

Between Foreign Policy and the *Umma*: The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan

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“Ahlū Makka adrā bi-shi’abihā [The people of Mecca are more knowledgeable of the pathways of its terrains]”

- Arabic Proverb¹

Introduction

Since its inception in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood has focused its attention on the *umma*, viewing it as one collective and spiritually cohesive body of believers.² The movement subscribes to an Islamist vision of international relations that conceives of an order comprising a unitary *umma* where foreign relations are limited to those associations between the Islamic community and the non-Muslim world, whether hostile (*dār al-ḥarb*) or neutral (*dār al-‘ahd*). Accordingly, foreign policy, as conventionally understood, did not feature in the Brotherhood’s conception of external relations. In reality, however, the Egyptian and Jordanian chapters of the Islamist movement have had to operate within national confines whenever they have assumed power or engaged in domestic politics, even if in opposition over the years. Consequently, this obliged them to formulate ‘foreign policy’ positions in increasingly conventional terms reflecting the concerns confronting the countries within which they were located. Yet, their official dicta often reflected a contrary narrative as the language of their statements framed foreign policy from the vantage point of a single Islamic community that does not recognise territorial borders.

This contradiction will be examined by comparing the ways in which the Ikhwān in Egypt and in Jordan have reacted to the exigencies of formulating foreign policy and how they have

¹ This proverb essentially translates as the people of Mecca know its ins and outs best and refers to the mountainous terrains that encircled Mecca making it difficult for travellers to reach it. It was used repeatedly by this author’s interviewees from the Ikhwān with respect to other national branches, implying that each branch knows its own societies and domestic affairs best so other branches should not interfere in their internal affairs.

² The terms ‘Muslim Brotherhood,’ ‘Ikhwān,’ ‘Muslim Brothers,’ ‘Brothers,’ and ‘Brotherhood’ will be used interchangeably throughout this article to refer to the Muslim Brotherhood.

attempted to resolve the discrepancies between their normative visions and the actual issues that they encountered in dealing with external affairs in practice. It sets out to explore the context in which the two Islamist groups' branches were caught politically between the wider *umma* and their domestic audiences. Ideologically, the Egyptian and Jordanian Ikhwān's stances towards foreign policy crises should have been identical since they stem from the same intellectual roots and profess to adhere to the same universalist vision. Notwithstanding the universalist language and stated attachment to the idea of a borderless unified *umma*, however, a closer examination reveals different individual nuances of the foreign policy positions assumed by each group. The foreign policy stances of the Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan diverged to a certain extent, and were occasionally opposed to one another, due to a conscious and unconscious emotional affiliation to their respective territorial nation-states and varying geopolitical interests. In practice, the Egyptian and Jordanian Brotherhoods consider the particularism of the territorial nation-state as a legitimate structure through which political governance can be conducted.³ Aspiring to govern the territorial nation-state themselves, these movements should not be seen in isolation from other domestic actors.

This article argues that by engaging in domestic politics for ideological and pragmatic reasons, the Brotherhood was obliged to envision foreign policy as part of its national programme. Although the need to appeal to its support base meant that the Brotherhood had to project these views through the prism of the *umma*, in practice they could be applied only through the confined geographic and political medium of the modern state. This inevitably made the Brotherhood more inclined to react to foreign policy crises through a domestic lens, whilst retaining its default Islamic disposition. The exigencies of practical politics, resulting from domestic political engagement stripped the Brotherhood's international outlook of universalism and has in its stead consequently developed interpretations based on specifically domestic dimensions. The demands thus forced Islamist movements to abandon their ideal Islamist vision of an international order and engage in narratives of foreign policy that do not differ greatly from those of other national secular political parties and movements.

Two questions will be considered: first, what were the foreign policy stances of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan as articulated by their leaderships? 'Foreign policy stances' refer to those positions and attitudes that were reflected in the form of official communiqués, interviews, actions and alliances by the Brotherhood branches regarding major crises that affected the Islamic *umma*, usually in response to the foreign policies of the states in which they are embedded, as well as regional and international actors. Second, what can we infer from the attitudes of the two branches of the Muslim Brotherhood towards major foreign policy crises that would assist our understanding of each branch's relationship and affiliation to its local socio-political milieu?

³ On the compatibility of the territorial nation-state and Islam see, for example, the works of J. Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation-States* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and S. Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State* (London & NY: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

The Ikhwān and the *Umma*

The Brotherhood's foreign policy positions are particularly significant because the overarching ideology typically stipulated by the transnational movement dictates a unitary view that does not make concessions. Further examination suggests, however, that this is not in fact the case. Rather, separate branches factor in context as well as ideology when formulating their positions on external affairs. Prevalent attitudes that view the Muslim Brotherhood as a monolithic group are thus misplaced. In *Islam in a World of Nation-States* James Piscatori examines the relevance of international relations to Islam and whether the concept of the modern territorial state is palatable to Muslims.⁴ Challenging the common premise that Islam and the territorial-state are irreconcilable, Piscatori demonstrates that Muslim practice has shown both flexibility and pragmatism since the early formation of the Islamic community. Complementary to this argument are the ideas advanced and articulated by Sami Zubaida, in "Islam and Nationalism: Continuities and Contradictions," chiefly that the conception of the political entity in the Middle East encompasses the territorial-state, Arab nationalism and Islam.⁵ Zubaida maintains that Islamist movements have adopted all three in their conception of the state and Arab nationalist movements have similarly not shunned faith but absorbed it as a crucial element of the fabric that makes up the character of the state.⁶ Both Piscatori and Zubaida move away from cultural and essentialist explanations of Islamic politics and situate it instead in historical and socio-political contexts.⁷

Despite the pan-Islamic focus and declarations of their foreign policy positions, the Brothers have ultimately been influenced by national realities and constraints. The Ikhwān in Egypt and Jordan have been consistent in their message of reforming society within an Islamic framework with a focus on the revival of the *umma*, a concern that implies an interest in the foreign arena operating within the confines of their own state as autonomous entities. But given the national bounds that apply to the actions of each branch of the Brotherhood in practice, that ideal has been adapted to focus more on national and foreign policy issues as two distinct arenas of political action, thus leading to the emergence of a more pronounced country-specific Islamo-nationalism. As Olivier Roy has observed, "Islamism wins out over pan-Islamism."⁸ Their views on happenings in the international arena—in practice rather than in rhetoric—abandoned the idea of the boundless *umma* and accepted the boundaries of the modern territorial-state as defining the arena for political action. This is not to suggest that Islamists have openly embraced the idea of the territorial-state; in fact the idea of the division of the Islamic community into separate territorial-based communities was initially met with strident resistance.

⁴ Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation-States*, 1.

⁵ S. Zubaida, "Islam and Nationalism: Continuities and Contradictions," *Nations and Nationalism* 10 (2004): 407. This article is also published in S. Zubaida, *Beyond Islam: A New Understanding of the Middle East* (London; NY: I.B. Tauris, 2011): 175-199.

⁶ Zubaida, "Islam and Nationalism," 408.

⁷ For other authors who discuss these themes see for example H. Munson, "Islam, Nationalism and Resentment of Foreign Domination," *Middle East Policy* 10 (2003): 40-53 and M. Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism and Fundamentalism* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 2005).

⁸ O. Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), 201.

Rather, it is that they have become more accustomed to it as the movement itself evolved. The rejection of these ideas of fusing Islam with the modern state is found in the works of such Islamist revivalists as Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Mawdūdī, who equated territorial pluralism with secularism and heresy, and Sayyid Qutb, a prominent Muslim Brotherhood thinker, who likened national allegiance to territory as spiritual sacrilege.⁹

Piscatori contends that, “In the contemporary context the emphasis on the emotional solidarity of Muslims had led to neglect of the idea that Muslims have national interests and that these interests often differ.”¹⁰ This is a crucial point, especially if it is applied to the narrative used to protest against foreign policy by the Brotherhood. Given their past slogans of ‘Islam is the solution’ and their fervent Islamic solidarity, there has been an inclination to focus on these rallying cries as devoid of any national attachment to the territorial-state. Although some of their attitudes are indeed dictated by ideology, their allegiances are nuanced and are not solely the preserve of Muslim causes, as they perceive their own territorial-states as equally important and at times are given greater priority than Islamic causes. Hints to these discreet discrepancies can be observed in the differences of opinion between national branches of the Brotherhood on key foreign policy crises such as the invasion of Kuwait, as well as subtle differences in their approach to *jihād*.¹¹

Islamist politics were awakened during the confrontation with colonial powers, which marked the beginning of the dissent of ‘secular’ Arab nationalists and Islamists alike against their occupiers.¹² However, an ideological distinction between the two groups in terms of their ‘anti-western’ attitudes is merely a categorisation in intent rather than function as both were effectively nationalist movements seeking to unify the Arab community.¹³ External intervention would bring about the construction of territorial nation-states and their emergence would have repercussions for both Islamists and Arab nationalists alike. Arab nationalists held views akin to those of the Islamists, but their bonds were based on a linguistic and cultural heritage of which Islam, as a civilisation, was a component. The Ikhwān held universalist aspirations and the idea of being confined to a bounded territory was therefore seemingly rejected. Yet, through their engagement in politics, this language evolved towards a nationalist vision, despite challenges to

⁹ See, for example, N. Mas‘ad and ‘A.‘Ā Muḥammad Āḥmad, *al-Siyāsāt al-Kubrājiyya lil-Ḥarakāt al-Islāmiyya* [*The Foreign Policies of Islamist Movements*] (Centre for Political Research and Studies: Cairo University Press, 2000), 64.

¹⁰ Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation-States*, 149.

¹¹ See for example J. Piscatori, *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis* (Chicago: Fundamentalism Project, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991), 88-130; A. Pargeter, *The Muslim Brotherhood: From Opposition to Power* (London: Saqi Books, 2010), 120-128; Interview with Rashād al-Bayūmī, Cairo, 13 May, 2013.

¹² See for example P. Mandaville, *Islam and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2014) and S.V.R. Nasr, “European Colonialism and the Emergence of Modern Muslim States,” in the *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. J.L. Esposito, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780195107999/islam-9780195107999-chapter-13>.

¹³ For more on ideology in the Arab world see P. Salem, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World* (Syracuse, NY.: Syracuse University Press, 1994); A. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and M.L. Browsers, *Political ideology in the Arab world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

the subtle intellectual reorientation from opposing factions within the Ikhwān and as exemplified within the Brothers' own rhetoric.

Originally, the mother Egyptian movement's conception of foreign policy was idealistic and unitary, reflecting its focus on the integrated nature of the *umma* as a single Islamic unit. The group's theoretical conception of the *umma* as an indivisible global Muslim community was central to its message. Foreign policy, then, simply reflected its relations with the external, non-Muslim world. In practice, the character of the Ikhwān's ideal conception of external relations emphasised several elements: anti-imperialism, Arab and Islamic unity, inclusivity of Egyptian society in decision-making and context.¹⁴ Underpinning its understanding of international relations was the idea of political freedom and the goal of liberating Muslims from foreign captivity.¹⁵ Political liberty was fundamental in enabling the Brotherhood to better serve God; society was a crucial factor here, as it was the medium through which Islamisation could occur and the deity's concept of law, *shari'a*, could be ordained. The Brotherhood saw the *umma* in a state of weakness and its disunity that was inflicting misfortune on its people brought on by autocratic rulers and western intervention.

The movement thus approached foreign policy issues from two angles: the ideological and the pragmatic. Ideologically, it sought to posit foreign policy from an ostensibly authentic Islamist perspective, deriving its legitimacy from an Islamic reference point that harked back to the first Islamic polity under the Prophet Muḥammad. Rarely was a statement issued from the Brotherhood that lacked a religious reference in some form. For example, the Egyptian Brothers' positing an Islamic alternative to Mubārak's secular external policies and opposing what it saw as subservience to a Western project was crucial to its approach.¹⁶ The group wanted to pressure the Egyptian government to adopt an 'Islamic foreign policy' consonant with its own vision, one that constituted Muslim political liberty by rejecting subordination to the West and emphasising Arab unity – a populist outlook within Egypt.

Geopolitical pressures and the domestic environment, however, pressed Islamists to think more pragmatically, inducing them to become more flexible. This was primarily to seek legitimacy and local appeal, whilst being careful not to overstep the mark with their governments for reasons of self-preservation. They wanted to remain relevant within their own societies, rather than at its margins, and whilst domestic policy could not necessarily afford them that opportunity, foreign policy could. All these factors were crucial in expanding the Brothers' message to appeal to various segments of their respective societies in their quest for power and legitimacy. Simultaneously, the Ikhwān were actively engaged in world affairs, presenting itself as a global representative of the Islamic community and maintaining an internationalist Islamic activism.

¹⁴ A detailed description of the international relations vision of the Egyptian Brotherhood is provided in al-Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-'Abbādī's *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn wa'l-'Ilāqāt al-Diwalīyya: Jānīb min Tafā'ulāt al-Jamā'a* [The Muslim Brothers and International Relations: One Dimension of the Interactions of the Society] (Cairo: The Historical Studies Centre (Ikhwanwiki), 2013, Unpublished book, 23-37.

¹⁵ For a more detailed explanation of the concept of political freedom in Islam see M. Cook, "Is Political Freedom an Islamic value?" in *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, eds. Q. Skinner and M. van Gelderen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 283-310, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139519298.019>.

¹⁶ Interview with 'Amr Shawbakī, Cairo, 20 May, 2013.

Acting in a manner akin to a shadow government, the Ikhwān sought to project its voice internationally; it contacted heads of state directly, for example the Egyptian Brotherhood sent letters to Hugo Chavez, thanking him on behalf of Egypt and the Islamic world for his support for the Arab and Islamic *umma*.¹⁷

But tensions repeatedly surfaced over the years regarding the Brotherhood and its relationship to the *umma*, which was a constant source of controversy for its critics who accused it of disloyalty. Contradictory statements made by Maḥdī ‘Ākif, the former General Guide of the Egyptian Brotherhood (2004-2010), illustrates this point. In a 2006 interview with *Roḥ el-Yousef*, ‘Ākif reportedly said “*toḥ fī maṣr*” (Egypt could go to hell) after an interviewer’s provocation. Years later in 2013, he maintained that “Islam is what makes me respect the nationalists, and the Ikhwān in all walks of life are the greatest nationalists in Egypt.”¹⁸ Positing Islam as the main anchor of patriotism that bestows civility, ‘Ākif stressed that the ideology of the Ikhwān does not in any way negate its “national aspirations.”¹⁹ His comments mirror those of Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906-1949), the Brotherhood’s founder in 1928, in underscoring the importance of service to country.²⁰ ‘Ākif asserted: “[Egypt] is my homeland...if I was not Egyptian I would want to be. Listen to Umm Kalthūm singing ‘this is Egypt’. We love it and we defend it. Egypt is great...it is 90 million times closer to God than anything.”²¹ These contradictory statements were pounced upon by critics who have accused the Brotherhood of disloyalty and double-speak and claimed that the movement’s interests really lie in the *umma*.

No issue caused controversy more than the Brotherhood’s broader understanding of the caliphate, which is a key component of its international thinking. The movement’s critics claim that the caliphate is a crucial aspiration of the organisation and an aim that detaches the Ikhwān’s loyalties from its national contexts.²² Conceptions of the caliphate vary between members of the Ikhwān. As Reza Pankhurst observed, the caliphate “represented different things to its various supporters and detractors.”²³ Jihād al-Ḥaddād, then Egyptian Brotherhood spokesperson, suggested that the movement’s idea of a caliphate is akin to the concept of the European Union:

They have collective interests, powers to safeguard them and a collective interest to channel their trade and their travel, instead of passports, controls and currencies. This is how we think of *khilāfa*. The Europeans established the European *khilāfa*; they call it the European Union, but it is exactly what we had.²⁴

¹⁷ Letter from the Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt to Hugo Chavez, Cairo, 4 December, 2006.

¹⁸ Interview with Maḥdī ‘Ākif, Cairo, 16 May, 2013.

¹⁹ Interview with Maḥdī ‘Ākif.

²⁰ Ḥ. al-Bannā, *Majmū‘at Rasā’il al-Imām al-Shahīd Ḥasan al-Bannā* (Cairo: *Dār al-Tawḥīd wa’l-Nashr*, 2006), 143.

²¹ Interview with ‘Ākif.

²² There are many Brotherhood opponents who believe the movement’s ultimate goal is the revival of the caliphate or that the movement’s loyalties lie beyond national borders: Interviews with ‘Amr Mūsā and Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī, Cairo, 12 and 9 May, 2013, respectively; and with Ḥasan Barārī and ‘Abdālla Abū Rummān, Amman, 7 October and 13 September, 2012, respectively.

²³ R. Pankhurst, *The Inevitable Caliphate: A History of the Struggle for Global Islamic Union, 1924 to the Present* (London: Hurst & Company, 2013), 5.

²⁴ Interview with Jihād al-Ḥaddād, Cairo, 11 May, 2013.

Some objected to any propagation of the caliphate as an end goal. ‘Issām al-‘Aryān, a prominent Egyptian Brother, argued that interpreting the Ikhwān’s position as disloyal to Egypt showed no “awareness” of its mission.²⁵ Reprimanding leftists and socialists, he claimed Egyptian regimes “went to war beyond their borders, against the national interest of their own countries” and objected that “they accuse us of the same crimes they committed against Egypt.”²⁶ Opponents saw some Brotherhood leaders as obsessed by the caliphate’s resurrection, whilst others dismissed its utility but believed that, should it be established, the Ikhwān would embrace it.²⁷ Thus this presumed goal was controversial as it instigated doubt over the movement’s priorities, distancing the organisation from the Egyptian political mainstream.

From the mid-1990s onwards, the Egyptian Ikhwān arguably focused far more on the goal of creating a ‘civil state with an Islamic reference’ in Egypt than on creating a caliphate. Critics of the movement asserted that the Brotherhood wanted to eliminate the ‘Egyptian’ element of the state’s identity. The Ikhwān retaliated by claiming its loyalties to the *umma* did not trump its nationalist sentiments, a view which correlated with al-Bannā’s stances.²⁸ In the view of ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abū al-Futūḥ, despite the Ikhwān’s multi-faceted identity and strong ties to the *umma*, at its core, the Brotherhood’s main concern was Egypt. This becomes especially apparent in the context of foreign policy, obliging the Brotherhood to choose between *ummami* and *waṭani* positions. The Egyptian Ikhwān put itself forward as the vanguard of the transnational Islamic community, claiming to constitute the centrist Muslim voice in articulating grievances against external intervention and division in the Muslim world. But it would be Egyptian concerns, rather than the *umma*, that would eventually dominate the group’s thinking on foreign policy. Though the universal discourse of the Brotherhood remained static, underneath the ecumenical language lay hints of fragmentation. Notably, the Ikhwān’s transformation from a religious transnationalist movement into one that considered foreign policy through the lens of the modern state has its roots in the First Gulf War in 1990.

The Ikhwān and Foreign Policy

The First Gulf War

Iraq’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the consequent war caused political division not only amongst Arab states but also between the Brotherhood’s national branches. The First Gulf War was therefore the first external crisis to cause fragmentation and friction amongst national Brotherhood branches, destabilising the movement’s customary united front. The Egyptian Ikhwān was the first Egyptian political movement to condemn Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s incursion into

²⁵ Interview with ‘Issām al-‘Aryān, Cairo, 16 May, 2013.

²⁶ Interview with al-‘Aryān.

²⁷ Interviews with Mūsā and al-Ghīṭānī.

²⁸ Interview with ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abū al-Futūḥ, Cairo, 12 May, 2013.

Kuwait, warning that it would have dangerous consequences.²⁹ In the lead-up to the war, the movement issued statements cautioning of the detrimental effects of the tensions between Iraq and Kuwait.³⁰ Condemning the incursion just hours after Iraqi forces had invaded, it saw the aggression “as an expression of hostility between two Islamic forces” and called on Iraq to withdraw.³¹ As al-Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-‘Abbādī, a Brotherhood researcher, contended: “[T]he Ikhwān’s position was very clear in its condemnation of the invasion and demanded that Ṣaddām withdraw from Kuwait.”³² But, like other Islamist movements, the Egyptian Brotherhood’s leadership was confronted with the dilemma of its members’ empathy with Iraq; it too feared causing friction with the Saudis and Kuwaitis, the movement’s main financial backers.³³ The Ikhwān saw its foreign policy stances in general as being independent of outside pressures and aligned with those of the Egyptian people. It distinguished itself not only from the more extremist Islamist militants but also from the Salafists, who the Egyptian Brothers believed had sided with Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war for sectarian reasons.

The Brotherhood’s initial position aligned with the official stance of the Egyptian government, but that changed as problems surfaced in its relations with Cairo following foreign intervention in the crisis. The Brotherhood issued thirteen statements denouncing the invasion whilst expressing unease at the massing of troops from the U.S.-led alliance in the Arabian Gulf.³⁴ Stirred by the potential involvement of foreign forces in the resolution of an intra-Arab dispute, tensions were compounded by Cairo’s decision to join the U.S.-led coalition. The Brotherhood deemed it a “strategic error to give Egyptian and Arab cover for foreign troops to gain ground in the region”; once admitted under this pretext, foreign forces would, the Brotherhood feared, remain on the Peninsula and cause enduring problems.³⁵ During this time there was “considerable sympathy” amongst Arab and Muslim publics towards Iraq, albeit not to the extent of triggering demonstrations.³⁶ The Ikhwān utilised both syndicates and university campuses to criticise Cairo’s policies, organising joint protests against the attack on Baghdad and the involvement of Egyptian soldiers.³⁷ The Brotherhood invoked a faith-based argument, asserting that Egypt was colluding “with an atheist state [the United States] against another Muslim state, Iraq.”³⁸ The government saw the statement critical of the Egyptian military and the country’s foreign policy,

²⁹ G. Auda, “An Uncertain Response: The Islamic Movement in Egypt” in *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis*, ed. J. Piscatori (Chicago: The American Academy of Arts and Science, 1991), 109-130: 118.

³⁰ H. al-Awadi, “A Struggle for Legitimacy: The Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak, 1982–2009,” *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 2 (2009): 221; ‘A.S. Jubāra, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn wa-Āzmat al-Khalīj* [*The Muslim Brothers and the Gulf Crisis*] (Cairo: The Islamic Publishing & Distribution House, 1994), appendix; Interview with Abū al-Futūh.

³¹ Auda, “An Uncertain Response,” 118.

³² Interview with al-Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-‘Abbādī, Cairo, 8 May, 2013.

³³ J. Piscatori, “Religion and Realpolitik: Islamic Responses to the Gulf War,” in *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis*, ed. J. Piscatori (Chicago: The American Academy of Arts and Science, 1991), 1-27: 11.

³⁴ Jubāra, *Āzmat al-Khalīj*, appendix.

³⁵ Interview with Badr Muḥammad Badr, Cairo, 18 May, 2013.

³⁶ F. Halliday, “The Politics of the *Umma*: States and Community in Islamic Movements,” *Mediterranean Politics* 7 (2002): 29.

³⁷ al-Awadi, “A Struggle,” 222.

³⁸ al-‘Abbādī, *al-Ikhwān*, 220.

both seen as sacrosanct by the Egyptian state, as disloyal and as an overstepping of boundaries by the Brotherhood.³⁹ Relations with the Egyptian government thus deteriorated principally over the role of Egyptian troops in the coalition. Additionally, taking this stance was difficult for the Ikhwān because much of its funding came from Gulf state donors. Saudi Arabia, a long-time ally of the Ikhwān, was incensed by the movement's position and demanded that it support the U.S.-led coalition's intervention at a moral and political level. The Saudi Minister of Interior even publicly rebuked the Brotherhood.⁴⁰

For the Egyptian Brothers, the attempt to position themselves as independent actors free from the influence of state and non-state actors—including other branches—was difficult to maintain as head of the Ikhwāni family. This was a crisis wherein one of its own national branches was significantly affected, so maintaining a balanced position was difficult and was indeed interpreted, at least in some quarters, as indifference to the Kuwaiti Brothers' predicament. This suggests that the ideological unity of the Ikhwān proved to be subordinate to the notion of the territorial state, and that the domestic concerns of each national branch took priority. For example, the Egyptian Brothers' concern for the safety of Egyptian citizens in Kuwait was a national concern in Cairo, to the extent that the Brothers even expressed support for the Mubarak regime to curry favour with the local populace: on 16 August 1990, at a meeting requested by the Iraqi ambassador to Egypt, the then General Guide Ḥamid Abū al-Naṣr conveyed a series of requests to secure the safety of Egyptians in Kuwait, including an insistence that Iraq halt its media campaigns against the Egyptian president and government as part of an Arab solution to the crisis.⁴¹ The Egyptian Ikhwān's position was thus contradictory and complex, stressing the unity of the *umma* and the threat posed by foreign intervention, while simultaneously asserting Kuwaiti independence and sovereignty, which technically negated its Islamist ideal of a borderless Islamic community. Furthermore, it prioritised Egyptian concerns and appealed to the Iraqi ambassador to Egypt to ensure the safety of Egyptian citizens in Kuwait and temper the Iraqi government's verbal attacks on the Mubarak regime. Although ideology did play a part, the Egyptian Brotherhood's stance on the crisis was determined by the regional situation and domestic considerations concerning its efforts to legitimise itself and its position relative to the Egyptian public.

The Jordanian Ikhwān might have been expected to adopt a neutral position on the crisis, and initially even criticised the Iraqi President over the troubled legacy of the Iran-Iraq war. However, in light of the Jordanian public's pro-Iraqi sentiments during the conflict, it quickly shifted position to support Iraq. At the time, it had a strong parliamentary presence, with 22 out of 80 seats and 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Arabīyāt as speaker. The Ikhwān, as part of an Islamist bloc aligned with independent Islamists and, in an unprecedented move, formed a coalition with the secular National Front and organised demonstrations in support of Iraq and against American

³⁹ al-'Abbādī, *al-Ikhwān*, 219.

⁴⁰ S. Naguib, "The Muslim Brotherhood: Contradictions and Transformations," in *Political and Social Protest in Egypt*, ed. Nicholas S. Hopkins (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 155-174: 168.

⁴¹ "Bayān Ṣaḥāfī min al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn [Statement by the Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt]," 16 August, 1990, as published in Jubāra, *Azmat al-Khalij*.

hegemony.⁴² It construed the attack on Iraq rhetorically as a “Judeo-Crusader” war whose purpose was to destroy Baghdad. Yet despite these fiery statements it nevertheless advocated a political solution.⁴³ The Brotherhood supported King Ḥusayn’s position and appreciated the pressure that the state was under.

The crisis highlighted how integrated the Ikhwān was into the national fabric and provided an example of its domestic sympathy, with both the authorities and the Jordanian people. Acknowledging public popularity of the government’s position and asserting satisfaction that they had “helped maintain national unity” during an exceptionally difficult period for Jordanian foreign policy,⁴⁴ the Brothers thus not only approved of the government’s handling of the crisis but were proud to take positions of authority. An indication that they were at ease not only with the idea of Jordan but also with participating in its political apparatus. ‘Arabīyāt, for example, maintained that he “was privileged to be speaker of parliament,” adding that during the crisis “Jordan’s standing was high, it led and did not just follow.”⁴⁵ He emphasised the role played by the 11th Parliament, maintaining that, despite King Ḥusayn’s difficulties with certain Gulf states, his position remained steadfast with parliamentary and public support. Describing King Ḥusayn’s criticism of the Gulf countries as “historic stances” he argued that the monarch’s position protected Jordan.⁴⁶ Support for the state’s position was practically unanimous despite the problems it posed. Jordanian supporters of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn applauded his defiance against the international coalition, claiming he restored dignity to the Arab world. Others believed Ṣaddām’s overtures were merely a show of strength to compensate for his political and military bankruptcy. Yet there existed a public perception that he was a defender of the Palestinian people.⁴⁷ Since many of the numerous Palestinian refugees in Jordan were Brotherhood supporters, in some ways, the Ikhwān also “felt duty bound to defend Ṣaddām” to appease them.⁴⁸ But that was not the only reason why the group cultivated close relations with the public, many of whom had trade links with Iraq and supported it strongly.⁴⁹

The invasion of Kuwait dealt a devastating blow to the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood and led to a fissure in its relationship with the wider Ikhwān movement, which had attempted to arbitrate between Iraq and Kuwait. In September 1990, popular Islamic figures from the region decided to mediate between the Iraqi and Kuwaiti governments and a delegation was formed, led by the Brotherhood, to travel to Baghdad to seek a regional diplomatic resolution. The then Jordanian General Guide, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Khalīfa, headed the delegation since Egyptian General

⁴² B. Milton-Edwards, “Islamic Response in Jordan,” in *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis*, ed. J. Piscatori (Chicago: The American Academy of Arts and Science, 1991), 88-108: 93.

⁴³ Society of the Muslim Brothers in Jordan, “Ḥarb al-Khalīj: Durūs wa ‘Ibar” [The Gulf Crisis: Lessons Learned], Internal paper, Unpublished, n.d.

⁴⁴ Interview with Jamīl Abū Bakir, Amman, 19 September, 2012.

⁴⁵ Interview with ‘Abd al-Laṭīf ‘Arabīyāt, Amman, 24 September, 2012.

⁴⁶ Interview with ‘Abd al-Laṭīf ‘Arabīyāt.

⁴⁷ M. Bouillon, “Walking the Tightrope,” in *Jordan in Transition (1990-2000)*, ed. G. Joffé (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2002), 1-22: 6-7.

⁴⁸ Pargeter, *From Opposition to Power*, 123.

⁴⁹ On Jordanian popular pressure and the Brotherhood’s reaction to it, see for example Milton-Edwards, “Islamic Response in Jordan,” 96-103.

Guide Ḥāmid Abū al-Naṣr and his deputy were prevented from travelling by the Egyptian authorities.⁵⁰ This state of affairs sowed the seeds of dissent amongst the Brotherhood branches. According to ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abū al-Futūḥ, then a prominent Egyptian Ikhwān figure, the position of the Jordanian Ikhwān diverged significantly from that of the Egyptian Brotherhood, which attempted to assert a position for the Brotherhood as a collective:

The Jordanian Brothers may have had a more rebellious position than others for they backed Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and some of their preachers started comparing him to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. This was very different from the position of the Egyptian Ikhwān who were completely against the invasion of Kuwait, even though they also refused American intervention and were very resolute.⁵¹

The general perception amongst the Brotherhood’s national branches was that the Jordanian Ikhwān stood on the side of Ṣaddām. This seemed to be confirmed in a 21 January 1991 letter from the Jordanian Brotherhood to the Egyptian Guide, wherein they sought to persuade the Egyptian movement to adopt a more positive stance towards Iraq.⁵² The Jordanian Ikhwān’s view was that, in striving for a balanced solution, they were met with an emotional response from Gulf states and a coalition that wanted to eliminate Iraq’s power.⁵³ Prominent Brotherhood leaders ‘Alī Abū al-Sukkar and Hammām Sa‘īd, for example, denied backing Ṣaddām but argued that the Jordanian Brotherhood primarily opposed the resort to foreign troops and had wanted an Arab and Islamic force to deal with the crisis.⁵⁴

Evidently, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood was unimpressed with the position the Jordanian group had taken. Mubārak al-Dūwayla, a former Kuwaiti Brother, decried the position as “shameful,” adding that “The Jordanians were the most aggressive and differed a lot from the Muslim Brothers in Egypt whose stance was supportive.”⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the Jordanian Brotherhood understood that this was natural as “the Kuwaiti Ikhwān were part of Kuwaiti society, so could not adopt another position, and were very emotional,” which they thought was “understandable for they were kicked out of their homes and from their country.”⁵⁶ It acknowledged nonetheless the differences that arose:

There was a crisis between Mubarak and Ṣaddām and there were thousands of Egyptian workers that were expelled from Iraq. As a result, the Egyptian Ikhwān could not take a political position if there was any sense that it would be in opposition to the general

⁵⁰ A more extensive explanation of the problems that arose can be found in W. ‘Abd al-Majīd, “*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn bayna al-Maḥāliya wal-‘Alamiya*” in *Aẓmat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* [The Crisis of the Muslim Brotherhood], ed. by ‘A. Shawbakī (Cairo: Al-Ahram Centre for Strategic Studies, 2009), 229-263; 256-263.

⁵¹ Interview with Abū al-Futūḥ.

⁵² ‘Abd al-Majīd, “al-Ikhwān,” 262.

⁵³ Interview with Ruḥayl al-Gharāyba, Amman, 1 March, 2014.

⁵⁴ M. al-Dhaydī, “Āḥādīth fi’al-Siyāsa w’al-Uṣūliyya (Āwrāq Urdūniyya) (5-3) [Conversations on Politics and Fundamentalism (Jordanian Papers)],” *al-Sharq al-Awṣaṭ*, 10 October 2005, <http://classic.aawsat.com/details.asp?issueno=9813&article=327592#.VIbjtaSsUYI>

⁵⁵ Al-Dhaydī, “Āwrāq Urdūniyya (5-3).”

⁵⁶ Interview with al-Gharāyba (1 March).

Egyptian public's position. I remember that we had an intense discussion with them. Two people visited us from the Egyptian Ikhwān: the General Guide was Ma'mūn al-Huḍaybī and...his deputy, 'Abd al-Mun'im Abū al-Futūḥ...And we told them that their position was not clear. And they did not want to upset anybody, they did not want to upset the Kuwaitis nor did they want to show that they supported Ṣaddām. They particularly did not want to upset the Egyptian people, who were very angry at Iraqi actions against Egyptian workers.⁵⁷

The Brotherhood's national branches were thus divided into camps: those who condemned the invasion of Kuwait, principally the Iraqi and Kuwaiti branches of the Brotherhood; those who sought a central or balanced stance, like the Egyptians; and those who stood by the Iraqi regime from the perspective of total opposition to the U.S.-led assault on Baghdad, mainly the Jordanians.⁵⁸ The Kuwaiti Ikhwān was outraged by the invasion and sensitive to the wider movement's reaction. It believed the press release issued by the joint Brotherhood delegation after meeting with Ṣaddām Ḥusayn refrained from direct or strong repudiation of the invasion and interpreted it as simply offering guidance on Islamic principles.⁵⁹ Against this backdrop, Mūṣṭafā Mashhūr tried to temper the situation at a meeting in Saudi Arabia in November 1990, asserting that the Egyptian Ikhwān's position had been misinterpreted as partial to Iraq, arguing that in truth it wanted only "to bring about a peaceful solution for the *umma*."⁶⁰ They claimed that Kuwait could have been liberated "under the cloak of the Arab League only and under Egyptian auspices."⁶¹ Here the Egyptians tried to clarify their position and assert their authority as the mother movement, hoping to contain the crisis that was developing between the various national Ikhwān branches. But, at a later meeting, the Egyptian Brothers held that the Kuwaiti Ikhwān did not fully comprehend their clarification.⁶² The Kuwaiti Brothers saw the Egyptian Brothers' rejection of the Western coalition as unsupportive and as overly accommodating of Iraq. The Kuwaiti Ikhwān's main goal was the liberation of Kuwait by whatever means available.⁶³ It interpreted any sympathy towards Iraqi action in Kuwait as excusing Iraq's actions, including any opposition to Western troops, which the Kuwaitis saw as liberation forces. It decided therefore to secede from the main movement, trust having broken down. On 31 March 1991, the Kuwaiti brotherhood branch formed an independent movement, al-Ḥaraka al-Dustūrīyya al-Islāmiyya (The Islamic Constitution Movement).⁶⁴

The Gulf Crisis of 1990 was a striking example of how political and national frameworks, rather than transnational, bound people together, and demonstrated the stark differences between the Brotherhood's national branches. The conflict revealed the political variance within the

⁵⁷ Interview with al-Gharāyba (1 March).

⁵⁸ 'Abd al-Majīd, "al-Ikhwān," 257.

⁵⁹ 'Abd al-Majīd, "al-Ikhwān," 258.

⁶⁰ Pargeter, *From Opposition to Power*, 124.

⁶¹ Interviews with al-'Abbādī and Badr.

⁶² Interviews with al-'Abbādī and Badr.

⁶³ Interview with Badr.

⁶⁴ Pargeter, *From Opposition to Power*, 127 and W. Kristianasen, "Kuwait's Islamists, officially unofficial," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, last modified June 2002, <http://mondediplo.com/2002/06/04kuwait>.

region and its fragility but, crucially, it highlighted the adoption by the Brotherhood branches, as well as Arab states, of the modern nation-state system. Even though these territorial formations were external impositions, the Arab world had accepted the distinct individual identities that emerged. Not only did this happen at the state level, as shown in the nationalism that emerged in Kuwait when all its constituents rallied around the flag in defence of the small nation. It also occurred at the non-state-actor level, amongst the Brotherhood branches, as they sided with their own states and streets. The crisis, culminating in the Kuwaiti Brothers' exit from the broader movement, also negated the idea that the global International Organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood operated with a single, cohesive agenda. In this instance transnational Islamism showed itself to be a notion as feeble as its antithesis, Arab nationalism.⁶⁵ The diverse stances of the Brotherhood's national branches on the Gulf War demonstrated that "the understanding of the global movement" interpreted as "an official leadership whose decisions are binding on all branches" is erroneous.⁶⁶ Ultimately the various branches aligned with populist sentiments in their home countries, with a dramatic impact on the overarching movement.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict

No foreign policy issue has evoked the emotion and ire of the Muslim Brotherhood collectively more than the Arab-Israeli conflict. When the US recognised Israel in 1948, Ḥasan al-Bannā sent a telegram to President Harry Truman stating that the move was a declaration of war against Arabs and Muslims.⁶⁷ Invoked by the Ikhwān as the biggest failure of the international community and Arab states alike, the conflict has been a primary concern for the Ikhwān throughout its history.⁶⁸ The Palestine question therefore "carries a great deal of historical and emotional baggage."⁶⁹ Framing it within an ideological religious discourse, the Brotherhood posits the issue as a constant reminder of the *umma's* disunity and impotence against an aggressive West.

The Palestine-Israel conflict was a primary contributor to the Egyptian Brotherhood's politicisation and, indeed, was a critical driver for the instigation of the Jordanian Brotherhood branch. The articulation of the transnationalism of Islam and the ideological component of the views of Ikhwāni branches manifest themselves most visibly in their official communiqués on Palestine. More recently, resistance through *jihād* and support of Hamas, the Islamist Palestinian movement that took power in Gaza in 2006, was evoked in the language of the Egyptian and Jordanian Ikhwān as the only solution to end the occupation and liberate Palestine. The Brotherhood perceived the failure of Arab states to unite against Israel as their biggest bane. Yet a closer examination reveals a more layered response than the Brotherhood's ideological statements damning

⁶⁵ Pargeter, *From Opposition to Power*, 127.

⁶⁶ Interview with Abū al-Futūḥ.

⁶⁷ *Ikhwanwīki*, "al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn wa'l-Amrikān wa'l-Ingliẓ bayna al-Māḍi wa'l-Ḥāḍir [*The Muslim Brotherhood, the Americans and British: Between the Past and the Present*]," last modified 7 September 2014.

⁶⁸ See for example Ḥ. al-Bannā, *Mudbakarāt al-Da'wa wa'l-Dā'iyya* [*Memoirs of the Call and the Preacher*] (Cairo: Dār al-Ālamīyya, 2011); B.M. Badr, *al-Ṭariq ilā Taḥrīr Filisṭīn* [*The Road to Liberating Palestine*] (Cairo: Dār al-Bayān, 2011); Abdelnasser, *The Islamic Movement*.

⁶⁹ G.E. Fuller and I.O. Lesser, *A Sense of Siege: the Geopolitics of Islam and the West* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 40; Badr, *al-Ṭariq*, 16.

the “Zionist enemy” would suggest. Despite leading the strident opposition to the peace treaties and anti-normalisation movements, both the Egyptian and Jordanian Ikhwān did not actively incite hostility against their respective governments. For example, Egyptian General Guide, ‘Umar al-Tilmisānī (1972-1986), maintained in *Memories, Not Memoirs* that violence was not a solution and that Islam “does not call for running Israel into the sea,” but argued that the Jews, as a minority, should live under Palestinian rule.⁷⁰ This was in line with the movement’s inclination towards prioritising *da’wa* and the gradual Islamisation of society before any action could be taken. But the rejection of violence was also in line with the general feeling in Egypt.⁷¹ Thus the Brotherhood rejected the peace treaty while discouraging disobedience against the state, consistent with popular Egyptian sentiment, and whilst rhetorically encouraging *jibād*. This illustrates the dichotomy between the Brothers’ views of the Egyptian national interest and the interest of the Islamic community—a division that should theoretically have been absent from the Brotherhood’s vocabulary.

Despite their fiery ideological dicta, both the Egyptian and Jordanian Brotherhoods responded to the Palestinian crisis as national political actors rather than transnational movements that sought direct interference. The Egyptian Brotherhood launched scathing attacks on Egyptian President Anwar Sādāt after his visit to Jerusalem in 1977 and led the opposition against the peace treaty.⁷² Concurrently, in a rejoinder, shortly after Egypt’s signing of the peace treaty in 1979, al-Tilmisānī, called for jihad but simultaneously cautioned Egyptians not to act against al-Sadat and to heed his calls should the situation demand it. In fact, al-Tilmisānī encouraged Egyptians to respect Sādāt’s leadership, maintaining that he would place himself “under the command of the head of the state today and tomorrow if he calls in the name of God and asks us to.” Paradoxically, however, he added that ultimately *jibād* was the only way to liberate Palestine.⁷³ This was a tactical move in line with earlier positions that reiterated the rejection by the Brotherhood of the violent overthrow of regimes, distancing themselves from other violent Islamist groups.⁷⁴ Furthermore, throughout the history of the conflict, the Egyptian Ikhwān sought to carve out a role for itself as an arbitrator, and to temper disputes in an effort to shadow Cairo’s mediation efforts. The Egyptian Islamist movement forged relations with both Palestinian factions including the President of the Palestine National authority, Yāssir Arafāt, and Hamas in an attempt to remedy relations between the two opposing Palestinian factions, even positioning itself as a neutral party that sought to heal rifts within the Palestinian house.

The Jordanian Brotherhood’s position on Palestine was far more politically strident in opposing the Jordan-Israel peace accords signed in 1994 and marked the first hints of a structural transformation in the relationship between the Ikhwān and the Jordanian state. The

⁷⁰ ‘U. al-Tilmisānī, “Normalisation with the Jews,” in *Dhikrayāt, lā Mudhakarāt* [*Memories not Memoirs*], ed. ‘U. al-Tilmisānī (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibā’a wa’l-Nashr al-Islamī, 1988), <http://www.daawa-info.net/books1.php?id=4579&bn=184&page=25>.

⁷¹ Interview with Abū al-Futūḥ.

⁷² S.E Ibrahim, “An Islamic Alternative in Egypt: The Muslim Brotherhood and Sadat,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 4 (1982): 75-93, 86-88.

⁷³ Mas’ad and Aḥmad, *al-Siyāsāt al-Kharījīyya*, 210.

⁷⁴ Mas’ad and Aḥmad, *al-Siyāsāt al-Kharījīyya*, 210.

Jordanian Brotherhood, alongside other nationalist parties, sought to undermine the peace treaty. Opposition to the peace accords was cross-ideological and had begun to mobilise even before the accord's signing: the Brotherhood's Islamic Action Front and several leftist and nationalist groups on 15 May 1994 established the Committee for Resisting Submission and Normalisation (CRSN), which also included independent Islamists and former government officials.⁷⁵ They believed that intertwining Jordan's interests with Israel's distanced Jordan "from its Arab depth."⁷⁶ The Brothers lamented that relations with Tel Aviv had taken precedence over regional ties, insisting that Jordan's Arab neighbours should take priority and that "economic integration policies should be intertwined primarily with them."⁷⁷ There were three main reasons for Islamist opposition to the Wādī 'Araba treaty: a faith-based ideological opposition to the treaty as seen in the religious vocabulary used to express the Ikhwān's rejection; second, a defence of Arab nationalism (*qawmiyya 'arabiyya*) as reflected in the rejection of foreign incursions into the Middle East; and finally, a nationalist argument that the accords did not serve Jordanian interests. Despite the unremitting, emotive, universalist framing of the Palestine issue in faith-based rhetoric, it has been a combination of these factors that has dictated Brotherhood attitudes.

The Jordanian movement had more of a stake in the conflict due to its proximity to Palestine, the complex make-up of Jordanian society, and not least because of the composition of its support base which is mainly Jordanians of Palestinian origin as well as Palestinian refugees. For example, an Islamist parliamentary spokesperson asserted that "We are on the two banks but one nation - we are one people, not two."⁷⁸ He maintained the Ikhwān "...does not believe in borders between Arab and Islamic lands as it is one *umma*," but simultaneously stressed that this unity cannot be created "through prayer or hope or opening borders without thought or preparation or strategy," indicating an acknowledgment of the reality of distinct Arab identities that exist in the region.⁷⁹ Crucially, the Jordanian group had a far more convoluted relationship with Hamas that gnawed at the unity of the Jordanian Ikhwān given the ideological split within the movement over local versus regional priorities. There was a split internally amongst the Jordanian Brothers between the non-Jordan centric camp who leant heavily towards Hamas and prioritised regional issues, and the Jordan-centric group who wanted to concentrate on reform within Jordan. Yet the Jordanian Brothers did not resign from parliament, nor did they incite havoc in Jordanian streets despite the immense significance of the Palestine conflict to them and emotive pronouncements to that effect. An inherent tension over the very identity of the Jordanian organisation and its immediate concerns arose over the Palestine cause that could not be overlooked, underscoring the importance of local identities. Furthermore, in both Egypt and Jordan, the Palestine issue was cause for the forging of national alliances between the Islamists and other

⁷⁵ J. Choucair, "Illusive Reform: Jordan's Stubborn Stability," *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, December 2006, 14; R.E. Lucas, "Jordan: The Death of Normalization with Israel," *Middle East Journal* 80 (2004): 93-111, 99.

⁷⁶ Interview with Sālim al-Falāḥāt, Amman, 16 September 2012.

⁷⁷ Interview with al-Gharāyba, Amman, 19 September 2012.

⁷⁸ S. Al-Khazendar, *Jordan and the Palestine Question: The Role of Islamic and Left Forces in Foreign Policy-Making* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1997), 178.

⁷⁹ Interview with Abū Bakr; Interview with al-Gharāyba, Amman, 19 September, 2012.

domestic political actors, specifically in opposing policies related to the occupied territories. Therefore, the conflict provided a platform for the Ikhwāns' construction of non-ideological coalitions.

Both Brotherhood chapters also instrumentalised the conflict in order to further their message and boost their legitimacy amongst their respective local publics. As Ewan Stein has argued, for example, in Egypt the Arab–Israeli conflict “has been instrumentalised in complex ways” by the state and opposition movements.⁸⁰ Stein underscores, however, that this has happened because the Palestine issue “[was] linked to the opposition’s own political strategies” and “seen as safe political ground on which to mobilise.”⁸¹ For example, at the outbreak of the Second Intifada, the Egyptian Brotherhood was careful not to provoke the regime and “exercised constraint in its response to regional developments” which had been met with rage in the Arab world.⁸² In a statement released on 22 September 2000, the Brotherhood welcomed Mubārak’s decision to recall the Egyptian Ambassador to Israel in protest against what it described as “barbaric attacks on the Palestinian people.”⁸³ It further added “...that they hoped that steps would be taken to further the will of the Egyptian people, who support the Intifada and the Palestinian people until they could ensure justice by freeing their lands from occupation.”⁸⁴ Additionally, the Jordanian former General Guide, Sālīm al-Falāḥat explained that “From 1994 until now we did not cause a revolution because of this treaty—if Jordanians should be truly represented through parliament we can annul it...if there is a consensus.”⁸⁵ Therefore, although the Brotherhood’s ideological position and populist rhetoric proclaimed that it sought a military solution, in reality, it worked within the legal frameworks it opposed.⁸⁶ And the Islamic Action Front (IAF), referenced above, was formed after the Madrid peace talks in 1991 as its own political vehicle to participate in pluralist politics.⁸⁷ Thus ideology played a part in the way the Islamist movements perceived the Palestine-Israel conflict and the ways in which they sought to alleviate the crisis but, ultimately, they also considered local Egyptian and Jordanian populist positions to direct their stances.

The Invasion of Iraq

Proximity to Iraq and closer relations between Amman and Baghdad since 1990 made a difference in the attitudes of both Brotherhood movements towards the crisis. A month prior to

⁸⁰ E. Stein, *Representing Israel in Modern Egypt: Ideas, Intellectuals and Foreign Policy from Nasser to Mubarak* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 192.

⁸¹ Stein, *Representing Israel*, 192.

⁸² C. R. Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 99.

⁸³ “Bayān min al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn bi-Sha’n Istid’a al-Safir al-Misrī min Dawlat al-Kayān al-Ṣahūnī [Statement by the Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt Regarding the Recalling of the Egyptian Ambassador from the Zionist Entity],” Cairo, 22 September, 2000.

⁸⁴ The Muslim Brothers in Egypt, “Bayān Istid’a al-Safir al-Misrī.”

⁸⁵ Interview with Sālīm al-Falāḥat, Amman, 16. September 2012.

⁸⁶ Interview with ‘Abdālla Abū Rummān, Amman, 13 September, 2012.

⁸⁷ S. Hamid, “The Rise of the Islamists,” *Foreign Affairs* 90 (2011), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-africa/2011-04-03/rise-islamists>.

the first strike in 2003 against Baghdad, the Egyptian Ikhwān declared its opposition to the invasion, alongside al-Azhar clerics and other Islamic intellectuals. The Egyptian Brotherhood organised a protest and conference at the Cairo Central Stadium in February 2003 which proved to be one of the largest and most significant rallies against the invasion, attracting between 150,000 and 250,000 people.⁸⁸ On 20 March 2003, the Egyptian group joined more than 20,000 protestors in Cairo's Tahrir Square in a rally condemning the strike on Baghdad, organised by the Egyptian Popular Committee in Solidarity with the Palestinian Intifada.⁸⁹ This triggered smaller marches in the following months, where the Brotherhood's old mantra, "The road to Jerusalem goes through Cairo," became "The road to Baghdad goes through Cairo."⁹⁰ Banners and pictures of President Nasser even appeared at marches held by the professional unions and syndicate rallies under Brotherhood supervision.⁹¹

In a statement issued by the Egyptian Brothers against the imminent attack on Iraq, the movement reiterated that any assistance to the Americans in their invasion or against any Islamic state, including the cooperation of Iraqis with any foreign power, was treason against God, his Prophet, the *umma*, and the *waṭan*. Ma'mūn al-Hudaybī, then General-Guide, declared that the occupation should be resisted as a duty of faith. Concomitantly, however, al-Hudaybī went on to affirm that the participation of the Islamic Iraqi Party, the Muslim Brotherhood affiliate in Iraq, and the Kurdish Islamic Union in the U.S.-backed Iraqi transitional government was an independent decision designed to contribute to policies to end the occupation. He added that other national and Islamic forces also participated in this government and that this was an "*ijtihad*" (independent reasoning) which was the sole responsibility of the Muslim Brothers in Iraq.⁹²

This stance towards the Iraqi Ikhwān was baffling, given the vociferous rejection of collaboration with an occupier that the Ikhwān typically expressed. Answering a question on what the Egyptian Brothers made of their Iraqi counterparts' decision, Issām al-'Aryān affirmed the independence of the Iraqi Brothers stating, "the Ikhwān in each country decide for themselves from a nationalist perspective. They do not get instructions from abroad, and the Ikhwān anywhere pay the price of their own doings."⁹³ Rashād al-Bayūmī, the former Egyptian Deputy General-Guide, also defended this point of view, stating "*ablu Makka adra bi-shi'ābiha*." He maintained, "We have relations with the [Iraqi] Ikhwān, yet each branch is permitted to do what is suitable for the political environment they reside in."⁹⁴ Respecting the Iraqi Brotherhood's autonomy, despite being ideologically opposed to its actions, the Egyptian Ikhwān was careful not to publicly reveal its displeasure with the other branch's domestic affairs. Furthermore, some discussion ensued

⁸⁸ Interview with Abū al-Futūḥ; S.L. Myers, "Thousands of Egyptians Protest Against a U.S. War in Iraq," *New York Times*, 28 February, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/28/international/middleeast/28EGYP.html>.

⁸⁹ Browsers, *Political Ideology*, 123.

⁹⁰ Browsers, *Political Ideology*, 123.

⁹¹ M. Abdelrahman, "With the Islamists?—Sometimes," With the State?—Never! Cooperation between the Left and Islamists in Egypt," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36 (2009): 43.

⁹² "Bayān min al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn Ḥawl Iḥtilāl al-'Iraq [Statement by the Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt on the Invasion of Iraq]," Cairo, n.d.

⁹³ Interview with 'Issām al-'Aryān.

⁹⁴ Interview with Rashād al-Bayūmī.

between the branches, as some Iraqi Brothers wanted to take up arms: the Egyptian Brothers broadly opposed this but did not want to interfere with the Iraqi Ikhwān's internal decisions.⁹⁵ Walīd al-Haddād asserted that the internal decisions of the Iraqi Brothers should be respected and that decisions pertaining to and responding to domestic situations should not be dictated from Cairo. Recognising domestic policy as well as foreign policy for its branches, the Egyptian Brotherhood thus did not adhere to a global policy for the *umma*. The Egyptian Brothers were also more vocal in condemning militant Islamist groups than their Jordanian counterparts and opposed to the Iraqi Islamists taking up arms. For example, the Egyptian Ikhwān rejected the violence perpetrated by al-Qā'ida "morally, religiously, and nationalistically," adding "Abū Muṣ'ab's [al-Zārqāwī's] position was perceived as criminal."⁹⁶ It asserted that the al-Qā'ida in Iraq's leader's ideology was not compatible with the Ikhwān's, and neither were those of Usāma Bin Laden or al-Zawāhirī.⁹⁷

The Jordanian Brotherhood's response to the Jordanian authorities' position on the Iraq invasion was much more vociferous and continuously condemned Amman for adopting positions the Islamists saw as supporting the U.S.-led occupation.⁹⁸ The invasion of Iraq had a devastating impact on the links between Jordan and its neighbour. A large segment of the Jordanian public, along with the Brotherhood, regarded the deteriorating situation in Iraq as a major challenge for the kingdom. The public was, broadly, firmly anti-war while the Jordanian authorities anxiously observed the unfolding crisis. On a political level the region lost a strong player that had to some extent been perceived as a bulwark against encroaching Western hegemony. The invasion was attributed mainly to Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's defiance, especially during the invasion of Kuwait. The Jordanian Ikhwān vehemently opposed the attack on Iraq and, disillusioned with its own government, even resorted to requesting a meeting with Syrian President Bashār al-Asad's Ba'ṯh party ahead of the projected invasion to discuss the fate of the *umma*.⁹⁹ Concurrently, the Jordanian Ikhwān did not denounce the actions by groups such as al-Qā'ida against foreign forces in Afghanistan and Iraq but encouraged them.

The Ikhwān's responses revealed how both Egyptian and Jordanian movements approached violence and how they justified it by framing and contextualising it against Muslim occupation. The Egyptian Brothers were more tempered in the way they approached the issue of *jibād* since they were slightly more geographically removed from events than their Jordanian counterparts, especially regarding Iraq. Furthermore, the Egyptians had their own encounter with domestic terrorism in the 1990s, which left the Egyptian Ikhwān more apprehensive of any potential justification of violence. They even issued statements that distinguished between terrorism and legitimate resistance, so keen were they to underscore their views on the difference between legitimate and illegitimate violence.

⁹⁵ Interview with Walīd al-Haddād, Cairo, 13 May, 2013.

⁹⁶ Interview with Abū al-Futūḥ.

⁹⁷ Interview with Badr.

⁹⁸ Interview with al-Gharāyba (1 March).

⁹⁹ Letter from the Islamic Action Front to Bashār al-Asad, 14 August, 2002 (in Arabic).

For their Jordanian counterparts, the debate was far more emotive. Iraq was more of an immediate concern for the Jordanian Ikhwān given their close alliance with Baghdad. Murād al-‘Aḏāila, an official Brotherhood spokesperson, maintained that “all Jordan’s higher interests are connected to Iraq: economic, political and social, and because of the war, assistance was severed.”¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, there was more of an overt collaboration between Jordanian intelligence and the U.S., such as that revealed in the Khost incident in 2009, which brought the debate on the Jordanian state’s involvement in the ‘war on terror’ under increased scrutiny. The 2003 crisis was thus seen by the Islamists to have left Amman allegedly co-opted as a subservient accessory to Western powers and their interests, regarded, “whether directly or indirectly, as part of the American and western coalition in invading Iraq.”¹⁰¹

But simultaneously the Jordanian Ikhwān’s own position remained controversial as they ideologically supported al-Qā’ida affiliated fighters in the context of their resistance to foreign occupation.¹⁰² The Jordanian Ikhwān was very clear that it stood firmly with the Iraqi resistance against the coalition forces and anyone who allied with them. It objected strongly to the participation of the Iraqi Islamist movement in the U.S.-led coalition’s transitional government, and met with the Iraqi Brotherhood in the United Kingdom and Turkey to try to dissuade it from doing so.¹⁰³ Furthermore, denouncing the new Iraqi constitution put in place after the invasion, the Jordanian Ikhwān urged the Iraqi Islamic Party to “revise its positions and assessments and to take stock of this for its future political dealings.”¹⁰⁴ The group, even “called upon the Iraqi Ikhwān to coordinate and create a resistance front” against the occupation.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the Jordanian Brotherhood’s position on violence remained a source of contention and controversy and one often addressed by their opponents as reason for distrusting it. The issue of the Jordanian movement’s loyalties were laid bare after the controversy that arose when some of their members attended the wake of Abū Muṣ‘ab al Zārḳāwī, the mastermind of the 2005 Amman attacks – which the Islamists were keen to justify by stating that it was a traditional Jordanian duty to pay their respects to their constituents. Divergences amongst the Brotherhood branches demonstrate that the pull of the Ikhwān on issues to do with insurgencies are related to their domestic contexts and corresponding political environments.

Domestically, the assault against Baghdad paved the way for the first major alliance of the Egyptian Brothers with other national actors and narrowed the divisions among the Brothers, leftists, and secularist Egyptian political factions. This was a turning point in collaboration with other domestic actors and allowed the Egyptian movement to strengthen its ties within its local political environment. In Jordan, however, the crisis and subsequent war on terror whittled away

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Murād al-‘Aḏāila, Amman, 16 September, 2012.

¹⁰¹ Interview with ‘Alī Ābū al-Sukkar, Amman, 16 September, 2012.

¹⁰² Interview with Ḥamza Mansūr, Amman, 18 September, 2012.

¹⁰³ Interview with al-Gharāyba (1 March).

¹⁰⁴ “Bayān min al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn Ḥawl al-Dustūr al-‘Iraqī al-Jadīd [Statement by the Society of the Muslim Brothers in Jordan on the New Iraqi Constitution],” 19 October, 2005.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with al-Gharāyba (1 March).

at the strained relationship between the Brotherhood and King ‘Abdālla II.¹⁰⁶ The Jordanian Ikhwān alleged that the king was too close to the Americans and, at times, even accused the state of actively assisting the occupation forces. The Jordanian Islamists’ position was also in line with general attitudes in Jordan that were historically favourable towards Iraq and averse to the occupation. But the Islamists also used the conflict to their own advantage to highlight their self-proclaimed centrist Islamic credentials; they offered their services to stem radicalisation in Jordan, which they accused the state of stoking through what it perceived as misguided foreign policies. The Jordanian Islamists were, thus, ostensibly attempting to engage more directly with the political fabric of Jordanian society. It was the response of the Egyptian and Jordanian Brothers to the participation of the Iraqi Islamist movement, affiliated to the Ikhwān, in the transitional government that was most notable. The vehement rejection of any collaboration with occupying forces that encroached on Muslim lands was a historical red line for the Brotherhood. Hence, both Ikhwān’s stated respect for the Iraqi Islamists’ decision to take part in a transitional government set up by the U.S.-led occupying forces was bewildering, since it demonstrated the Islamists’ defaulting on a central ideological principle. Undoubtedly, although this judgement on the part of the Iraqi Islamists was not met with approval, the acceptance of their decision by the Egyptian and Jordanian Ikhwān is of great significance in itself. It is one indicator of the changed attitudes of the Brothers towards the sovereignty of states and issues of foreign policy.

Conclusion

The Ikhwān’s foreign policy positions are significant as the ideology typically stipulated by the transnational movement dictates a unitary view that does not make concessions. Further examination suggests, however, that this is not the case. Rather, separate branches factor in context as well as ideology when formulating positions on external affairs. Both the Egyptian and Jordanian Brotherhoods, through distinctive political paths, arrived at foreign policy positions rooted within their states’ borders, which were markedly not in pursuit of the *umma*. Not only did the Brotherhood branches in question develop a conception of foreign policy at the expense of a transnational outlook on international relations, they also acquired a national political dimension in practice. Consequent of their political vision to acquire and maintain power on a national level, both Ikhwān chapters were compelled by practical pressures to consider national concerns. Hence, these groups developed political strategies, which adopted certain foreign policy stances with the twin aims of domestic self-preservation and legitimation. The movements’ strategic imperative was to retain their status amongst their local membership bases, stressing their position as a voice for the *umma* and centrist Islamism and framing their language accordingly. Simultaneously, they sought to carve domestic political positions within their distinctive states. Thus, alongside their Islamist frame of reference, it is in large part the national environments of the Egyptian and Jordanian movements and their desire for domestic

¹⁰⁶ Evidence of this surfaced publicly in a controversial article in *The Atlantic* claiming the King had described the Jordanian Brotherhood as a ‘masonic cult’. See J. Goldberg, “The Modern King in the Arab Spring,” *The Atlantic*, April 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/04/monarch-in-the-middle/309270/>.

legitimacy that have shaped their external outlook. This has resulted, whether intentionally or not, in their acceptance of the cast of the territorial state from which to construct foreign policy views.

Some scholarship removes the concept of foreign policy from the Ikhwān's maxims, instead focusing on its idealised caliphate vision and a united *umma* disdainful of territorial borders, placing them alongside Salafi-jihadi movements. This view neglects the development of the thinking behind Brotherhood positions on foreign policy over the past few decades. This is not to say that the Ikhwānī branches have abandoned their ideological affiliation to a boundless Islamic community, but there are inherent complexities present in both the Jordanian and Egyptian Brotherhoods, internal as well as external, that have influenced the formation of their foreign policy. Thus, while the *umma* diminishes as a principal policy motivation, its symbolic significance remains. As such, it can stir the emotions of followers and legitimise positions that are, in fact, hardly pan-Islamic. Yet, although the transnational ideal is never wholly abandoned by the Brotherhood, the understanding of the *umma* is framed through what might be considered a realist prism. The conception of the *umma* is thus ultimately desirable but inaccessible. In this regard, the state paradigm and contemporary political circumstances are as defining of the modern idea of the *umma* as are theological sources.

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