Hassan Houeidi resigned as controller in the face of severe criticism from `Adnan Sa`d al-Din.[449] The movement's inability to appoint a replacement in turn paralysed the SMB, until the International MB intervened and appointed Munir Ghadban as acting leader in 1986.[450]

The SMB's leadership elections later in 1986 ended undecided, as neither `Adnan Sa`d al-Din or Sheikh `Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghudda got more than 50% of the vote.[451] The International MB intervened once again,[452] and declared Abu

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[444] Kutschera, "L'éclipse Des Frères Musulmans Syriens".
[445] Ibid.
[446] Ibid.
[447] Ibid.
[448] Eyal Zisser, "Syria, the Ba'Th Regime and the Islamic Movement: Stepping on a New Path?," *The Muslim World* 95, no. 1 (2005).
[449] Kutschera, "L'éclipse Des Frères Musulmans Syriens".
[450] Ibid.
[451] Ibid.
[452] There is little information available on the International MB, other than its control by the EMB, which is the mother organisation. See Barry Rubin, *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization and Policies of a Global Islamist Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 9-10.

Ghudda the winner.[453] However, `Adnan Sa`d al-Din did not accept the outcome, and declared himself the leader.[454] The SMB was now officially split in two.

In 1987, the SMB, under the leadership of Sheikh Abu Ghudda, again engaged the Syrian government in fruitless negotiations. This round of negotiations was but a repeat of the government's earlier arrogance and ingenuity.[455] The failure in 1987 must have been foreseen, but serves to confirm the Brotherhood's desire to return to the Syrian political arena. In addition, Kutschera suggests that pressure from Saudi Arabia on the Abu Ghudda faction (which was based in the Kingdom) might explain the unfortunate decision to once again engage the Syrian government in negotiations.[456] This explanation shows the SMB's vulnerability in exile to their patron's whim, in this instance that of the Saudi King.

Further rounds of negotiations with the government took place in the second-half of the 1990s, after the Adnan Sa`d al-Din and Abu Ghudda factions reconciled. [457] One such round, which started in 1997, saw the SMB agreeing to take part in mediation by Shaikh Muhammad Amin Yakan,[458] a former deputy controller of the SMB in Aleppo in the 1960s.[459] Once again, the al-Asad government had an agenda other than reconciliation; in this instance it was to pave the way for Bashar al-Asad's succession.

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[453] Kutschera, "L'éclipse Des Frères Musulmans Syriens". Kutschera explains that Sheikh Abu Ghudda got 903 votes and 'Adnan Sa'd al-Din got 822, while 989 ballots were left blank. The International MB disregarded the blank ballots, which gave Sheikh Abu Ghudda the highest number of cast votes.
[454] Ibid.
[455] Ibid., Kutschera writes that Ali Duba exclaimed in response to the Brotherhood's standard demands: "But you want the end of the regime!"
[456] Ibid.
[457] See Fred H. Lawson, "Explaining Shifts in Syria's Islamist Opposition," in *Contentious Politics in the Middle East: Political Opposition under Authoritarianism*, ed. Holger Albrecht (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 149-150.
[458] Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 175; Zisser, "Syria, the Ba'Th Regime and the Islamic Movement: Stepping on a New Path?," 53-54.
[459] "Syria Set to Free Muslim Brotherhood Members in 'Reconciliation'," (BBC Monitoring Service: Middle East, 5 April 1997); "Muslim Brotherhood's Reconciliation with Government Said to Be 'Frozen' ", (BBC Monitoring Service: Middle East, 9 May 1997).

An interlocutor recounted a meeting with Yakan in the home of the then controller Bayanuni in Amman.[460] Whilst Yakan would not verbally confirm my interlocutor's suspicion that the so-called mediation was in actual fact in aid of Hafez's efforts to prepare the ground for Bashar's presidency, those present understood it as such.[461] The Brotherhood, as previously, took a reconciliatory approach and agreed to Bashar succeeding his father. Yakan returned to Damascus, but was then tasked to get the green light from `Adnan Sa`d al-Din, who represented the hawkish faction in the SMB. The Brotherhood in turn responded that not only did `Adnan Sa`d al-Din support the initiative, but the whole *shura* council supported Bashar's succession. The Amin Yakan mediation, however, came to an abrupt end in December 1998 with Yakan's assassination. Official sources attribute Yakan's death to a land dispute between Yakan and "some peasants or small landowners".[462] The Brotherhood, however, held the al-Asad government, or at least elements therein, responsible for Yakan's death.[463] Once again, the government demonstrated that the Brotherhood would not be included in the Syrian political arena.

My main contention in this section was that after the Hama disaster, the power imbalance between the Hafez al-Asad government and the SMB was heavily weighed in the government's favour. We have seen that exile, internal divisions, and the large number of Muslim Brothers in Syrian prisons weakened the SMB's negotiating position. There is also no evidence that the Hafez al-Asad government was ever prepared to soften its position on the SMB's return to Syria. The Brotherhood therefore engaged in these negotiations out of a position of weakness.

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[460] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2014.
[461] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2014.
[462] "Killing of Former Muslim Brotherhood Official Reportedly Not Political," (BBC Monitoring Service: Middle East, 23 December 1999).
[463] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2014.

4.2   Excluded from Bashar al-Asad's Syria: "Change within Continuity"[464]

In the previous section we have explored the SMB's unsuccessful attempts to reconcile with the Hafez al-Asad government. In this section, I will show that the political succession that followed the death of Hafez al-Asad in June 2000 created an opportunity for political change. The resultant political opening became known as the Damascus Spring. In response, the SMB once again reached out to the Syrian government. However, we will see that the Damascus Spring did not facilitate the SMB's return to the Syrian political arena, but in contrast, served to amplify the SMB's exclusion.

The death of the dictator brought expectations for change. But Hafez al-Asad did not leave his succession to chance. When his eldest son and designated successor, Basil al-Asad, died in a car accident in 1994, the son next in line was brought home from London where he was working and studying at the Western Eye Hospital.[465] Over the next six years Bashar al-Asad was groomed to take over from his father, while Hafez prepared the ground for a smooth transition.[466] It was this smooth transition that ensured Hafez al-Asad's legacy amidst the inevitability of change.

The state structures that supported Hafez al-Asad's Syria for 30 years facilitated Bashar's coming to power. First, Bashar was promoted from colonel to lieutenant general (his father's rank) and appointed as commander in chief of the Syrian armed forces.[467] Then on 18 June 2000 the Ba`th party elected Bashar al-Asad as

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[464] Najib Ghadbian, "The New Asad: Dynamics of Continuity and Change in Syria," *The Middle East Journal* 55, no. 4 (Autumn 2001): 641, posits that "change within continuity" was the buzzword in Damascus after Hafez al-Asad's death .

[465] David W. Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar Al-Asad and Modern Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 60.

[466] Eyal Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 30-35 and 37; See also for a sligtly different perspective: Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar Al-Asad and Modern Syria*, 62-77.

[467] Robert G. Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 126.

secretary-general, and two days later, nominated him as president.[468] Next, parliament amended the constitution to allow the head of state to be 34 (Bashar's age) and not 40, after which it approved the Ba`th party's nomination.[469] In a national referendum on 11 July the Syrian electorate endorsed Bashar al-Asad as the Ba`th party's sole candidate, and as Syria's new president with 97.29 % of the vote.[470]

Still, change was promised and expectations were created. In an interview with *Al-Hayat* newspaper three months before his father's death, Bashar al-Asad called for change and said: "We need it more today than at any other time".[471] In April 2000, the *Washington Post* described Bashar as "soft spoken and congenial" and wrote about his vision, according to which "the Internet is going to enter every house [in Syria]".[472] Jordan's King Abdullah said of Bashar after a visit to Syria in April 1999: "Bashar is like me, a child of the Internet generation".[473] U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright said that Bashar had the potential to be a "modernizing reformer",[474] after attending the former president's funeral. The image of Bashar as a modern, technologically minded reformer was therefore furthered by a variety of opinion makers.

Bashar al-Asad's inaugural speech to parliament on 17 July 2000 was, in contrast to expectations, uneventful. It was long-winded and did not offer anything as specific as an end to the state of emergency, or the scrapping of Article 8 of the Constitution that guaranteed the Ba`th party's political monopoly.[475] However, the speech did use such terms as "transparency", and phrases such as:

[468] Barry Rubin, *The Truth About Syria* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 135.

[469] Ibid.

[470] Ibid.

[471] George, *Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom*, 31.

[472] Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, 34.

[473] Ibid.

[474] Christopher Hemmer, "Syria under Bashar Al-Asad: Clinging to His Roots," in *Know Thy Enemy: Profiles of Adversary Leaders and Their Strategic Cultures*, ed. Barry R. Schneider and Jerrold M. Post (Washington, D.C.: USAF Counterproliferation Center, 2003), 224.

[475] Bashar al-Asad's inaugural address is available at: http://www.al-bab.com/arab/countrys/syria.bashar00a.htm (dead link).

"administrative reform is a pressing need"; "balanced and comprehensive reform in all provinces"; and "society will not develop, improve or prosper if it were to depend only on one sect or one party or one group".[476] An optimist could therefore have hoped for some political and economic change.

Bashar al-Asad's rule did bring some economic reform,[477] and initially, even a slight opening of the political space. The temporary opening of the political space became known as the Damascus Spring.[478] Between July 2000 and February 2001, the secularist opposition convened discussion forums in private homes, and published public memorandums, one in Lebanon and two in Syria.[479] At the same time, the Syrian state closed the notorious Mezze military prison, offered an amnesty to some 600 political prisoners, and lifted some restrictions on press freedom.[480] In contrast to the "old Syria" in which Hafez al-Asad's name was not mentioned in public for fear of reprisal by one of the numerous security agencies or *mukhabarat*, the Damascus Spring allowed political dialogue in public. But the SMB was not part of the Damascus Spring, which made the Brotherhood's exclusion from the Syrian political arena more acute. I will elaborate on this point later in this section.

In exile, the SMB was not in a position to benefit from the Damascus Spring. In addition, rapprochement between the Bashar al-Asad government and the SMB's patrons in the region posed a threat to the SMB's interests. For example, in February 2000 King Abdullah of Jordan closed the SMB's offices in his country, and banned the Brotherhood's *shura* council from convening in the capital.[481] When Bashar came to power in July, Jordan asked the Brotherhood's controller

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[476] http://www.al-bab.com/arab/countrys/syria.bashar00a.htm (dead link).
[477] Carsten Wieland, *Syria - a Decade of Lost Chances: Repression and Revolution from Damascus Spring to Arab Spring* (Seattle: Cune Press, 2012), 122-123.
[478] See: George, *Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom*, 30 - 63; Perthes, "Syria: Difficult Inheritance," 103-106.
[479] Joshua Landis and Joe Pace, "The Syrian Opposition," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2007): 47.
[480] Hemmer, "Syria under Bashar Al-Asad: Clinging to His Roots," 227.
[481] Zisser, "Syria, the Ba'Th Regime and the Islamic Movement: Stepping on a New Path?," 55.

Al-Bayanuni to leave Amman.[482] At the same time there were signs of possible reconciliation between Iraq and Syria, which would have weighed heavy on the SMB.[483]

Given the rapprochement between Bashar al-Asad and the SMB's regional patrons, plus the expectations generated by Bashar's accession, the SMB's decision to engage the government in talks, does not surprise. Israeli hegemony, in addition, served various Arab agendas. It justified the so-called secular Syrian government's hosting of (Islamist) Hamas and the Palestinian chapter of Islamic Jihad in Damascus up until the 2011 Syrian uprising. The Syrian government also signed a "framework for cooperation" with the Islamic Action Front (MB in Jordan) in 1997, and received high-level Sunni delegations from Jordan, Sudan, Tunisia, and Lebanon, all in the framework of resisting Israeli expansionism.[484] The SMB was therefore not out of step with the regional trend generally, and the Islamist trend in particular, in seeking reconciliation with the Ba`th government.

Already in the months preceding Hafez al-Asad's death, the SMB's registered its willingness to "open a new page" with a Bashar al-Asad government.[485] An Arab head of state, who attended Hafez al-Asad's funeral, also carried a message of reconciliation from the SMB to the new President.[486] In a telephone interview with Al-Jazeera on 17 July 2000, SMB head Bayanuni further recognised the legacy "accumulated in decades of totalitarian, autocratic rule" that Bashar inherited from his father, but said that Bashar "is not responsible for the past. His

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[482] Ibid.

[483] This reconciliation was primarily due to the economic opportunities that the UN oil-for-food programme in Iraq offered to Syrian industrialists. See: Hemmer, "Syria under Bashar Al-Asad: Clinging to His Roots," 48-49.

[484] Zisser, "Syria, the Ba'Th Regime and the Islamic Movement: Stepping on a New Path?," 57-58.

[485] Al-Jazeera interview with `Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni, 5 December 2005 (Part 2).

[486] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2014. The interviewee was of the opinion that the head of state in question would prefer to remain anonymous.

responsibility begins after he is sworn in".[487] Bashar al-Asad's response to the Brotherhood's initiatives of appeasement was a clear 'No'.[488]

The Bashar al-Asad government's closing of the political space started with clamping down on the secularist activists. On 8 February 2001, Bashar took the proponents of the Damascus Spring to task in an interview with *al-Sharq al-Awsat*.[489] In a tone reminiscent of Hafez's Syria, the Syrian media accused the secularist opposition of "harming Syria's national interests, while serving foreign governments".[490] Next followed a requirement that the discussion forums obtain permits to operate within the context of Syria's state of emergency, after which the public figures leading the various forums were arrested.[491]

Notwithstanding the negative turn of events, the SMB pursued rapprochement with the Bashar al-Asad government by publishing the Draft Charter on 3 May 2001. The document's stated purpose was to bring about a debate that would produce a "covenant of national honour" to serve as "the basis for political activity in Syria".[492] The 2001 Draft Charter theoretically differs from the 1980 document in that it is a framework for dialogue, which therefore does not fully represent the SMB's political platform. However, it represents the SMB's response to the Damascus Spring. A member of the SMB executive confirmed to me that the document was produced in a short time after the death of Hafez al-Asad in order to "open up to Syrians, including to the [new] President".[493] The Draft Charter therefore targeted the Syrian government as its primary target audience, as I will show in the remainder of this section.

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[487] "Syrian Muslim Brotherhood Head Cites 'Positive Indications' for Bashar's Rule," (BBC Monitoring Middle East – Political, 18 July 2000).
[488] Interview with participant 4, in January 2015.
[489] Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, 87-88.
[490] Ibid., 89.
[491] Ibid., 89-90; Also see Volker Perthes, *Syria under Bashar Al-Asad: Modernisation and the Limits of Change* (London: Routledge, 2014), 17-19.
[492] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity: Interim Papers Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Released in London, 3 May 2001."
[493] Email correspondence with a member of the executive dated 19 October 2015.

When the SMB published the 2001 Draft Charter, the Brotherhood publicised its willingness to reconcile with the Bashar al-Asad government, but it also made public an "openness", which was not emphasized in its 1980 platform. In saying: "Long gone is a time when one party could claim to represent the entire nation",[494] the Brotherhood remained true to its criticism of Syria's one-party state, but instead of highlighting the sectarian character of the state, the Brotherhood instead emphasized its acceptance of political pluralism.[495] This was a departure from the 1980 document in which the SMB addressed "the sectarian nature of the regime",[496] as discussed in the previous chapter. The SMB's openness in the 2001 document to 'the other' was further a departure from the SMB's call in 1980 for an Islamic revolution. Bayanuni wrote at the time: "We believe the distance between us [and the other] is no longer what it used to be. We are now capable of accepting those with whom we may disagree".[497]

The 2001 document's three stated goals are: to build a "modern state"; to confront and defy the Zionist project; and to achieve Arab unity.[498] The SMB's modern state is further based on political pluralism, in contrast to the Ba`th party state, which is ideologically committed to a one-party state. Also, apart from the first goal, the 2001 document's goals are not in conflict with the Ba`th party's ideology. In further stating that political change can be pursued without resorting to violence,[499] the 2001 document communicated a clear departure

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[494] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity: Interim Papers Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Released in London, 3 May 2001," 223.

[495] Al-Jazeera interview with `Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni, 5 December 2005 (Part 2).

[496] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*," 209.

[497] Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanuni, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood: Experiences and Prospects," *Middle East Affairs Journal* 7, no. 1-2 (2001): 117.

[498] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity: Interim Papers Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Released in London, 3 May 2001," ibid. (Winter-Spring, 2001).

[499] Ibid.

from the SMB's advocacy for an Islamic revolution in the 1980 document.[500] The document also distinguishes between terrorism and resistance, which accommodates the Palestinian struggle, also an important policy position for the al-Asad government. This document was therefore meant to register the SMB's readiness to re-enter the Syrian political arena through rapprochement with the Bashar al-Asad government.

Coexistence is another character of the 2001 document. The document maintains the SMB's commitment to democratic principles by calling for a "modern state", based on the rule of law, free and fair elections, political pluralism, and the division of authority.[501] But in keeping with its focus on reconciliation, the "modern state" is characterised by the "plurality of opinions [that] can mutually co-exist".[502]

Absent from the 2001 Draft Charter are aspects of an Islamic state, such as *shura* and sharia. Still, Bayanuni wrote in 2001 that the Brotherhood's primary task was to persuade people that the "divine social system embodied in the *shari'ah*" is the solution to many "manmade problems".[503] He also said that even though the movement was competing with others for the "hearts and souls of the people", that did not weaken their belief "in the divine source" of their program.[504] But, an Islamic state was not the focus of the 2001 Draft Charter, as evident in the description of Islam as both a "religious authority" and a

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[500] "Statement and Program of the Islamic Revolution in Syria/ *Bayan Al-Thawrat Al-Islamiyya Fi Suriyya Wa-Minhajuha*."
[501] "Draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity: Interim Papers Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Released in London, 3 May 2001," 226-227; Also see Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanuni, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood: Experiences and Prospects," ibid. (2001): 116.
[502] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity: Interim Papers Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Released in London, 3 May 2001," ibid. (Winter-Spring, 2001): 226.
[503] Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanuni, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood: Experiences and Prospects," ibid. (2001): 117.
[504] Ibid., 118.

"civilizational belonging".[505] Islam as a "religious authority" confirmed the SMB's understanding of God's sovereignty (more later). However, the draft's recognition of Islam as a "civilizational belonging", which can be associated with culture as opposed to religion, showed that the SMB was open to accommodate those who did not support an Islamic state. The emphasis here, as in the previous examples, is therefore on being inclusive and seeking the unity of all Syrians.

Earlier in this section, we have seen that the 2001 document offered a framework for political dialogue, which implies a reformist agenda. The documents published by key players during the Damascus Spring similarly supported reforms, but differ in tone from the SMB's 2001 Draft Charter. For example, the Draft Charter concludes by saying that the SMB appreciates that its objectives can only be achieved in a "gradual manner".[506] We can argue that "gradual" change is part and parcel of the SMB's approach, as we know that the SMB is committed to an Islamic state, through the "gradual reform of society".[507] Nonetheless, using "gradual manner" in the 2001 document sets a different tone than the statements published during the Damascus Spring, as we will see next.

In September 2000, ninety-nine Syrian intellectuals, artists and professionals,[508] as opposed to political parties or dissidents, signed a statement that called on the government to bring about political reforms. The statement insisted on an end to the state of emergency; on an amnesty for all political prisoners and exiles; and for political pluralism and the freedom of assembly, the press, and expression; and freeing "public life" from legal and structural constraints.[509] Political reforms were emphasised, which is indicative of a perception at the time that economic liberalisation under Bashar was a given. The organisers of the Statement of 99 released another statement on 9 January 2001 in which they criticised the Ba`th

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[505] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Draft Charter of National Honour for Political Activity: Interim Papers Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Released in London, 3 May 2001," ibid. (Winter-Spring, 2001): 225.

[506] Ibid., 231.

[507] Interview conducted with participant 2, in January 2015.

[508] George, *Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom*.

[509] The Statement of 99 appears as Appendix 1 in ibid., 178-181.

party's monopoly on power, as supported by the security services, and its practice of patronage.[510] The second statement further called for a civil society, and reforms based on a "comprehensive national dialogue", as well as economic, political and constitutional reforms.[511] The statement demanded free and fair elections, an independent judiciary, and economic rights embodied in the constitution; it called for the abolishment of legal discrimination against women; and rejected the so-called reinvigoration of the Progressive National Front (PNF),[512] as intimated in Bashar's first parliamentary statement in July 2000.

The opposition activists' statements grew in intensity. Though the focus of both statements was political reforms, the second statement rejected not just the status quo, but also the Ba`th party state. It explicitly called for political and constitutional reforms, without which it predicted the government's economic reforms "would not achieve their objectives".[513] A member of the opposition who distanced himself from the petitioners summarised the mood of the Damascus Spring activists as follows: "They wanted all or nothing […] They wanted to storm the Bastille."[514]

In comparison, the SMB's Draft Charter was accommodating. But this also was to no avail. The gatekeeper was not about to compromise Hafez al-Asad's legacy by allowing the SMB to reclaim a foothold in Syrian society. The Bashar al-Asad government dismissed the SMB's 2001 document as opportunistic, and based on a perception that a "political and organisational vacuum exists in Syria".[515] It also rejected the Brotherhood as a "terrorist organisation".[516]

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[510] Ibid., 182-185.
[511] Ibid., 185.
[512] Ibid., 186-188.
[513] Ibid., 185.
[514] Carsten Wieland, *Syria: Ballots or Bullets?: Democracy, Islamism, and Secularism in the Levant* (Seattle, WA: Cune Press, 2006), 47.
[515] Zisser, "Syria, the Ba'Th Regime and the Islamic Movement: Stepping on a New Path?," 57.
[516] Ibid.

The Brotherhood next hosted a conference in London in August 2002 to discuss the draft Charter of National Honour. Approximately "fifty Islamists, leftists and independents" participated in the meeting.[517] However, the Syrian Minister of Information scoffed at an interviewer's mention of the conference, and suggested that the SMB was manipulated by the United Kingdom (controller Al-Bayanouni was in exile in London) to put pressure on Syria at a time that an attack by the United States against Iraq was feared.[518]

In sum, the SMB's attempt to reconcile with the Bashar al-Asad government in order to return to the Syrian political arena came to naught. An intractable policy on the SMB, which had developed under Hafez al-Asad, also characterised the government of Bashar al-Asad. A small opening during the Damascus Spring was allowed only to the state's secularist opponents, which amplified the SMB's exclusion from the political arena.[519] The SMB's new target audience in 2004 should be seen against this reality.

4.3 The Road to the Damascus Declaration

In the previous section, we have seen that the death of Hafez al-Asad created political space in Syria for a limited period, which became known as the Damascus Spring. We have also seen that the SMB was excluded from this opportunity.

In this section, I will argue that a second opportunity for political change occurred in 2005. In doing so, I will show that a) this opportunity occurred

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[517] Robin Yassin-Kassab and Leila Al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), 28.
[518] "Iraq Maintains That Negotiations May Avert War with Us," (St Petersburg Times, 30 August 2002); "Syrian Minister Plays Down Significance of Muslim Brotherhood Conference," (BBC Monitoring Middle East - Political, 27 August 2002).
[519] Yasin Al-Haj Salih, "A General Socio-Political View of Contemporary Syrian Society," 13 October 2010.

primarily due to international pressure on the Syrian government;[520] and b) was at least partially made possible by the Brotherhood's Damascus road or "revision" of policy in 2004,[521] in which the domestic secularist opposition became the Brotherhood's primary target audience. We will see that the SMB's political revision in 2004 and the parallel change in its primary target audience led to the signing of the Damascus Declaration in 2005, with its vision for a secular state.

4.3.1 International Pressure - An Opportunity for Change

The Bashar al-Asad government was significantly weakened in the period between the Damascus Spring and the Damascus Declaration. This was caused by a series of developments that primarily played out in Lebanon and Iraq.

The first link in the chain of events that led to Syria's international isolation was Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the south of Lebanon in May 2000.[522] This was initially seen as a victory for Syria's Lebanese ally Hezbullah, which was founded in response to Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982.[523] However, as the Israeli withdrawal changed the balance of power in Lebanon, Syria's detractors were in a position to demand that Damascus withdraw its remaining troops from Lebanon.[524] Syria and Hezbullah subsequently highlighted Israel's ongoing occupation of the Shebaa Farms, a small strip of disputed territory on the border between Lebanon and Syria,[525] which negated Israel's claim of a complete withdrawal from Lebanon. Notwithstanding this, the demand for Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon gained international currency, because of a

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[520] For and overview of how international pressure increased against the Syrian government, see: Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*, 138-174.

[521] Interview conducted with participant 3, in January 2015.

[522] Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 and occupied the south of Lebanon after a withdrawal from other parts of the country in 1985.

[523] Wieland, *Syria: Ballots or Bullets?: Democracy, Islamism, and Secularism in the Levant*, 146.

[524] Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*, 123.

[525] See: Asher Kaufman, "Who Owns the Shebaa Farms? Chronicle of a Territorial Dispute," *The Middle East Journal* (2002).

fundamental shift in the regional geostrategic balance, namely the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The United States' invasion of Iraq led to a confrontation between the United States and Syria. Damascus' opposition to the US-led occupation of Iraq generated support for the Syrian government at home, and in the region,[526] but Syria's support for the Iraqi insurgency came at a significant economic cost.[527] In May 2004, the Bush administration imposed economic sanctions against Syria under the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SAA). These sanctions were said to punish Syria for "its support of terrorism, involvement in Lebanon, weapons of mass destruction programs, and the destabilizing role it is playing in Iraq".[528] The linkage of Syria's presence in Lebanon with developments in Iraq and weapons of mass destruction served to enforce a perception that Syria might be next in the so-called war on terrorism.[529]

Next, UNSC Resolution 1559 of 2 September 2004 called on "all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon".[530] The Syrian government saw UNSC Res. 1559 as a US-French strategy to evict Syria from Lebanon, which would undermine its geostrategic influence in the region, and threaten the government's survival domestically.[531]

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[526] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Syria: From 'Authoritarian Upgrading' to Revolution?," *International Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2012): 103.
[527] Ibid., 100.
[528] See the US Embassy in Damascus website for information on the Syria Accountability Act (SAA) at http://damascus.usembassy.gov/mobile/sanctions-syr.html.
[529] For an excellent discussion of Syria's threat perception and response to developments in Iraq and Lebanon, see: Bassel Salloukh, "Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar Al-Asad," in *Demystifying Syria*, ed. Fred H. Lawson (London: Saqi, 2009), 163-168.
[530] UNSC Resolution 1559 of 2 September 2004 is available at: http://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sc8181.doc.htm
[531] Salloukh, "Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar Al-Asad," 166-168.

As the Syrian government was dealing with a perceived international strategy to bring about regime change, 1 020 Syrian intellectuals circulated a petition on the Internet in February 2004 with demands similar to those issued by intellectuals during the Damascus Spring.[532] Kurdish riots after a soccer match in Qamishli on 12 March 2004 added to the general atmosphere of uncertainty,[533] as did the Israeli assassination of a Hamas official in Damascus later the same year.[534] It is against these developments that the SMB issued its Political Project for the Future Syria in December 2004.[535]

The assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri on 14 February 2005 was the final link in the chain of events impacting Syria, which started with the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, five years earlier. The October 2005 UN report, by Detlev Mehlis, incriminated the Syrian government in the assassination. Syrians and foreign observers alike thought this spelled the end of the Bashar al-Asad government.[536] In the same month, with uncanny timing, the secularist opposition and the SMB published the Damascus Declaration as a joint project to unseat the Bashar al-Asad government.

4.3.2   The SMB's Political Project and the Secularist Opposition

The 2004 Political Project constitutes a total break with the SMB's Islamic revolution of 1980. It also offers a detailed plan for an alternative political system to that of the ruling Ba`th party,[537] which communicates an end to the 2001 policy of reconciliation with the Syrian government. The 2001 and the

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[532] Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*, 149; "Petition Signals Growing Calls for Change in Syria," *Agence France Presse*, 5 February 2004.
[533] See: Julie Gauthier, "The 2004 Events in Al-Qamishli: Has the Kurdisn Question Erupted in Syria?," in *Demystifying Syria*, ed. Fred H. Lawson (London: Saqi, 2009), 105-119.
[534] Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*, 155.
[535] This document will be discussed in detail in the next section.
[536] See Sami M. Moubayed, "The Ball Is Now in Syria's Court," *Asia Times Online*, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/GJ25Ak02.html; Volker Perthes, "It's All over, but It Could Be Messy Endgame in Syria," *International Herald Tribune*, 5 October 2005.
[537] The Damascus Declaration similarly lists the necessary steps to bring about a new political system.

2004 documents were both produced under `Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanuni's leadership, but with distinctly different focuses. The 2001 document was produced in a short time to utilise the opportunity that the political succession from Hafez to Bashar al–Asad offered, as discussed in section 4.2. The 2004 document (127 pages) was the result of an approximately five-year process,[538] which allowed the SMB to revise its policy and reposition the movement politically. In this process, the domestic secularist opposition became the SMB's primary target audience, while in a statement the SMB said of its previous target audience: "…in its current structure [the Syrian government] is unable to reform."[539]

In targeting the reform-minded secularist opposition, the SMB emphasized its commitment to political reforms. Its new target audience was the intellectuals and artists, who expressed their desire for political change through statements during the Damascus Spring,[540] discussed earlier. It also included pious Sunni Muslims, such as independent MP Riad Seif, human rights activist Radwan Ziadeh, and human rights lawyer Haytham al-Malih; as well as secular reformers, such as Michel Kilo.[541] Some of the key players were seasoned politicians, such as Riad Seif,[542] while others came to identify themselves with the opposition during the Damascus Spring, such as Razan Zeitouneh.[543] Though the secularist opposition in Syria was not unified around a political program, its participants shared a commitment to political reforms,[544] which set "the agenda for public

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[538] Interviews conducted with participant 3, and participant 4, in January 2015.
[539] Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*, 191.
[540] George, *Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom*, 39-46.
[541] See Pierret, "Islamist-Secular Cooperation: Accounting for the Syrian Exception," 94-96.
[542] For background information on Riad Seif, see: George, *Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom*, 30-31.
[543] For an interview with Razan Zeitouneh, see: Joe Pace to Syria Comment, 4 October 2005.
[544] Joe Pace and Joshua Landis, "The Syrian Opposition: The Struggle for Unity and Relevance, 2003–2008," in *Demystifying Syria*, ed. Fred H. Lawson (London: Saqi, 2009), 121-122.

debate".[545] This agenda naturally did not include an Islamic state.[546] With the 2004 document, the SMB demonstrated that it too had a reformist agenda.

The SMB's reformist platform in 2004 was not new in principle. In the previous chapter, we have seen that the SMB participated in parliamentary politics at its inception, and in 1980 called for "equality between the citizens", a "system of mutual consultation", "separation between the authorities", "freedom to form political parties", and the "freedom of thought and expression".[547] In 2001, the Brotherhood called for a "modern state", and in doing so, confirmed its commitment to the rule of law, free and fair elections, political pluralism, and the division of authority. Thus, the SMB's 2004 call for "freedom and political pluralism", as well as its renunciation of violence as a tool for change, was "not a change in position but a return to the principles it was originally founded upon".[548] The SMB's resort to violence in the late 1970s and early 1980s was further out of character, and even more so, a mistake, as Bayanuni noted elsewhere.[549] In fact, the SMB spearheaded the adoption of democratic principles, which by 2001 had become part of Islamist rhetoric.[550] But with the signing the Damascus Declaration in 2005, the SMB went one step further:

On 16 October 2005, the secularist opposition and the SMB signed the Damascus Declaration in support of "democratic change", based on inclusivity, Islam as the "prominent cultural component", the "sovereignty of the people", a constitution "that makes citizenship the criterion of affiliation", the protection of minorities, a

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[545] Salih, "A General Socio-Political View of Contemporary Syrian Society."

[546] Pierret, "Islamist-Secular Cooperation: Accounting for the Syrian Exception," 94.

[547] Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, 214-220.

[548] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Official Vision of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (the Political Project for the Future Syria)," http://carnegie-mec.org/2013/13/29/official-vision-of-syria-muslim-brotherhood/fujz; *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, 19.

[549] Anthony Shadid, "Inside and Outside Syria, a Debate to Decide the Future," *The Washington Post*, 9 November 2005.

[550] Gudrun Kramer, "Modern but Not Secular: Religion, Identity and the *Ordre Public* in the Arab Middle East," *International Sociology* 28 (2013): 640.

"just democratic solution to the Kurdish issue", and lifting the state of emergency as well as Law no 49 of 1980.[551]

Furthermore, in accepting the SMB as a partner, the secularist opposition accepted the SMB's pledge to a secular state, based on the sovereignty of 'the people'. In an interview in 2015, one of my interlocutors explained that the SMB differs from secularists based on its "Islamic reference".[552] But in 2005, the SMB downplayed its "Islamic reference" in order to support a secular state. Though the political reforms in the Damascus Declaration also correspond with the democratic principles of the SMB's "modern state", notable, is the SMB's acceptance of secular governance, and the secularist opposition's endorsement thereof. In the context of what was seen as Bashar al-Asad's impending fall in 2005, the Damascus Declaration therefore moved the SMB one step closer to its objective of returning to the Syrian political arena, and demonstrated the SMB's willingness to accept the people's sovereignty in a specific political context.

In this section, I have argued that international pressure on the Bashar al-Asad government in 2005 led to a second perceived opportunity for change in Syria. This time, as opposed to the Damascus Spring, the SMB was equipped to cooperate with the domestic secularist opposition, based on its 2004 political platform that has the secularist opposition as its primary target audience. We have seen that in an unprecedented show of strength, the SMB and the secularist opposition signed the Damascus Declaration in October 2005, with its vision for a secular state.

4.4   The SMB's Islamic State and Sovereignty

In this section, I will demonstrate that the SMB's Islamic State allows a parliamentary political system, and dependent on the political environment, might even accommodate popular sovereignty. First, I will show that the 2004

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[551] "The Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change," http://www.joshualandis.oucreate.com/syriablog/2005/11/damascus-declaration-in-english.htm. (my emphasis).
[552] Interview conducted with participant 3, in January 2015.

document understates sharia to exhibit the compatibility between the SMB's "modern state" and democratic principles. Second, I will show that the SMB has not officially exchanged God's sovereignty for the people's sovereignty. Third, I hope to convince the reader that the SMB's stance on sovereignty is as much a consequence of its political environment, as of its ideology, based on an understanding that the SMB is a rational political actor.

4.4.1 The SMB's "Modern State" and Sharia

Here, I will show that the 2004 document understates sharia and emphasises democratic principles relevant to the SMB's "modern state". The document does so, first by using an "Islamic frame of reference", then by suggesting that certain democratic values are also Islamic values, and third, with a "renewed methodology" that includes *ijtihad* or independent reasoning, and which distinguishes between Islamic jurisprudence and sharia. Fourth, and finally, the 2004 document emphasizes the principles of sharia, as opposed to its comprehensive application.

The 2004 document presents the SMB's "modern state" or its proposed system of governance in an "Islamic frame of reference". In Chapter 3, we saw that an "Islamic frame of reference" or *mariji`iya* invites questions as to moderate Islamists' commitment to democratic principles. Kramer further posits that an "Islamic frame of reference" generally refers to sharia, but moderate Islamists use the phrase to enhance their public appeal, and avoid some of the negative reactions that a reference to sharia invites.[553] During my interviews, a member of the executive explained that the SMB supports a parliamentary political system, but differs from secular parties due to its "Islamic reference". He said: "You know, [what we understand from] democracy, we resort to the ballet box, but we still have a reference, an Islamic reference...our basic principles are Islamic."[554] Thus, the SMB uses an "Islamic frame of reference" to understate sharia, and at the same time, to label the Brotherhood's "modern state" Islamic.

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[553] See Kramer, "Modern but Not Secular: Religion, Identity and the *Ordre Public* in the Arab Middle East," 640-641.

[554] Interview conducted with participant 7, in June 2015.

Furthermore, instead of pinpointing sharia, the 2004 document offers Qur'anic examples to demonstrate that certain democratic values are also Islamic values. It posits that the SMB's "modern state" (*dawlat haditha*) is compatible with Islamic values, based on the notion that democratic values, such as the rule of law, civil liberties, and the separation of powers "are [were] Islamic rules before it was [they were] adopted as civil rules or democratic values".[555] For example, the Qur'anic injunction (3:159) to Mohammed to consult with his followers and to Muslims to consult with each other in conducting their affairs is used to equate consultation or *shura* with a parliamentary system of governance.[556] Thus, the 2004 document suggests that certain democratic values are also Islamic values to impart democratic principles with religious legitimacy, in the absence of pinpointing sharia as that which makes governance Islamic.

The 2004 document also anchors political pluralism in Islamic doctrine. It quotes Qur'an 11:118: "And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community, but they will not cease to differ",[557] which the SMB reads as a guarantee for religious and political freedom. The 2004 document states that not only does Qur'an 11:118 guarantee freedom of religion, but that such freedom is even more relevant to politics, based on the "natural" occurrence of "free thought and belief".[558] Thus, the 2004 document suggests that political pluralism is not only a democratic principle, but also an Islamic principle.

On citizenship, the 2004 document replaces the Islamic concept of *dhimma* in favour of an interpretation based on the Sunna of the Prophet. Historically, Christians and Jews or *dhimmis* had different rights and duties than Muslims in a Muslim-majority polity, but the 2004 document says: "Citizenship…has replaced the concept of *dhimma* and constitutes the basis for full participation and complete equality in the civil and political rights and duties that are guaranteed

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[555] Interview conducted with participant 7, in June 2015.
[556] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, 31.
[557] Ibid., 28.
[558] Ibid.

by the constitution".[559] Here, the SMB resorts to the Sunna of the Prophet in declaring that "equal citizenship" is based on the Constitution of Medina,[560] which the SMB argues included Jewish tribes as equal citizens of the Muslim polity.[561] In this instance, the 2004 document justifies equal citizenship based on the Sunna of the Prophet, but also demonstrates how the SMB uses *ijtihad* to modify a significant Islamic stance on citizenship.

Thus, in the 2004 document, the SMB uses *ijtihad* or independent reasoning to reconcile its understanding of Islamic governance with the challenges that come with a "modern state". The 2004 document explains this use of *ijtihad* by saying that the SMB's ideology is "rooted in tradition but with a renewed methodology".[562] This renewed methodology does not question the oneness of God or the comprehensive nature of Islam, which is at the root of the SMB's ideology. But the SMB makes a distinction between the Qur'an and Sunna as the divine sources of Islam, and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) that is based on "*ijtihad* [or independent reasoning] of Islam's earlier and later scholars…[that] is not considered to be sacred".[563] This distinction between sharia, based on the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet, and *fiqh* is central to the Brotherhood's renewed methodology, which justifies its modified stance on citizenship.

The 2004 document further has it that the SMB's "modern state" is not secular, but neither is it a theocracy.[564] A theocracy is "rule by a clerical class that enforces its decisions upon the people in the name of God".[565] The SMB not only rejects a theocracy, but the "modern state" can only be Islamic, because sharia is

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[559] Pierret, "The Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Flexibility, and Its Limits," 3.
[560] See Uri Rubin, "The "Constitution of Medina" Some Notes," *Studia Islamica*, no. 62 (1985): 12-17.
[561] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, 27.
[562] Ibid., 12.
[563] Ibid., 13.
[564] "Official Vision of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (the Political Project for the Future Syria)".
[565] http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/article/opr/ t236/e0185?_hi=0&_pos=18#match

the main source of legislation, and democratic concepts are presented in an "Islamic frame of reference". However, the implementation of sharia has never been absolute, nor without the influence of human agency.[566] Muslim-majority countries that claim to base their legal systems on sharia mostly use *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) to "inform personal status and family law".[567] Kramer posits that it is rare to find states that implement even elements of "Islamic criminal, maritime or commercial law."[568] Though it is not possible to know to what extent or indeed how *fiqh* will be applied in the SMB's "modern state", we know that the movement considers *fiqh* as "open to discussion and adjustment".[569] In contrast, the text of the Qur'an and the Sunna, the primary sources of the sharia, are seen as divine and unalterable.[570] Thus, though the ulama will not rule the SMB's "modern state", we still do not know how much sharia will limit democratic practices.

Furthermore, the 2004 document focuses on the principles of sharia, as opposed to viewing sharia as "a comprehensive set of norms and values regulating human life down to the minutest detail".[571] In doing so, the 2004 document equates the "principles of constitutional governance, within a modern state", with three principles of sharia, namely: equality, justice, and consultation (*shura*).[572] With the concept "modern state", the SMB further takes cognisance of the fact that there is no prototype Islamic state in history, and as "Islam did not come with detailed rules for [a] modern lifestyle…but only with general rules such as equality and freedom…how to reach these principles is for the people [to] decide".[573] This answers the question posed by Kramer in the previous chapter, namely whether the implementation of sharia is based on principles, or whether

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[566] Kramer, "Modern but Not Secular: Religion, Identity and the *Ordre Public* in the Arab Middle East," 633.

[567] Ibid.

[568] Ibid.

[569] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, 13.

[570] Ibid.

[571] Krämer, "Islamist Notions of Democracy," 4.

[572] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, 27.

[573] Interview conducted with participant 2, in January 2015. See ibid.

the implementation of sharia is envisioned as something far more comprehensive. The 2004 document supports the view that sharia offers principles, and therefore a guideline for ethical behaviour. It also posits that society's understanding of "Islamic principles" should be renewed to be relevant in the modern world.[574] Thus, in focusing on the principles of sharia, as opposed to the comprehensive implementation thereof, should that even be possible, the 2004 document presents Islamic values as compatible with democratic principles.

In sum, the 2004 document understates sharia to demonstrate the compatibility between the SMB's "modern state" and democratic principles. It pursued this objective by utilising an "Islamic frame of reference", suggesting that democratic values were also Islamic values, using *ijtihad*, and in doing so, distinguishes between sharia and *fiqh,* and concentrating on the principles of sharia, as opposed to the comprehensive implementation thereof. Thus, the 2004 document presents the SMB "modern state" as compatible with democratic values. Still, in Chapter 3 we have seen that an "Islamic frame of reference" can result in an understanding of political and ideological pluralism that is different from what is commonly understood by these terms in the context of a Western-style democracy. But *ijtihad,* a distinction between sharia and *fiqh*, and a reference to the principles of sharia, as opposed to its comprehensive implementation, lessen the limitations that sharia might have on democratic practices.

4.4.2 Divine versus Popular Sovereignty

In the previous section, we saw that the 2004 document presents the SMB's "modern state" as compatible with democratic principles. In this section, I will show that the SMB's commitment to sharia as the main source of legislation however challenges the people's sovereignty.

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[574] Interview conducted with participant 2, in January 2015.

The 2004 document emphasizes the electorate, and therefore human agency, in that "the ruler gains legitimacy only through the ballot box", but it comes with the qualification that such authority must in turn obey God.[575] Though the political system is clearly left to "people [to] decide", which is the electorate, God is presented as the ultimate authority. The 2004 document further states that the constitution will recognise Islam as the official religion of Syria, and as the "main source and highest reference for <u>all</u> legislation, while the people are the source of authority".[576] Again we see that the people bring legitimacy to those who govern, based on free and fair elections, but Islam is said to be the state's religion, and sharia is given as the ultimate source of all legislation. This ambiguity around sovereignty leads one to ask: Is sovereignty in the "modern state" still with God, as opposed to the people? In order to answer this question we will revisit Islam as the state religion, and the role of sharia in the SMB's "modern state".

The practical value of an official religion is questionable. For example, in 1973, the Syrian draft constitution omitted the clause that required the head of state to be a Muslim, which in effect designates Islam as the official religion.[577] It was subsequently amended to include the omitted article in the permanent constitution,[578] which to this day determines that the Syrian head of state must be a Muslim. However, the official status of Islam in the constitution has no bearing on Syria's ideological secularism. Officials, with clear political intent, emphasize the secular nature of the state to set Syria apart from its troubled neighbours.[579] The SMB's description of Islam as the state religion therefore does not necessarily take sovereignty away from the people. Islam as the state religion further does not have its origin in the sharia.[580] Finally, the SMB's "modern state"

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[575] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Official Vision of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (the Political Project for the Future Syria)".
[576] *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, 31 (my emphasis).
[577] Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 185.
[578] John J Donohue, "The Syrian Constitution and the Religious Opposition," *Cemam Reports* 1 (1973): 85.
[579] Wieland, *Syria: Ballots or Bullets?: Democracy, Islamism, and Secularism in the Levant*, 81.
[580] Ann Elizabeth Mayer, "Law and Religion in the Muslim Middle East," *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 35, no. 1 (1987): 137.

offers the "freedom of private belief and religious practice for all faiths".[581] In this, the SMB is no different from the majority of Muslim-majority countries that have Islam as the state religion, but constitutionally guarantees religious freedom.[582]

On sharia, the Brotherhood emphasizes a gradual approach in the Islamisation of laws, and the absence of coercion. One of my interlocutors said that the ideal is an Islamic system, but that this would take "tens of years, and this is if we [they] succeed to convince people of this position".[583] He also stressed that the SMB "will not allow our [its] program to be enforced on the people", and would use elections to test their success or failure.[584] Thus, for the SMB, sharia remains of fundamental importance, but how and to what extend it is implemented is open to be influenced by society.

Nevertheless, the SMB's commitment to sharia as the main source of legislation challenges the people's sovereignty.

4.4.3   The Political Environment Rules Supreme

In the previous two sections, we saw that the 2004 document understates sharia, but also proposes that Islam is the official religion, and sharia the main source of law. However, Islam as the official religion does not equal Islamic governance. In addition, members of the executive said that the Islamisation of laws would be gradual, and would not be enforced, which leaves room for society to influence the implementation of sharia.

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[581] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, 32.
[582] See "The Religion-State Relationship and the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Comparative Textual Analysis of the Constitutions of Majority Muslim Countries and Other Oic Members," United States Commission on International Religious Freedom,
http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/USCIRF%20Constitution%20Study%202012%20(full%20Text(2)).pdf.
[583] Interview conducted with participant 7, in July 2015.
[584] Interview conducted with participant 7, in July 2015.

In this section, I will argue that the SMB's stance on sovereignty is as much a consequence of its political environment, as of its ideology. This argument rests on the notion that Islamists are rational political actors, [585] which by definition make choices based on opportunities and constraints. [586] Though the "significance of an ideology inspired by divine revelation" is not underestimated,[587] the SMB's pragmatism and the priority that the Brotherhood assigns to its political objectives will demonstrate the importance of the political environment. The fact that moderate Islamists have a religious agenda should therefore not obscure the political nature of their objectives, which "require a rational understanding of the reality surrounding the movement".[588]

In an interview with a member of the executive, I was told: "The SMB's priority is democracy, we will accept whatever people vote for, even if we don't like it".[589] When I sketched a scenario in which the SMB has the majority of seats in parliament, and asked another member of the executive whether the SMB would accept a parliamentary vote in favour of same-sex marriages, he responded as follows: First, he noted that it is a virtual question, as the majority of Syrians would not support same-sex marriages.[590] Then he said that the SMB would not stop a democratic law or decision, if the majority of Syrians support such a law or decision. He further said that members of the leadership are living in Muslim-minority countries, and that "when we go to the polls…we must accept whatever the result is".[591] Thus, the SMB posits that the movement will not only abide by the opinion of the majority, even if it contradicts sharia, but is already doing so where members of the executive are living in Muslim-minority countries.

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[585] For a definition of a rational political actor, see Roxanne Euben, "When Worldviews Collide: Conflicting Assumptions About Human Behavior Held by Rational Actor Theory and Islamic Fundamentalism," *Political Psychology* 16, no. 1 (1995): 157.

[586] Cavatorta, "Neither Participation nor Revolution: The Strategy of the Moroccan Jamiat Al-Adl Wal-Ihsan," 382.

[587] Ibid., 383.

[588] Ibid., 385.

[589] Interview conducted with participant 5, in January 2015.

[590] Interview conducted with participant 7, in June 2015.

[591] Interview conducted with participant 7, in June 2015.

Though a position expressed in an interview does not have the same value as one stated in a formal platform, it is worth pursuing the implications of my interlocutors' support for a parliamentary vote, and by implication, sovereignty of 'the people'. At the very least, it means that individual members of the Brotherhood are prepared to accept a parliamentary vote that contradicts sharia. The first interlocutor further said that the SMB would abide by a democratic vote, even if such a vote contradicts what the Brotherhood "thinks [is] right Islamically". [592] However, more important, is these interlocutors' acknowledgements that we are dealing with two absolutes, namely sovereignty of the people versus sovereignty of God.

We have seen earlier that the SMB accepts the concept of a nation-state, and as demonstrated above, that of sovereignty. [593] Thus, my interlocutors' comments imply that due to their acceptance of the principle of the people's sovereignty (where the people is the ultimate legislative authority), sharia cannot be the primary source for legislation. Whereas, if sharia is the primary source of legislation, then the people is not sovereign in terms of legislation, because the people will not be able to pass legislation that goes against sharia.

In contrast, a parliamentary political system and sharia are not necessarily in conflict. Earlier, we have seen that Qaradawi's Islamic state accommodates a parliament, which has a legislative role, and acts as a check on potential abuse by the executive.[594] Scholar and politician, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), suggests an Islamic state in which parliament constitutes the "caliphate or deputyship of God", based on *ijtihad* and *ijma* (consensus).[595] But the latter, in fact, is an appeal for a collective interpretation of sharia, while Qaradawi's acceptance of a

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[592] Interview conducted with participant 5, in January 2015.

[593] This is true, notwitstanding the fact that sovereignty is an exclusive 16th century Western concept, see Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 86.

[594] Euben and Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden*, 227.

[595] Muhammad Khalid Masud, "The Construction and Deconstruction of Secularism as an Ideology in Contemporary Muslim Thought," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 33, no. 3 (2005): 378.

parliament does not mean that he accepts the people's sovereignty. A parliamentary political system and Islamic governance is further not necessarily mutually exclusive, because a parliament equals people's representation, but not people's sovereignty. Many parliaments in history have not been sovereign, because their legislative power was limited by other sources of authority, such as the king/queen, or in the case of Syria, by the constitution.[596] Thus, the SMB's support for a parliamentary political system does not contradict its commitment to sharia.

Furthermore, in practice, the SMB prioritises its political objectives vis-à-vis its religious agenda. For example, as part of government, the SMB first campaigned for Islam as the state religion in 1950,[597] but then compromised on its demand based on political considerations.[598] We have also seen that the 1973 draft constitution omitted the clause that designated Islam as the official religion.[599] This omission and some clauses that registered an apparent disregard for the majority's religious sensitivities led to demonstrations, some violent, in a number of Syrian cities.[600] It also allowed Sa`id Hawwa, a member of the SMB, to mobilise the Syrian ulama against the new constitution.[601] However, political considerations in both instances outweighed the omission of Islam as the official religion. The 1973 draft constitution crudely enforced the Ba`th party's control, with the addition of Article 8 that declared the Ba`th "the leading party in society

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[596] Omayma Abdel Latif, "Syria: Elections without Politics," *Arab Reform Bulletin* (April 2007).
[597] Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 174-175.
[598] A contemporary of Mustafa Siba'i argued at the time that the SMB's demand (as opposed to its subsequent compromise) was politically driven. See George N. Sfeir, "Islam as the State Religion a Secularist Point of View in Syria," *The Muslim World* 45, no. 3 (1955): 243.
[599] Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 185.
[600] See Donohue, "The Syrian Constitution and the Religious Opposition," 81-96.
[601] For a detailed account of Sa'id Hawwa's mobilisation of the Syrian ulama against the constitution, see Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, 184-188.

and the state".[602] In the ensuing atmosphere of discontent, Sa`id Hawwa saw an opportunity to further the SMB's political objectives by mobilising the Syrian ulama against the draft constitution. The official status of Islam in the 1973 draft constitution, as in 1950, therefore was secondary to political considerations at the time. In 2005, the SMB also compromised its commitment to Islamic governance, when it signed the Damascus Declaration. This is another example where the SMB prioritised its political objectives vis-à-vis its religious agenda. Thus, we have a number of examples where the SMB, as a rational political actor, compromised its religious agenda in favour of political objectives.

In this section, we have seen that the SMB's Islamic state does not contradict its support for a parliamentary political system, but that the people, ultimately, will not have legislative authority. In the 2004 document, the SMB reconciled its "modern state" and religious agenda by understating sharia. To do so, it used an "Islamic frame of reference", the notion that democratic values were also Islamic values, and a "renewed methodology" that includes *ijtihad* or independent reasoning, and which distinguishes between Islamic jurisprudence and sharia. We have also seen that the Brotherhood in 2004 emphasized the principles, as opposed to a comprehensive application of sharia, while in 2015, members of the executive said that the Islamisation of laws would be gradual, and as such, would not be enforced. But, in 2004, the SMB has not changed God's sovereignty for the people's sovereignty, which means that 'the people' will not have legislative authority.

Most surprising was that in my interviews in 2015; some members of the executive were prepared to accept a parliamentary vote that contradicts sharia. We have also seen that in 1950, in 1973, and again in 2005 (Damascus Declaration), respectively, the SMB compromised its religious agenda in order to optimise a political opportunity. These examples suggest that the SMB's official stance on sovereignty is as much a consequence of its political environment, as of its ideology.

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[602] The Syrian Constitution of 1973 is available at: http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50255

4.5   Summary

In this chapter, I have shown that the SMB's exclusion from institutional politics was an important driver of the movement's policy and actions after 1982. We have seen that after 1982, the SMB's moderation was not due to its inclusion in pluralist political processes, as the inclusion-moderation hypothesis would have it. Notwithstanding its exclusion, the SMB first pursued negotiations with the Hafez al-Asad government, and subsequently, rapprochement with the Bashar al-Asad government. We have seen that the failure of this policy paradoxically exacerbated the SMB's exclusion from the Syrian political arena. This led to the SMB's revision of its political platform, and a change in its primary target audience, namely from the Bashar al-Asad government to the secularist opposition. Still, the SMB did not radicalise, as shown in its 2004 Political Project.

We have also seen that the SMB's political revision in 2004 allowed it to collaborate with the secularist opposition in 2005. This posed a major challenge to the Syrian government, as it gave the SMB a voice inside Syria, which temporarily negated the state's 23-year exclusion of the movement from the Syrian political arena.[603]

Thus, the 2004 document not only prepared the ground for the SMB's cooperation with the secularist opposition in 2005, it also confirmed the SMB's moderate policy on governance. We have seen that the SMB understated sharia in the 2004 document, while it presented its "modern state" as equal to a parliamentary democracy. Nevertheless, the SMB has not formally exchanged God's sovereignty or *hakimiyya* for the people's sovereignty. The SMB's pragmatism and the priority that it has assigned to political objectives in the past, however suggest that the SMB's official stance on sovereignty is as much a consequence of its political environment, as of its ideology.

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[603] Landis and Pace, "The Syrian Opposition," 56.

Chapter 5 The Syrian Uprising

This chapter deals with the SMB's moderate stance in the context of the 2011 Syria uprising.[604] I will show a) that during the uprising, the sponsors of the secularist opposition replaced the secularist opposition as SMB's primary target audience, and b) that the SMB maintained its moderate policy and actions, against the militarisation, radicalisation, and internationalisation of the uprising.

In the previous chapter, I identified the secularist opposition as the SMB's primary target audience for its 2004 political platform. Though the secularist opposition remained an important target audience through 2011 and 2012, the internationalisation of the uprising led to a subtle shift in the SMB's primary target audience, namely to the sponsors of the secularist opposition. The sponsors of the secularist opposition are the United States and its Western allies,[605] plus Saudi Arabia.[606] Turkey and Qatar are also prominent sponsors of the Syrian opposition, in particular the Syrian National Council (SNC).[607] However, neither Turkey nor Qatar qualifies as gatekeeper for the SMB's return to the Syrian political arena, which disqualify them as the SMB's primary target audience.

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[604] For more on the Syrian uprisings, see: Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*, 181-200; Wieland, *Syria - a Decade of Lost Chances: Repression and Revolution from Damascus Spring to Arab Spring*; Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*; Jasmine Gani, "Contentious Politics and the Syrian Crisis: Internationalization and Militarisation of the Conflict," in *Contentious Politics in the Middle East: Popular Resistance and Marginalized Activism Beyond the Arab Uprisings*, ed. Fawaz A. Gerges (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015).

[605] Aron Lund, "A New Free Syrian Army Leadership," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/55245.

[606] Thomas Pierret, "External Support and the Syrian Insurgency," *Foreign Policy*, 9 August 2013, 4.

[607] International Crisis Group, "Anything but Politics: The State of Syria's Political Opposition," in *Middle East Report* (Beirut/Damascus/BrusselsOctober 2013), 19, fn 79.

The Syrian uprising proved to be highly complex, and has continued for longer than what the SMB initially expected.[608] The complexity in part comes from the uprising's metamorphosis, namely from a peaceful protest movement to an insurgency, and then into a civil war.[609] But even this trajectory of contention does not fully reflect the complexity brought by regional and international actors, who pursued domestic interests through the Syrian contention.

Thus, in this chapter, my main contention will be that the sponsors of the secularist opposition became the SMB's primary target audience in the wake of the Syrian uprising, and that this explains its moderate stance, despite the metamorphosis of the uprising.

I will make my argument in four steps. First, I will show that the SMB maintained a moderate stance during the early phase of the Syrian uprising. This phase was characterised by non-violent resistance,[610] which invited a political solution. Second, I will show that the militarisation, radicalisation, and internationalisation of the Syrian uprising a) aided a shift in the balance of power from the political to the armed opposition, and b) made it impossible to find a solution separate from foreign interests. Third, I will discuss the SMB's moderate stance during later phases of the uprising, based on the 2012 Pledge and Charter, an opposition conference in Cairo, in 2012, and the formation of the WAAD party in 2013. Fourth, I will demonstrate that the SMB-sponsored rebels abided by a moderate or centrist Islam, and functioned within the boundaries set by the sponsors of the secularist opposition.

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[608] Participant 3 said in an interview in January 2015 that the SMB launched a political party in June 2013, based on an assumption that the conflict would only last for two to three years.

[609] It is not possible to draw a clear line between the Syrian insurgency and the subsequent civil war. Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*, 78, writes that the UN started to refer to a civil war in June 2012, with the red Cross following suit a month later.

[610] Hinnebusch, "Syria: From 'Authoritarian Upgrading' to Revolution?," 106.

5.1   The SMB: Praxis in Moderation

In this section, I will show that the SMB maintained a moderate stance during its early engagement with the Syrian uprising. I will proceed as follows: a) I will show that the SMB demanded political reforms, as opposed to a revolution. b) I will demonstrate that the SMB succeeded to return to the Syrian political arena, for a limited time, based on the Brotherhood's success in mobilising the political opposition in the Syrian National Council (SNC). c) I will show that the SMB lost political influence when foreign actors restructured the opposition structures.

At the onset of the Syrian uprising, most Syrians, including the SMB, called for political reforms. A little more than a month after the first protests occurred in the southern Syrian city of Dara`,[611] the SMB hosted a conference in Istanbul, Turkey, entitled: "Istanbul Meeting for Syria".[612] A SMB member of the organising committee recounted: "We as Syrians were calling for reform and calling for Bashar [al-Asad] to lead that reform".[613] One of the SMB demands in Istanbul was "to finish one-party rule and [to] change to multi-party politics".[614] The SMB traditionally supported political pluralism, and although the Brotherhood's Istanbul statement challenged the one-party Ba`th state, it did not condemn Bashar al-Asad to the same fate of former Presidents Ben Ali of Tunisia, and Mubarak of Egypt.[615] In the statement, the SMB also encouraged the Syrian government "to find a solution [for which] there is still ample possibilities [in order] to change the negative situation onto a positive course".[616] In doing so, the

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[611] The detention of 15 schoolboys in the city of Dara`, after they painted "the people want the fall of the regime" (*as-sha`b yureed isqat an-nizam*) on a wall, was the catalyst for the Syrian uprising. The children were tortured, and their parents were crudely insulted when they pleaded with the local authority for the children's release. The subsequent protests in Dara`, and the government's use of live ammunition against the protesters, sparked further protests in Dara` and further afield, which gave way to the Syrian uprising.

[612] A member of the executive provided me with the SMB press statement on the conference, dated 26 April 2011.

[613] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2015.

[614] SMB press statement dated 26 April 2011.

[615] President Ben Ali left Tunisia on 14 January 2011 and President Mubarak handed power to the military on 11 February 2011.

[616] SMB press statement dated 26 April 2011.

SMB was in step with the international community's restrained approach towards Syria,[617] and the protesters' early demands for political reforms.[618]

The international community's initial reaction to the Syrian uprising was one of restraint, as mentioned, but this changed in the face of the Syrian government's brutal repression of the protesters.[619] In May 2011, the European Union (EU) and United States imposed sanctions against Bashar al-Asad, and members of his government.[620] France, Germany, Portugal, and the UK, later in the same month, condemned the Syrian government's crackdown on protesters in a draft UN Security Council (SC) resolution.[621] In a manner that came to represent the failure of the UNSC on the Syrian crisis, Russia and China vetoed the resolution when the EU tabled it on 4 October 2011.[622] At the end of May 2011, the SMB and other participants to the Antalya opposition conference added their voices to the growing criticism of the Syrian government.[623] This was the first time since the start of the Syrian uprising that the SMB called on Bashar al-Asad to resign.[624]

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[617] The United States and its allies only called on Bashar al-Asad to resign in August 2011.

[618] Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*, 37.

[619] See Samar Yazbek, *A Woman in the Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*, trans. Max Weiss (London: Haus Publishing, 2012); Philippe Droz-Vincent, "'State of Barbary' (Take Two): From the Arab Spring to the Return of Violence in Syria," *The Middle East Journal* 68, no. 1 (2014): 38.

[620] "Update Report No. 2: Syria," *Security Council Report*, http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/update-report/lookup-c-glKWLeMTIsG-b-7494091.php.

[621] Ibid.

[622] Russia and China vetoed this and other draft UNSC resolutions, based on a perception that the United States and its allies wanted to bring regime change to Syria by invoking Chapter VII of the UNSC, which allows military action to "maintain or restore international peace and security".

[623] See Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM), "The Complete Decipher of the Change in Syria Conference, Carried out in Antalya between 1-2 June 2011," in *ORSAM Report* (Ankara, Turkey: Ortadoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi/ Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM), 2011).

[624] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2015.

Still, the call for Bashar al-Asad's resignation at Antalya was in the framework of the constitution.[625]

In contrast to an armed struggle, the SMB used its organisational capacity to mobilise the opposition in exile. We have seen earlier that the SMB hosted the Istanbul meeting for Syria, the first opposition conference after the start of the Syrian uprising. The SMB also served on the Antalya conference's Follow-up Consulting Council, and its Executive Council.[626] But more important, the SMB was pivotal in the formation of the Syrian National Council (SNC),[627] as we will see next.

The formation of the SNC negated the SMB's exclusion from the Syrian political arena. In the weeks and months before the formation of the SNC, the Brotherhood arranged numerous round-table meetings, which accommodated minority, secular, and other Islamist groups, such as the Group of 74.[628] When the SNC was established in Istanbul on 2 October 2011, it therefore incorporated the SMB's partners from 2005, namely the secularist opposition (of the Damascus Declaration), but also nationalists, some Kurds, Assyrians, independents, and representatives of the protesters, known as the Local Coordinating Committees (LCCs).[629] In April 2012, seventy countries at the so-called Friends of Syria summit endorsed the SNC as "a legitimate representative" of the Syrian people, and "the main opposition interlocutor with the international community".[630] This recognition was a major success for the newly formed SNC. It was also seen as a success by the SMB, based on the

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[625] Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM), "The Complete Decipher of the Change in Syria Conference, Carried out in Antalya between 1-2 June 2011," 63.
[626] Project on Middle East Democracy, "The Antalya Conference " (23 June 2011), http://pomed.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/The-Antalya-Conference.pdf.
[627] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2015.
[628] The Group of 74 consisted of mostly business people and former members of the SMB. See Carnegie Middle East Center, "The Syrian National Council," (25 September 2013), http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48334.
[629] Elizabeth O'Bagy, "Syria's Political Opposition," in *Middle East Security Report* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, April 2012), 10.
[630] Ibid., 9.

Brotherhood's position that a national project was necessary to bring down the al-Asad government.[631] However, the unspoken victory laid in the political access that the SNC afforded the SMB.

The SNC was modelled on the Western-backed National Transitional Council (NTC) in Libya, which acted as a transition government in 2011, and steered Libya to elections in mid-2012.[632] Many in Syria further thought the direct military intervention of NATO in Libya was as relevant to Syria, as Libya.[633] But, Syria is not Libya. The SNC was plagued by internal disagreements, not least on foreign military intervention,[634] and an armed struggle.[635] Russian and Chinese opposition to a repeat of the Libyan example, namely that of regime change based on foreign military intervention, further paralysed the UNSC, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

The SNC had shortcomings,[636] but it was the suspicions of the foreign sponsors of the secularist opposition that ultimately weakened the SNC, and therefore, the SMB. The SMB's strong standing in the SNC, specifically the General Secretariat and the Executive Bureau,[637] invited criticism from other members of the Council.[638] An independent council member accused the Brotherhood of taking

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[631] Interview conducted with participant 3, in January 2015.

[632]International Crisis Group, "Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (V): Making Sense of Libya," in *Middle East/North Africa Report* (Cairo/ Brussels6 June 2011), 24-26.

[633] "Anything but Politics: The State of Syria's Political Opposition," 3.

[634] NATO's military intervention in Libya was officially based on the "responsibility to protect principle". See for an alternative perspective Inez Von Weitershausen, "Foreign Engagement in Contentious Politics: Europe and the 2011 Uprisings in Libya," in *Contentious Politics in the Middle East: Popular Resistance and Marginalized Activism Beyond the Arab Uprisings*, ed. Fawaz A Gerges (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015), 159-165.

[635] International Crisis Group, "Anything but Politics: The State of Syria's Political Opposition," 3.

[636] See O'Bagy, "Syria's Political Opposition," 16.

[637] Aron Lund, "Struggling to Adapt - the Muslim Brotherhood in a New Syria," *The Carnegie Papers* (May 2013), http://carnegieendowment.org/files/struggling_to_adapt_mb.pdf.

[638] International Crisis Group, "Anything but Politics: The State of Syria's Political Opposition," 3, fn 5; Lund, "Struggling to Adapt - the Muslim Brotherhood in a New Syria". 13.

the lead role in the Council, and treating the rest like "extras".[639] Criticism also came from inside Syria, where some rebels thought the SMB might try to "steal the revolution".[640] But it was the suspicions of the foreign sponsors of the secularist opposition that ultimately weakened the Brotherhood's influence in political opposition structures, as we will see in the remainder of this section.

By October 2012, it was clear that the United States and it allies had decided to restructure the opposition in exile. First, the United States Secretary of State accused the SNC of not adequately representing those Syrians who were fighting and dying for their freedom in Syria.[641] She also questioned the SNC's representational ability, as "people…who have not been inside Syria for 20, 30 or 40 years".[642] The SMB understood the SNC's reversal in fortune as based on an enduring Western suspicion of Islamists.[643]

The National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (NC) replaced the SNC as the international community's "main opposition interlocutor" in November 2012. Former British Prime Minister David Cameron said a few days before the formation of the new opposition National Council (NC): "There is an opportunity for Britain, for America, for Saudi Arabia, Jordan and like-minded allies to… try to help shape the opposition, outside Syrian and inside Syria".[644] As these like-minded states represented the main sponsors of the secularist opposition, it was clear that such a restructuring would lead to a lesser role for the SMB, if not the Islamists in general.[645] Therefore, when the NC was formed the SNC was sidelined, and the SMB with it.

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[639] O'Bagy, "Syria's Political Opposition," 16.
[640] Ibid.
[641] Carnegie Middle East Center, "The Syrian National Council".
[642] Neil MacFarquhar and Michael R. Gordon, "As Fighting Rages, Clinton Seeks New Syrian Opposition," *New York Times* 31 October 2012.
[643] Interview conducted with participant 1, in January 2015.
[644] "Uk Leads Calls to 'Shape' Syria Opposition," *Al-Jazeera* (8 November 2012), http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/201211710203617899 1.html.
[645] Interview conducted with participant 1 in June.

Initially, the SMB succeeded to maintain significant influence in the NC, based on its organisational capacity, discipline, and alliance with members of the secularist opposition.[646] An alliance with some Damascus Declaration figures and a Qatari-sponsored businessman, Mustafa Sabbagh,[647] allowed the Brotherhood, as part of the SNC bloc, to maintain an influential position in the NC until mid-2013. But the SMB's influence was finally curtailed with an alteration in the balance of power between foreign sponsors Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as follows:

In mid-2013, the United States had become concerned about some aspects of Qatar's support for the Syrian opposition, and exerted strong pressure on Doha. At the same time, Saudi Arabia took on a more public role vis-à-vis the Syrian opposition.[648] Given the Saudi preference for secularist opposition groups, such as the FSA,[649] a more prominent Saudi role was detrimental to the SMB's influence in the NC. A SMB interlocutor explained that the restructured NC included approximately 25 new individuals, the majority of whom were secular, and sponsored by Saudi Arabia.[650] This readjustment in favour of Saudi Arabia therefore curbed the SMB's influence in the NC.

The SMB's subsequent engagement with Saudi Arabia,[651] notwithstanding Saudi Arabia's public rejection of the MB,[652] shows the movement's pragmatism, but also the Kingdom's influence. In July 2013, Farouk Tayfour, then deputy superintendent, called on members of the SMB to support Saudi Arabia's candidate (Ahmad Assi al-Jarba) for the leadership of the NC.[653] Tayfour's

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[646] International Crisis Group, "Anything but Politics: The State of Syria's Political Opposition," 20.
[647] Ibid.
[648] Ibid., 22.
[649] Hassan Hassan, "Syria Is Now Saudi Arabia's Problem," *National Herald Tribune* 8 June 2013.
[650] Interview conducted with participant 1, in June 2015.
[651] For a discussion of the relationship between the SMB and Saudi Arabia see: Raphael Lefèvre, "Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Brotherhood," Middle East Institute, http://www.mei.edu/content/saudi-arabia-and-syrian-brotherhood.
[652] In March 2014, Saudi Arabia declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organisation. Though the terrorist designation is understood to refer to the EMB, the Saudi authorities did not issue any clarification.
[653] Lefèvre, "Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Brotherhood".

support came in the wake of a visit by the SMB to Saudi Arabia. However, the leadership did not sanction Tayfour's actions, nor did they approve of them.[654] My SMB interlocutor suggested that Jarba's name was not on the table during the meeting in Saudi Arabia, but was suggested "suddenly" at a later point.[655] This might point to no more than political disagreements within the SMB. However, given the November 2012 developments in the National Coalition (NC), it more likely reflects the renewed importance of Saudi Arabia as a primary sponsor of the secularist opposition.

In sum, we have seen that the Brotherhood remained true to its moderate policy on governance, as discussed in previous chapters. We have seen, specifically, that the SMB pursued political reforms at the onset of the Syrian uprising. We also witnessed that the secularist opposition remained an important ally to the SMB through the events leading up to the formation of the SNC, and subsequent to the replacement of the SNC by the NC. However, in 2012, we witnessed the weakening of the SMB's influence in opposition structures, due to the foreign sponsors of the secularist opposition's persistent scepticism of the SMB. Still, it is also at this time that the shift in the SMB's target audience occurred, as we will see in section 5.3.

5.2   Civil War and Foreign Influence

Before we continue our discussion on the SMB's moderation, we need to pause to consider the metamorphosis of the uprising into a civil war. This section will therefore discuss the militarisation, radicalisation, and internationalisation of the Syrian uprising. I will show that a) the Bashar al-Asad government's military solution aided a shift in the balance of power from the political to the armed opposition, and b) the internationalisation of the conflict made it impossible to find a solution separate from foreign interests.

The formation of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in July 2011 was inadvertently linked to the government's military solution to the uprising. First, in using the

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[654] Interview conducted with participant 1, in June 2015.
[655] Interview conducted with participant 1, in June 2015.

military as opposed to the police to respond to demonstrations, loyal elite units disproportionally staffed by Alawis were stretched. "Poorly equipped and trained regular units" were therefore deployed as demonstrations spread across the country.[656] This use of regular units to quell public unrest increased defections, for example in Jisr al-Shughour, as will be demonstrated shortly. The formation of the FSA therefore provided an umbrella for army defectors, but also for civilians who took up arms against the state.

Both the government and opposition claimed Jisr al-Shughour as proof of each other's transgression. The incident in early June 2011 reportedly started with security forces that fired at a funeral procession.[657] A group of mourners responded by attacking the local police station, killing the security personnel with their own weapons.[658] When army units, secret police, and intelligence personnel arrived the next day, "a portion of the army unit refused to assault the town and defected" .[659] In the events that followed "a total of 120 soldiers lost their lives; it's a matter of dispute how many were killed by revolutionaries and how many by their own officers".[660] The Syrian government subsequently bussed diplomats stationed in Damascus to Jisr al-Shughour in order to first hand observe a mass grave, which was said to contain the bodies of soldiers killed and mutilated by "terrorists" and "armed gangs".[661] Supporters of the government claimed the Jisr al-Shughour example as proof of an "armed insurrection", while "revolutionaries...were inspired" by the defection of a large number of soldiers.[662]

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[656] Philippe Droz-Vincent, "The 'Dark Side' of the Syrian Transition and Its Potentially Dire Regional Consequences," in *NOREF Policy Brief* (Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, April 2012), 2.
[657] Ibid., 3.
[658] Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*, 83.
[659] Joseph Holliday, "Syria's Armed Opposition," *Middle East Security Report* 3 (2012): 11.
[660] Ibid.
[661] I travelled to Jisr al-Shughour as a member of the diplomatic corps, courtesy of the Syrian government.
[662] Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*, 83.

Public support for the FSA, and by implication for armed struggle increased over time. The Syrian Revolution 2011 Facebook page, which suggested themes for Friday protests, demonstrates this well. Initially it advocated "dignity" (March 2011), "defiance" (May 2011), and "international protection" (September 2011) as relevant themes for the Friday protests.[663] However, in October 2011 the Syrian Revolution Facebook page started to promote the FSA, and therefore the armed struggle in general.[664]

By March 2012 the armed struggle was "part of the political mainstream" in Syria.[665] By the end of 2011 and early 2012 opposition groups across the political spectrum, with a few exceptions,[666] supported an armed struggle against the al-Asad government. The head of Al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, added his voice in calling on Muslims in February 2012 to support armed jihad in Syria,[667] and even some LCCs were drawn to the armed struggle in early 2012.[668]

Though armed struggle was the norm in Syria in 2012, the conflict became further radicalised when Salafi-jihadi Jabhat al-Nusra (then Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, and now Hay`at Tahrir al-Sham) entered the fighting. However, the seeds of radicalisation were already planted in 2011. Between March and October 2011 Bashar al-Asad decreed an amnesty, during which up to 1500 prisoners were released.[669] Leaders of Islamist militias, such as Zahran Alloush of Jaysh al-Islam and Hassan Aboud of Ahrar al-Sham, were amongst these pardoned prisoners.

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[663] https://notgeorgesabra.wordpress.com/2013/10/18/every-friday-new-slogans-of-the-peoples-revolution/

[664] International Crisis Group, "Tentative Jihad: Syria's Fundamentalist Opposition," in *Middle East Report* (Damascus/BrusselsOctober 2012), 1, fn. 6.

[665] Pierret, "Salafis at War in Syria: Logics of Fragmentation and Realignment," 279.

[666] Two exceptions are: the National Coordinating Body for the Forces of Democratic Change, and Building the Syrian State Movement. See International Crisis Group, "Anything but Politics: The State of Syria's Political Opposition," 4-6.

[667] "Tentative Jihad: Syria's Fundamentalist Opposition," 3.

[668] Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*, 93.

[669] Ibid., 120.

Al-Qaeda linked Jabhat al-Nusra was responsible for the first (double) suicide bombing in Damascus on 23 December 2011, but was surpassed in strength and brutality in 2014 by its former ally Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) (now Islamic State). Jabhat al-Nusra and Islamic State's trans-national objectives, recruitment of foreign fighters, narrow interpretation of Islam, and brutal military tactics further radicalised the Syrian conflict.

The internationalisation of the Syrian conflict became another distinctive feature of the Syrian conflict. Internationalisation here does not refer to the influence of any one political actor, but to the diverse and numerous external interests, which came to define the Syrian conflict. These interests have become so entangled with the survival of the Bashar al-Asad government and the opposition that a solution outside of these foreign interests has become impossible.

The internationalisation of the Syrian uprising further paradoxically coincided with the inaction of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Permanent members Russia and China respectively vetoed 8 and 6 UNSC Resolutions on Syria between October 2011 and June 2017,[670] based on a sentiment that "regime change" in Syria, as witnessed in Libya, should be foiled. The ensuing impotency of the UNSC, and the indirect role adopted by the United States under the Obama administration, left the Syrian arena open to significant influence from Russia, and regional actors Iran, Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

The year 2013 was a major turning point in this process. We have seen earlier that the UNSC showed itself unable to stem the violence in Syria, due to divisions in the Council. In August 2013, the al-Asad government used chemical weapons in a district of Damascus.[671] Earlier in the conflict, President Obama indicated that the use of chemical weapons was a red line.[672] However, instead of the

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[670] See http://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick.
[671] Ralf Trapp, "Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Stockpile of Syria," *Journal of conflict and security law* (2014): 9.
[672] Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*, 105.

anticipated military response, the US accepted a Russian plan that led to the apparent confiscation of the Syrian state's chemical stockpile, but no punitive action.[673] In addition, the UNSC's unanimous support for the Russian plan enhanced Bashar al-Asad's legitimacy.[674] With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that the UNSC's support for the Russian solution paved the way for Russia's increasingly dominant role in the conflict, as witnessed in particular after September 2015.[675]

In this section, we have seen that the militarisation and radicalisation of the Syrian uprising allowed the armed opposition to displace the political opposition in exile, and the protest movement that developed in Syria in 2011. The internationalisation of the uprising has further enlarged, and complicated the area of conflict, which means that a solution without foreign involvement has become impossible. This metamorphosis of the Syrian uprising influenced the SMB's policy and actions, as we will see in the next section.

5.3 The SMB's Primary Target Audience in the Civil War

In this section, I will show that the SMB changed its primary target audience, but that its moderate policy on governance remained unaffected. I will proceed in four parts. In the first part, I will show that the SMB adopted armed jihad in response to the Syrian government's military campaign. In the second part, based on the Pledge and Charter, I will demonstrate the SMB's persistent moderation, notwithstanding the metamorphosis of the uprising. In the third part, I will show that the SMB compromised its religious agenda at an opposition conference in Cairo in July 2012 to aid its political interests. In the fourth part, I will again demonstrate that the SMB has maintained its moderate stance, this time as reflected in the formation of the WAAD party in June 2013.

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[673] Trapp, "Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Stockpile of Syria," 9.
[674] See UNSC 2118 of 2013 at
http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2118(2013)
[675] In September 2015, Russia started using its military air power to directly intervene in the Syrian conflict.

5.3.1   Armed Jihad in 2012

In the previous section, we have seen that armed struggle became the norm in Syria in 2012. The SMB was initially reluctant to support an armed struggle, based on a concern that it would serve the government's rhetoric that held the Brotherhood responsible for the unrest, and attacks on the security forces.[676] However, in March 2012, the SMB "saluted the heroic jihad" and pledged moral and material support for the FSA.[677] A member of the executive explained that the Brotherhood's initial reluctance to support the armed struggle changed after the army's almost total destruction of the Baba Amr neighbourhood of Homs in February 2012.[678]

5.3.2   Pledge and Charter (2012)

In the same month that the SMB's *shura* council "saluted the heroic jihad", the Brotherhood published a confirmation of its moderate political platform, in the form of the Pledge and Charter. The Pledge and Charter was however not intended to contextualise the SMB's decision to support the insurgency, as armed struggle has become part of mainstream politics in 2012, as discussed. In fact, the Pledge and Charter came in response to a persistent suspicion among Western policy makers of the SMB's democratic commitment.

A member of the executive recounted how the SMB's democratic commitment was questioned during one of the numerous workshops that were held in Europe to deliberate on "Syria, the day after".[679] He narrated how his interlocutors

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[676] Talhamy, "The Muslim Brotherhood Reborn," 39.

[677] The final statement of the SMB's consultative council, held from 8 – 10 March 2012, is available in Arabic at:
www.ikhwansyria.com/Portals/Content/?Name=ﺑﯾﺎن%20اﻟ%20ﺧﺗﺎﻣﻲ%20اﻟﺟﻠﺳﮫ%20ﻟ
&i201032012%.. ﺳورﯾﺔ%20ﻓﻲ%20اﻟﻣﺳﻠﻣﯾن%20اﻹﺧوان%20ﺟﻣﺎﻋﺔ%20ﺷورى%20
nfo=YVdROU16QTRNemdtYzI5MWNtTmxQVk4xWWxCaFoyVW1kSGx3WlQweE
pnPT0rdQ==.Syr.

[678] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2015.

[679] The United States and German governments funded a number of meetings in Europe between Syrian exiles and Western technical experts on the reconstruction of Syria, aptly called: "The Day After", according to a speech by SMB executive and founding member of the SNC Molham Aldrobi in Berlin on 19 August 2012. See also: "The Hunt for 'Plan B' - Planning for 'the Day after' in Syria," *CNN Wire* (1 April 2012),

accused him of representing his own, as opposed to the Brotherhood's position. In response, he undertook to get a press statement from the executive that would confirm the movements' moderate policy, as he explained it in the workshop. The result was the Pledge and Charter, which was not only approved by the executive, but by the main decision making body of the Brotherhood, the *shura* or consultative council.[680]

The 2012 Pledge and Charter reiterated the SMB's commitment to a civil, democratic state, as developed in the 2004 Political Project for a Future Syria. However, it is more than just a summary of the much longer 2004 document. With its emphasis on key aspects of the SMB's moderate political program, the intention of the Pledge and Charter was said to "dispel fears" and "inspire trust".[681] The SMB's vision for a post-Asad Syria was further given as based on the following key notions: a civil, modern state, with a civil constitution; political pluralism, based on universal suffrage; equal citizenship; human rights; a heterogeneous character; democratic rule; division of powers; compliance with international conventions; rule based; and reconciliation between opposing elements of Syrian society.[682]

It is worth paying attention to the notion of "equal citizenship", which was left ambiguous in the 2004 document.[683] In the Pledge and Charter, all people are said to be equal, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, and/or ideology. Such equality is further confirmed by asserting that any Syrian could become head of state.[684] This ruling on citizenship challenges both the Islamic concept of *dhimma*

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https://global.factiva.com/ha/default.aspx#./!?&_suid=1431305150759028027 57809404284.
[680] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2015.
[681] The *Pledge and Charter*, also translated as *Covenant and Charter,* is available on the al-'ahd newspaper site: Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Covenant/Pledge and Charter,"
http://www.al3ahdnewspaper.com/uploads/ikhwan_covenant_and_charter_eng lish.pdf (account suspended).
[682] Ibid.
[683] Pierret, "The Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Flexibility, and Its Limits," 3-4.
[684] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Covenant/Pledge and Charter".

– which granted Christian and Jewish minorities protection, but with different rights and duties than Muslim subjects,[685] in early Islamic history – and the secular Ba`th government's standing constitution that requires the head of state to be a Muslim.[686]

Citizenship was also a point of contention between the SMB and the EMB. During an interview in 2015, an executive member of the SMB expressed his frustration with the EMB on the issue of equal citizenship. My interviewee said that during a conference to discuss a new draft constitution, some ten years ago, the EMB indicated that it would not support a Christian or a woman as head of state. The conference also supported a committee of religious scholars to sanction laws, which do not abide by the sharia. My interviewee indicated that he publicly rejected both suggestions. He also said that he asked his hosts: "Would you expect Egyptians to elect a Christian to be the President?" and "Would you expect Egyptians to elect a woman to be the President?" He noted that his hosts answered negative in response to both questions. So he asked them: "Why would you write it!?"

Thus, the Pledge and Charter with its unequivocal support for multi-party democracy and equal citizenship distinguish the SMB from other Islamists, even other moderate Islamists, to speak directly to an audience suspicious of the Brotherhood's commitment to a civil, democratic state, i.e. the sponsors of the secularist opposition.

In addition, the SMB released a statement to the Carnegie Middle East program, entitled: Building the Syrian State: A Plan by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, in October 2012.[687] Though this document does not have the same standing as the

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[685] Noel J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh: Aldine Transaction, 2011), 27.
[686] A copy of the Syrian constitution (2012) is available at: http://www.voltairenet.org/article173033.html
[687] A copy of the document can be found on the Carnegie website: http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50663

Pledge and Charter, it serves as another example of the SMB's attempts to address the doubt with which its moderate policies and actions were met.

The language of the October 2012 document is as explicitly democratic as that of the Pledge and Charter. However, the October statement specifically addresses sectarian violence in the context of "our revolution". The "revolution" is credited with granting "Syria a historic opportunity…to build a modern state". But it also speaks to the threat of sectarian violence, by calling for a "national truth and reconciliation commission" to deal with, and if possible prevent, sectarian revenge attacks in a post-conflict Syria.[688] This sensitivity to Syrian's minorities and their potential demonisation, because of their actual or perceived proximity to the al-Asad family,[689] has been a focal point for the international community from the onset of the Syrian uprising.[690] The SMB has demonstrated an equal sensitivity, as shown in the Antalya conference's concluding statement in June 2011,[691] and also in the Carnegie statement of October 2012.

5.3.3 Cairo Opposition Conference
Another example is an opposition conference in Cairo from 2-3 July 2012. This conference came in response to international pressure on the Syrian opposition to present a uniform political platform.[692] The conference produced the required consensus documents, one on a transition period, and the other a National

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[688] Carnegie Middle East Center, "Building the Syrian State: A Plan by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50663.

[689] Droz-Vincent, "'State of Barbary' (Take Two): From the Arab Spring to the Return of Violence in Syria," 40-42.

[690] In an interview in January 2015, participant 2 expressed discomfort with the international community's focus on the plight of non-Muslims, such as the Syrian Christians in Ma`loula, in September 2013, or the Iraqi Yazidis, in August 2014, compared to the international silence on the large-scale violence against the Sunni Muslims of Homs in February to March 2012.

[691] Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM), "The Complete Decipher of the Change in Syria Conference, Carried out in Antalya between 1-2 June 2011."

[692] http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/07/the-syrian-oppositions-demonstra.html

Covenant. Neither made any reference to Islam.[693] The only reference to religion was in a very general manner in the National Covenant, i.e.: "The Syrian people are linked to all other Muslim peoples with joint historical roots and common human values based on divine religions".[694] By endorsing the Cairo documents, the SMB therefore compromised its "Islamic reference".[695] A scheduled meeting three days later in Paris by the so-called Friends of Syria group, with its standing demand for a unified opposition, explained the SMB's compromise.

The SMB's narrative therefore reflects a moderate policy on governance, while the purpose of the Pledge and Charter and the SMB's compromise in Cairo confirm the sponsors of the secularist opposition as the Brotherhood's primary target audience.

5.3.4   Political Party WAAD

The SMB's moderation was also reflected with the formation of the political party WAAD in June 2013. The SMB "spearheaded" the established of the National Democratic Party for Justice and Constitution (WAAD),[696] which was launched as a "national party, with an Islamic reference".[697] WAAD supports a civil democratic state,[698] and with a Syrian Christian as the elected head at the end of 2014, projects itself as inclusive. WAAD was established to compete for power in a post-conflict Syria, based on the (mistaken) assumption that the conflict would not last for more than 2/3 years.[699] Though the party is a lame duck in the context of the militarisation of the conflict, it serves to demonstrate

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[693] Available at: https://othersuns.wordpress.com/2012/07/06/syria-the-final-statement-for-the-syrian-opposition-conference/
[694] "Syria: The Final Statement for the Syrian Opposition Conference," https://othersuns.wordpress.com/2012/07/06/syria-the-final-statement-for-the-syrian-opposition-conference/.
[695] Participant 3 identified an "Islamic reference" as that which distinguishes the SMB from secularists.
[696] Lefèvre, "Islamism within a Civil War: The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's Struggle for Survival," 4-5.
[697] Interview conducted with participant 3, in January 2015.
[698] Zaman al-Wasl, "Waad Party Is Not Musilm Brotherhood Affiliate: Deputy," (18 March 2014), https://en.zamanalwsl.net/news/4152.html.
[699] Interview conducted with participant 3, in January 2015.

the SMB's commitment to a civil, democratic state, and to cooperate with minorities.

In this section, we have seen that the SMB changed its primary target audience, but that its moderate policy on governance remained unaffected. I showed that the SMB adopted armed jihad in reaction to the government's military response to the uprising. We have also seen that the Brotherhood's persistent moderation, notwithstanding the metamorphosis of the uprising, and that the SMB has indeed changed its primary target audience, as demonstrated by the Pledge and Charter, and the Cairo opposition conference. In the next section, we will consider the SMB's ongoing commitment to a moderate policy and actions, even in its engagement with the armed opposition.

5.4 The Armed Opposition

As the Syrian conflict advanced, the SMB found itself in a very different political environment from that of March 2012, when the Pledge and Charter was published. In this section, I will show that in its engagement with the Syrian insurgency,[700] and later, civil war, the SMB has remained true to its moderate Islamist agenda. I will also show that the SMB has been pragmatic in its actions, as seen in the context of the movement's desired return to the (institutional) Syrian political arena.

The armed opposition in Syria is characterised by fluidity and change. Its capacity or strength can only be judged vis-à-vis that of its opponents, namely the Syrian government and its Iranian, Lebanese (Hizbullah), and Russian supporters, as well as Islamic State (IS), formerly known as Islamic State in Iraq and Sham/Levant (ISIS/L), and an *ad hoc* ally, the al-Qaeda linked Jabhat al-Nusra (now Hay`at Tahrir al-Sham).[701] The armed opposition is also diverse, a

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[700] Insurgency here means an armed uprising or rebellion.

[701] At times al-Nusra cooperated with the rebel mainstream, for example in the summer of 2012 with Ahrar al-Sham to form a Sharia Commission; with Free Syrian Army (FSA) factions in Deir al-Zor in 2014 to prevent the return of ISIS (later Islamic State); and in 2015, in an operation that took Idlib from government forces. But al-Nusra also displayed radical views in competition with

diversity which was increased by the vested interests of foreign state and non-state sponsors, the most prominent of which are Saudi Arabia, Turkey,[702] Qatar,[703] the US and its Western allies, and non-state actors in Kuwait.[704]

I will build my argument as follows: In order to profile the SMB in the complex environment occupied by the armed opposition, I will consider the "moderate" Islamist rebels that benefitted from SMB sponsorship in the period mid-2011 to June 2017. In focusing on these rebels' political platforms, alliances with other armed groups, and positions vis-à-vis the political opposition – as represented by the SNC, the NC, and the Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC)/High Negotiations Committee (HNC) –[705] I will show: a) that the SMB-sponsored militias adhered to a moderate or centrist ideology; and b) functioned within the boundaries set by the sponsors of the secularist opposition.

5.4.1   The SMB's Rebels

The three SMB-sponsored armed alliances/groups on which we will focus are: the Committee for the Protection of Civilians (CPC) or *Himayat al-madaniyin*,[706]

IS' empowerment in mid-2014, as detailed by International Crisis Group, "Rigged Cars and Barrel Bombs: Aleppo and the State of the Syrian War," in *Middle East Report* (Beirut/Brussles9 September 2014), 25.

[702] See Christopher Phillips, "Turkey's Syria Problem," *Public Policy Research* 19, no. 2 (2012).

[703] Thomas Pierret, "State Sponsors and the Syrian Insurgency: The Limits of Foreign Influence," in *Inside Wars Local Dynamics of Conflicts in Syria and Libya*, ed. Luigi Narbone, Agnes Favier, and Virginie Collombier (Florence, Italy: European University Institute, 2016), 26-27.

[704] Zoltan Pall, "Kuwaiti Salafism and Its Growing Influence in the Levant," in *Carnegie Middle East Program* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 7 May 2014), 17-22.

[705] The formation of the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) can be traced back to an opposition conference in Riyadh, in December 2015. The HNC represented the political and armed opposition at UN-sponsored peace talks at the end of January 2016, known as Geneva III. For background see: Aron Lund, "Riyadh, Rumeilan, and Damascus: All You Need to Know About Syria's Opposition Conferences," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/62239.

[706] For background, see "The Curious Case of the Commission for the Protection of Civilians," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/53518.

the Shields of the Revolution (*Duruʻ al-thawra*),[707] and the Sham Legion or *Faylaq al-Sham.*[708] However, before we consider the SMB-sponsored armed opposition groups in more detail, we will follow the events that preceded them.

The SMB naturally had some links with participants to the uprising in 2011, based on family ties and/or contact with former Brotherhood members and their families.[709] We have also seen that the SMB threw its weight behind the FSA in March 2012. This support for the FSA was reiterated in May 2017, as follows: "The FSA – with its popular support – is the only party capable of liberating the country from the Asad regime and all terrorist organisations".[710] However, informal links cannot be compared to the influence and proliferation of armed opposition groups, most with foreign sponsorship, from 2012 onwards.[711] The SMB support for the FSA further did not translate into actual influence on the ground in Syria.

Some in the SMB desired a more tangible impact on the ground in Syria, as evident in the formation of the Committee for the Protection of Civilians (CPC). In January 2012, a component of the SNC, called the National Coalition to Support the Syrian Coalition, formed the CPC.[712] The CPC was not an armed group, but provided financial support to rebel groups mainly based in the Homs countryside.[713] Though the CPC and some in the SMB denied an official

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[707] Raphael Lefèvre and Ali El Yassir, "Militias for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2013/10/29/militias-for-syrian-muslim-brotherhood/grhp.

[708] See R. Lefèvre and Ali El Yassir, "The Sham Legion: Syria's Moderate Islamists," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55344.

[709] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2015. Also see Lund, "Struggling to Adapt - the Muslim Brotherhood in a New Syria". 16.

[710] In response to the United States' decision to arm the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria, the SMB issued a statement in support to the FSA, see: http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=32692.

[711] For a discussion of foreign state sponsors Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, see: Pierret, "State Sponsors and the Syrian Insurgency: The Limits of Foreign Influence."

[712] Lund, "Struggling to Adapt - the Muslim Brotherhood in a New Syria". 17.

[713] Lefèvre and El Yassir, "Militias for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood".

relationship, evidence suggests that the CPC acted as an "informal funding arm of the Brotherhood".[714] This ambiguity on the relationship between the SMB and the CPC is the result of the movement's "decentralised" approach to armed struggle before March 2012. At this time, there was no consensus in the SMB on an armed struggle, which is why the leadership allowed individual members to decide whether they would actively support the armed struggle, or not.[715]

The SMB's initial engagement with the armed struggle was however not without difficulty. A suspicion that the Brotherhood deserted its followers in Hama in 1982 was lingering on the ground in Syria.[716] The SMB might also have erred in its indirect approach to armed groups, namely through the CPC and not as the SMB.[717] Wealthy donors from the Gulf-states further caused resistance to the SMB's influence. These patrons both had deep pockets and allowed the rebels more autonomy, based on the sheer number and variety of available donors.[718] The SMB, therefore, did not secure a significant influence in the insurgency by indirectly funding armed groups.[719]

Thus far, we have seen that the treacherous terrain of armed conflict makes hypothesising difficult. Covert support for armed groups, though tactically prudent, does not assist either. In 2012, the SMB changed its strategy, as we will see next.

Towards the end of 2012, the SMB formed an armed group, which became "fully operational" in January 2013 as the Shields of the Revolution (*Duru' al-*

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[714] Lund, "Struggling to Adapt - the Muslim Brotherhood in a New Syria". 17.
[715] Lefèvre, "Islamism within a Civil War: The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's Struggle for Survival," 7.
[716] See Raphael Lefèvre, "The Muslim Brotherhood Prepares for a Comeback in Syria," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/muslim_bro_comback.pdf.
[717] International Crisis Group, "Tentative Jihad: Syria's Fundamentalist Opposition," 31.
[718] Raphaël Lefèvre, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: A 'Centrist' Jihad?," *Turkish Review* 4, no. 2 (March/April 2014): 3.
[719] The CPC will again feature in the formation of the Sham Legion in March 2014, as we will see later in this section.

thawra).[720] The Shields shared the SMB's moderate policy on governance, as they "believed in our ideology", according to a member of the executive.[721] He explained that the militants in the Shields "had to be good Muslims, and [had to] comply with international law on military conflicts".[722] On its website, the Shields "called on their followers to respect international laws on human rights, "to support…the National Coalition (NC) and the FSA",[723] and unconditionally rejected "all calls for *takfir* [excommunication of some Muslims by other Muslims], forced displacement, mass murder and sectarian and ethnic discrimination".[724] The reference to sectarianism served to distance the Shields from Salafi groups and their inherent denunciation of Shi'a Muslims.[725] It also signified recognition for minority rights in Syria, as demanded by the international community.[726]

The Shields further endorsed the Saudi and Western backed NC and FSA. It also functioned nominally under the authority of the FSA, and the now defunct FSA command structure, the Supreme Military Command (SMC).[727] This meant that the Shields, at least in theory, functioned within a framework that enjoyed the support of the sponsors of the secularist opposition, as the security agencies of the US, France, the UK, the Gulf States, and Jordan, participated in the formation of the SMC.[728] The proximity of the Shields to the FSA, and the SMC, on the one hand, and the Shields commitment to moderate Islamism, meant that they

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[720] Lefèvre and El Yassir, "Militias for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood".
[721] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2015.
[722] Interview conducted with participant 4, in January 2015.
[723] Lefèvre and El Yassir, "Militias for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood".
[724] Lefèvre, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: A 'Centrist' Jihad?," 3.
[725] Pierret, "Salafis at War in Syria: Logics of Fragmentation and Realignment," 275.
[726] See the report of the independent international commission of enquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/21/50, dated 15 August 2012, available at: http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/search.php?ctype=Syria&rtype=Human%20Rights%20Council%20Documents&cbtype=syria&search=%22Human%20Rights%20Council%20Documents%22%20AND%20%22Syria%22&_mode=tag&IncludeBlogs=10&limit=15&page=2
[727] Raphaël Lefèvre, "The Brotherhood Starts Anew in Syria," (Majalla, 2013).
[728] See Elizabeth O'Bagy, "The Free Syrian Army," in *Middle East Security Report* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2013), 9.

functioned within the boundaries set by the sponsors of the secularist opposition.

The Shields was however not sustainable. The project was terminated when it "lost support of many inside the Brotherhood".[729] Faylaq al-Sham (Sham Legion) took its place in representing moderate Islamist militias in March 2014 .

Turkey and Qatar are the actual sponsors of Faylaq al-Sham.[730] But as we know, Turkey and Qatar have been sponsors of the SMB, as opposed to gatekeepers for the SMB's return to the Syrian political arena. In the remainder of this section, we will therefore see that Faylaq al-Sham, similar to the Shields, functioned within the boundaries set by the sponsors of the secularist opposition.

In May 2014, Faylaq al-Sham and other armed groups signed an Honour Charter, which called for a "state of law, freedom and justice",[731] and not an Islamic state.[732] The Honour Charter further included a clause indicating respect for Syria's ethnic and religious diversity as well as human rights.[733] These concepts are all in line with the SMB's policy on governance, as detailed in its 2004 and 2012 political platforms, and in stark contrast to the policy and actions of Salafi-jihadis, such as Jabhat al-Nusra.

Faylaq al-Sham was further one of 18 factions to form the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) in November 2014. This was another (unsuccessful) initiative by the sponsors of the secularist opposition to strengthen and unify the

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[729] According to a member of the SMB, as quoted by Lefèvre, "Islamism within a Civil War: The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's Struggle for Survival," 8.
[730] Aron Lund, "Assad's Broken Base: The Case of Idlib," The Century Foundation, http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/07/14/assad-s-broken-base-case-of-idlib-pub-64090.
[731] http://eaworldview.com/2014/05/syria-document-insurgents-issue-revolutionary-covenant/
[732] Pierret, "Salafis at War in Syria: Logics of Fragmentation and Realignment," 299.
[733] http://eaworldview.com/2014/05/syria-document-insurgents-issue-revolutionary-covenant/

command and control structures of the so-called moderate armed opposition.[734] The RCC did not succeed in unifying any significant factions, and disappeared during 2015.[735] Another such attempt occurred in December 2016, and included Faylaq al-Sham and the FSA, but again did not succeed.[736] Faylaq al-Sham has also been included in attempts to unify the moderate armed opposition through operation rooms. For example, in 2015 Faylaq al-Sham was part of the United States and Turkish-backed Mare`a operations room to push Islamic State out of north Aleppo.[737] In 2016, the United States-sponsored Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) cut the route between Aleppo city and the Turkish border,[738] which brought Mare`a's existence to an end.[739]

Faylaq al-Sham was therefore included in operation rooms supported by the sponsors of the secularist opposition, and mergers instigated by the United States and its allies. But it has also cooperated with Ahrar al-Sham,[740] and even Jabhar al-Nusra, as we will see next.

In March 2015, al-Nusra Front, Ahrar al-Sham, Faylaq al-Sham, Jund al-Aqsa and other factions formed Jaysh al-Fatah (Army of Conquest), with the purpose of

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[734] "Syria Daily, August 3: Reports - 18 Insurgent Factions Create 'Revolutionary Command Council'," EA Worldview, http://eaworldview.com/2014/08/syria-daily-reports-18-insurgent-factions-create-revolutionary-command-council/.
[735] http://www.aymennjawad.org/2017/01/syrian-rebel-mergers-a-harakat-nour-al-din-al.
[736] http://www.aymennjawad.org/2017/01/syrian-rebel-mergers-a-harakat-nour-al-din-al.
[737] http://www.aymennjawad.org/2016/01/the-islamic-state-turkey-transportation.
[738] The SDF includes FSA groups as well as Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), see Alex MacDonald, "Ypg, Allies Clash with Syrian Opposition Groups in Aleppo," *Middle East Eye* (29 November 2015), http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/ypg-and-allies-clashes-syrian-opposition-groups-aleppo-633986086.
[739] http://www.aymennjawad.org/2017/01/syrian-rebel-mergers-a-harakat-nour-al-din-al.
[740] Ahrar al-Sham is described as "revisionist jihadi" or "jihadi light", based on its ideological position between moderate Islamists, such as the SMB, and Salafi-jihadis. See Heller, "Ahrar Al-Sham's Revisionist Jihadism"; Pierret, "Salafis at War in Syria: Logics of Fragmentation and Realignment," 282-283.

liberating the northern city of Idlib from government forces.[741] Notwithstanding Jaysh al-Fatah's subsequent success in Idlib, Jund al-Aqsa withdrew from the coalition in October 2015.[742] On 23 October 2015, Jund al-Aqsa explained that its withdrawal was due to the clause in the 15 September statement on a future Syrian constitution that disregards sharia. As three other members of the Jaysh al-Fatah coalition, namely Faylaq al-Sham, Ahrar al-Sham, and Liwa al-Haq had signed the 15 September statement, Jund al-Aqsa made it clear that its return to the coalition would be premised on all the elements of Jaysh al-Fatah publicly distancing themselves from "projects contrary to the rule of Sharia".[743] The Jund al-Aqsa withdrawal from Jaysh al-Fatah is in all probability due to more than one reason.[744] However, Jund al-Aqsa's highlighting of the offensive clause on a future Syrian constitution demonstrated that military cooperation on the Syrian battlefield does not necessarily equal ideological convergence.

In this section, we have seen that the SMB's sponsored Shields abided by a moderate or centrist ideology, while the Shields and Faylaq al-Sham functioned within the boundaries set by the sponsors of the secularist opposition. Faylaq al-Sham was further included in these sponsors' unifying projects, and operation rooms. The exception, namely Faylaq al-Sham's *ad hoc* cooperation with Salafi-jihadi Jabhat al-Nusra, can further be explained in the context of military tactics, as opposed to ideological convergence.

5.5   Summary

In this chapter, we have considered the SMB's policy and actions in the wake of the Syrian uprising.

First, we witnessed the SMB's commitment to political reforms at the onset of the Syrian uprising. At the time, the secularist opposition was still the SMB's

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[741] Lund, "Assad's Broken Base: The Case of Idlib" 8.

[742] Jund al-Aqsa swore allegiance to Jabhat Fatah al-Sham after it changed its name from Jabhat al-Nusra.

[743] Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "Jund Al-Aqsa Withdraws from Jaysh Al-Fatah," Middle East Forum, http://jihadintel.meforum.org/about/.

[744] See ibid.

primary target audience, and an important ally to the SMB in opposition structures.

Second, we have seen that by early 2012, the Syrian uprising's character had changed from peaceful protests to an armed insurgency. The militarisation of the uprising, due to the Bashar al-Asad government's military "solution", meant that a military as opposed to a political solution gained currency. The internationalisation of the conflict, as we saw, further meant that it was impossible to find a solution to the conflict separate from foreign interests.

Third, as the Syrian uprising progressed into its second year, we saw a shift, and the SMB took as its target audience not the secularist opposition, but rather, the sponsors of the secularist opposition. The SMB's 2012 Pledge and Charter, the Cairo conference in 2012, and the establishment of the political party WAAD, in 2013, all served to demonstrate the shift in the Brotherhood's primary target audience, and also showed that the Brotherhood was still committed to a civil, democratic state. We also saw that the shift in the movement's primary target audience coincided with the internationalisation of the conflict.

Fourth, I surveyed SMB-sponsored rebels to show that they adhered to a moderate or centrist ideology, and functioned within the boundaries set by the sponsors of the secularist opposition.

This chapter therefore showed that the sponsors of the secularist opposition became the SMB's primary target audience during the Syrian uprising, and that this explains its moderate stance, amid the militarisation and radicalisation of the uprising. The shift in the SMB's primary target audience from the secularist opposition to the sponsors of the secularist opposition further befits the internationalisation of the Syrian uprising.

This was the final chapter of three chapters to demonstrate the SMB's moderate stance at four intervals in its political history, based on its key policy documents. In this chapter, as in previous chapters, we have seen that at any given time, the

SMB's primary target audience best explains its persistent moderate policy on governance.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I will summarise the research question, thesis, and methodology. Then I will provide an outline of my main thesis, after which, I will summarise my deductions on related questions. Finally, I will comment on the study's potential contributions, and identify possible areas for further research.

6.1   Research Question, Thesis, and Methodology

This dissertation's primary aim was to explain the SMB's moderate policy on governance. The SMB has been committed to a moderate policy on governance from its establishment, as demonstrated by its participation in Syria's early parliamentary democracy, through to its actions during the 2011 Syrian uprising, and beyond. The SMB has therefore accepted "the rules and procedures of the democratic game",[745] and has done so since its inception in 1946. In fact, the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy runs like a silver thread through all its key policy documents, published in 1980, 2001, 2004, and 2012.

We have seen, in Chapter 1, that Islamist moderation in movements similar to the SMB has been viewed through various lenses, the most popular of which is the "inclusion-moderation hypothesis". This theory holds that Islamists may moderate their policies when they have an opportunity to participate in pluralist political processes. However, my study has shown that the SMB has been progressively excluded from active participation in Syrian politics since 1963. The SMB's political exclusion, thus precludes application of the "inclusion-moderation hypothesis" to explain this case. Consequently, this study had to advance an alternative explanation for the SMB's persistent commitment to a moderate policy on governance.

I argued that the SMB's moderate policy on governance can be explained by the Brotherhood's primary target audience at any given time. The SMB's primary target audience is the political force which, in the Brotherhood's view, can

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[745] See Fawaz A Gerges, "The Islamist Moment: From Islamic State to Civil Islam?," *Political Science Quarterly* 128, no. 3 (2013): 389.

deliver its political objective; and as this implies, the target audience shifts over time, in accordance with changing circumstances.

To structure the argument, I used the SMB's four main policy documents as four reference points in the Brotherhoods political history. Then, at each reference point, I explored the SMB's policy and actions, which led me to identify its primary target audience at that time, and thereby to the reason for its moderate policy on governance.

In Chapter 2, I explained my methodology, which is rooted in qualitative data analysis. I briefly discussed my main textual sources, which are the SMB's key policy documents, mentioned above. I also offered an overview of the interview process, after which I demonstrated my use of thematic analysis. First I demonstrated how I coded the raw data, and then how I identified various levels of themes, to eventually group the different themes and sub-themes in four categories. These four categories, as we saw, were created to answer questions about the SMB's policy on governance (Governance); its political strategy (Political Strategy); the influence of the Syrian uprising on the SMB's policy and actions (Conflict); and the Brotherhood's organisational capacity (Capacity). Subsequently, I demonstrated how I analysed the primary themes and sub-themes in the four categories. I used the insight and knowledge that I gained through this process to supplement my textual sources in my endeavour to explain the SMB's moderate policy on governance.

6.2　Outline of the Main Thesis

Chapters three, four, and five are the body of my dissertation, through which I charted my main thesis. To this end, in Chapter 3, I argued that in 1980 the SMB aimed to mobilise the broadest segment of the Syrian opposition against the Hafez al-Asad government, and that this drove its commitment to a moderate policy on governance. In doing so, I showed that the SMB's primary target audience comprised the jihadi Fighting Vanguard, the Syrian ulama, and the secularist opposition. We saw that this diverse target audience in 1980 also explains the apparent contradiction in the Statement and Program (1980),

namely the SMB's commitment to a parliamentary democracy amidst an Islamic insurgency turned uprising. I also showed that the 1980 document remained true to the SMB's moderate policy on governance, even though the political environment of the 1970s and 1980 was politically intolerant, and increasingly exclusive. Thus, we saw, at least for the SMB, exclusion did not lead to radicalisation.

In Chapter 4, I discussed the SMB's final exclusion from Syria in 1982, focusing upon the fact that the Brotherhood still did not radicalise. I pointed out that, in contrast, the SMB's ultimate exclusion from the Syrian political arena in 1982 became an important determinant of its moderate policy, as reflected in its 2001 and 2004 policy documents.

I showed that in 2001, during the Damascus Spring, the SMB (unsuccessfully) attempted to reconcile with the Bashar al-Asad government, and that this government therefore comprised the primary target audience at this time. However, this policy paradoxically accentuated the Brotherhood's political exclusion, which led the SMB to revise its political platform, and to publish a new platform, called the Political Project, in 2004. We saw that the Brotherhood, in parallel, changed its primary target audience from the Bashar al-Asad government to the secularist opposition.

I then pointed out that the 2004 document prepared the ground for the SMB to collaborate with the secularist opposition, and therefore, to jointly sign the Damascus Declaration in 2005.

I also discussed the significance of the Damascus Declaration for the SMB's Islamic governance. The Brotherhood's 2004 political platform was not new in principle, and reiterated many of the liberal principles that the SMB was founded upon.[746] However, the Damascus Declaration supports a secular state, which

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[746] Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, "Official Vision of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (the Political Project for the Future Syria)". 2; *A Summary of the Political Project for the Future Syria*, 19.

means that the Brotherhood endorsed a political platform in which 'the people' has legislative authority.

In the same Chapter 4, I also addressed the tension between God's sovereignty and the sovereignty of 'the people'. I argued that the SMB's stance on sovereignty is as much a consequence of its political environment, as of its ideology. I supported this argument with three examples in which the SMB compromised its religious agenda in order to optimise a political opportunity.

In Chapter 5, I turned to the 2011 Syrian uprising. I showed that the SMB, still excluded from Syria in 2011, viewed the Syrian uprising as an opportunity to return to the Syrian political arena. I identified the sponsors of the secularist opposition as the SMB's new primary target audience at that time. I explained that though the SMB already indirectly engaged the sponsors of the secularist opposition, as early as 2005, its subtle shift from the secularist opposition to their sponsors was made necessary by the internationalisation of the Syrian uprising, in which external actors became overwhelmingly influential.

I next showed that the SMB maintained its moderate stance on governance, both before, and after the militarisation of the Syrian uprising. In doing so, I showed that during the early phase of the uprising, the SMB was committed to political reforms, as opposed to a revolution. I proceeded to show that the SMB's Pledge and Charter (2012) confirmed both the SMB's commitment to a "civil, "democratic state, and the sponsors of the secularist opposition as its primary target audience.

Following the metamorphosis of the Syrian uprising from a peaceful protest movement to an insurgency, and later civil war, I next explained the SMB's engagement with the armed opposition. We saw, at first, that the SMB engaged with the armed opposition by making public its support for the Free Syrian Army, and indirectly sponsoring some armed groups fighting in the Homs governorate. The SMB subsequently formed the Shields of the Revolution, and then later sponsored another moderate alliance called Faylaq al-Sham or the

Sham Legion. I pointed out that in keeping with the SMB's moderate stance in the 2012 Pledge and Charter, the SMB-sponsored rebel groups followed a centrist ideology, and on the ground, functioned within the boundaries set by the sponsors of the secularist opposition.

Thus, I demonstrated that at each step in its history, as represented by our four key policy documents, the SMB's primary target audience explains why the Brotherhood has remained committed to a moderate policy on governance, against all odds. In this sense, I intend this thesis to present a new model for the study of Islamist moderation, against the "inclusion-moderation hypothesis".

6.3   Other Questions and Broader Implications

Other than clarifying why the SMB has remained committed to a moderate policy on governance, this dissertation also addressed four related questions on the SMB's democratic commitment, and the relationship between politics and religion, as follows:

First, I debunked the notion that Islamists, who, for present purposes, by definition pursue an Islamic state, are "culturally" averse to parliamentary politics. In Chapter 1, in my definition of "moderate Islamists", I specified that an Islamic state does not presume any one political system. Furthermore, we have seen that the SMB participated in Syria's early parliamentary democracy, and that the Brotherhood has remained committed to parliamentary politics, even after it was definitively excluded from Syrian politics in 1982.

Second, I showed that both the SMB's democratic discourse and its notion of an Islamic state evolved. The SMB, as we saw, upheld democratic principles from its inception. In its 1980 political platform, the SMB supports a moderate policy on governance, based on a parliamentary political system, *hizbah* (to enjoin the good and forbid the wrong), *shura* (consensus), and sharia. I proceeded to show that the Draft Charter in 2001 called for a "modern state", and paved the way for the 2004 Political Project, which placed the "modern state" in an "Islamic frame of reference". I also showed that the SMB moved away from a singular focus on

sharia, and claimed that its "modern state" is compatible with democratic values. We have further seen that in its 2012 Pledge and Charter, the SMB confirmed that all citizens would enjoy equal rights in its "civil, democratic state". Nevertheless, as we saw, the SMB has not officially exchanged God's sovereignty or *hakimiyya* for the people's sovereignty.

Third, as with other studies on Islamist moderation,[747] my research concluded that the political environment has a bigger influence on the SMB's behaviour than its ideology. I showed that the political environment produces opportunities and limitations, which influence Islamists to subordinate their religious agenda to political interests. The examples I used included Mustafa Siba`i's compromise on Islam as the "official religion" in the 1950 draft constitution; Sa`id Hawwa's mobilisation of the Syrian ulama, ostensibly against the new 1973 constitution's disregard for Islam, but with clear political intentions; and the SMB's signing of the Cairo documents in July 2012, which made no reference to Islam, but aimed to satisfy the so-called Friends of Syria group's demand that the political opposition presents a unified front. Furthermore, as implicit in an interviewee's comment that the SMB would support a parliamentary vote that contradicts sharia, we can conclude that the SMB might compromise on God's sovereignty to optimise a political opportunity. Or in other words, the SMB's official stance on sovereignty could change if its political environment came to reflect a democratic, as opposed to an autocratic political system.

Fourth, and finally, I demonstrated that the SMB's political exclusion from the Syrian political arena did not cause the Brotherhood to radicalise, as the converse of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis would have it. I showed, in Chapter 3, that when Sunni radicalisation did occur in Syria in the 1960s and 1970s, it developed in competition with the Brotherhood's moderate ideology. I proceeded to show that when the SMB did adopt armed jihad in 1979, it was a

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[747] Gerges, "The Islamist Moment: From Islamic State to Civil Islam?," 403; Cavatorta, "Neither Participation nor Revolution: The Strategy of the Moroccan Jamiat Al-Adl Wal-Ihsan."

pragmatic military response, rather than a religious one. We further saw that though the SMB only officially rejected armed jihad in 2001, the leadership never fully committed to armed jihad, and had little success in executing armed operations.[748] I thus resolved that the SMB's adoption of armed jihad in 1979 was not due to behavioural change, and that it was limited in both time and scope. I showed that the SMB next adopted armed jihad in 2012, in the wake of the Syrian uprising. However, as we saw, at the time, armed struggle was the norm in Syria. Once again, the SMB adopted armed jihad in response to a militarised environment, and not as a preferred method to bring about domestic political change.

6.4   Contributions and Directions for Further Research

In Chapter 1, I indicated that the SMB's distinct history allows this study to make a contribution to existing research on "moderate Islamists". This study also followed a different approach to moderation, which might create opportunities for a contribution in the study of both Islamism and moderation.

Further research might well be conducted on the SMB's engagement with Western ideas during its formative years. Brynjar Lia has demonstrated that the EMB's expansion in the 1930s was not built on a rejection of the modern world.[749] In fact, he argues that the EMB adopted a wide range of influences from the West.[750] Though anti-imperialism features strongly in the early SMB's political stance, the SMB's early participation in parliamentary democracy and persistent support for pluralist politics suggest that the SMB might equally have had an openness to the West that has not been adequately investigated as yet.

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[748] See Lia, "The Islamist Uprising in Syria, 1976–82: The History and Legacy of a Failed Revolt," 17.

[749] *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*, 72-86.

[750] Ibid., 78.

Another area for further research is the 1979 – 1982 Islamic insurgency, in a contentious politics framework.[751] My finding that the SMB in 1980 aimed to mobilise the broadest political opposition against the Syrian state, opens up an opportunity to research the 1979 – 1982 insurgency turned uprising as an episode of contention.

Finally, my research shows that Islamist moderation can be studied outside of existing theories. In focusing on the primary target audience, as opposed to the inclusion or exclusion of Islamists in pluralist political processes, the influence of foreign actors comes under the spotlight. In doing so, the international community's sway over prospects for democracy in the MENA region would receive its due attention.

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[751] Sidney Tarrow, *Strangers at the Gates: Movements and States in Contentious Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Sidney G Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Appendix A

INTERVIEW GUIDE ONE

Opening:

Introductions – I will introduce my project: Study of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's policy (SMB) on governance.

The participant will be asked if he/she is ready for the interview to start.

Body:

Organisation

1) How would you describe your organisation, perhaps with reference to its objectives, membership, political allies, and relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt?
   a. What was the SMB's relationship with the mother organisation at its inception, and what is it now?
   b. How does the organisation function? Can you tell me about the divisions of power in the organisation, and the recent election of Dr Walid as well as the process that was followed to elect a new *shura* council?
   c. What is the role of the SMB in the National Coalition?

Governance:

2) What is the SMB's ideology, or in other words: What would make a SMB government Islamic?
   a. How should I understand the concept *shari`a*?
   b. In Tunisia, in the late 1980s, members of the organisation left when the party moved away from the idea that an Islamic state is based on the implementation of shari'a. Today Ennahda supports a civil state (*dawla madaniyya*), similar to the SMB – how did this evolution in the SMB's thinking on governance affect the organisation?
   c. The SMB's *Pledge and Charter on Syria*, published in 2012, called for political pluralism and a civil state. Is the SMB still committed to an Islamic state today?

Syria:

3) What role can the SMB play in Syria's future?
   a. How much support does the SMB have in Syria?
   b. What presents as the biggest obstacle to find a solution for the Syrian conflict?
   c. Does the SMB support the armed struggle in Syria?

Closing:

Thank the participant and ask if there is anything else that he/she might want to add.

Appendix B
INTERVIEW GUIDE TWO

Opening:
Introductions – I will introduce my project: Study of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's policy (SMB) on governance.

The participant will be asked if he/she is ready for the interview to start.

Body:
Organisation
1) How would you describe your organisation, perhaps with reference to its objectives, membership, political allies, and relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt?
   a. What was the SMB's relationship with the mother organisation at its inception, and what is it now?
   b. How does the organisation function? Can you tell me about the divisions of power in the organisation, and the recent election of Dr Walid as well as the process that was followed to elect a new *shura* council?
   c. How did the organisation maintain communication with its members during the years in exile, and want is the primary medium of communication today?
   d. What is the role of the political party – Waad – and how is its role different from that of the SMB?

Governance:
2) What is the SMB's ideology, or in other words: What would make a SMB government Islamic?
   a. How should I understand the concept *shari`a*?
   b. In Tunisia, in the late 1980s, members of the organisation left when the party moved away from the idea that an Islamic state is based on the implementation of shari'a. Today Ennahda supports a civil state (*dawla madaniyya*), similar to the SMB – how did this evolution in the SMB's thinking on governance affect the organisation?
   c. The SMB's *Pledge and Charter on Syria*, published in 2012, called for political pluralism and a civil state. Is the SMB still committed to an Islamic state today?
   d. Whom does the SMB view as its ideological leader, Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi?

Syria:
3) What role can the SMB play in Syria's future?
   a. How much support does the SMB have in Syria?
   b. What presents as the biggest obstacle to find a solution for the Syrian conflict?
   c. Does the SMB support the armed struggle in Syria?

Allies:
4) Who are the SMB allies, and why?
   a. What is the role of the SMB in the National Coalition?
   b. Who are important regional allies, and why?
   c. Who are important national allies, and why?
   d. Are the "Friends of Syria" group still relevant, and why?
   e. Does Turkey provide a political model to the SMB?

   f. What is the SMB's position on the National Coalition, the Interim Government, and the Revolutionary Council?

   g. How does the SMB manage its relationship with both secularists and Salafis?

Closing:

  Thank the participant and ask if there is anything else that he/she might want to add.

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