


The status of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt presently is, at best, tenuous. Accordingly, some questions that are pertinent for today and tomorrow include: Is this movement in Egypt that at one point attained a pinnacle of success beyond its members’ wildest dreams alive and well? If not, can the movement in Egypt still make a comeback? The three books selected for review offer insights on these and other related questions from different points of view. Of particular interest are the following topics that all three books develop directly or indirectly: (1) history of the movement; (2) the spiritual or religious objectives of the movement *vis a vis* the political objectives of the movement; (3) the conflict between the Brotherhood leadership and its youthful reformist membership in the organization; and, (4) how these topics were interrelated in the days before and after the fall of Morsi. The three texts cover the historical context of the secular revolution of 2011 from three overlapping temporal vantage points. Zahid covers the Muslim Brotherhood up to 2011; Wickham covers the Brotherhood to the period just after its ascension to power, but before its fall; and, Kandil covers the Brotherhood through its fall from power to the immediate aftermath thereof.

Mohammed Zahid obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Leeds with a concentration in Middle Eastern political economy and politics. His book can essentially be characterized as topical in its approach to the subject of the Brotherhood. That is, he addresses the role of the Brotherhood in the context of how the organization is related to the economical and the political development of Egypt and how the subject of the politics of succession in 2010 affected the organization on the eve of the 2011 revolution. Zahid’s book was revised in 2012 and therefore, except for his observations in his 2011 preface, his book does not cover the revolution. His observations, nevertheless, give added perspective and meaning to what happened to the Brotherhood post-2011, given what occurred before 2011. The book provides tentative answers, for example, to questions pertaining to what formed the basis for the secular revolution as well as to questions relating to what those events meant to the Brotherhood. The text’s structure reflects this topicality. The first six chapters trace the former topic and the last two chapters reflect on the latter topic. Zahid specifically analyzes the role of the Brotherhood in the context of what he frames as the "liberalization" of politics and economics as it has played out in the Middle East and especially in Egypt. For Zahid, this means that economic liberalization led to political liberalization, albeit in a haphazard manner. As a corollary to this overarching subject, he contends that the Brotherhood initially opposed political liberalization, but over time the Brotherhood came to adopt some attributes of democratic principles without essentially abandoning its primary spiritual mission. Both Wickham and Kandil agree on this point. What Wickham and Kandil do not develop is the topic of Gamal Mabarak, the son of Hosni Mubarak, and the succession question which looms
large in the later part of Zahid's book. A reader unfamiliar with the political concerns of not only the Brotherhood but also those of the secular interests opposing the Mubarak regime on the eve of the 2011 revolution would question the relevancy of Zahid's devotion of a complete chapter on Gamal Mubarak's role in inciting the revolution. Zahid makes clear that, at the time, there was a real fear that Gamal Mubarak was being groomed to succeed his father and that, accordingly, his father's repressive rule would continue if that succession succeeded. This factor, in large part, conflated with the economic and social issues of the day to motivate the revolution.

Chapter One provides a framework for these themes. Here Zahid declares that the popular Western assertion that, with liberalization, civil society evolves a consciousness of political rights, cannot be easily applied to the Middle East because, in the first place, there is a failure of consistency of liberalization in the region and, for another, the region has been plagued with conflict. He asserts that the Brotherhood’s experience in Egypt is a case on point. He argues that organizations such as the Brotherhood were, in part, reactions to the economic and political liberalization engendered by the impact of Western secularity on Egypt.

In Chapters Two and Three, Zahid provides proof for his argument. He uses the recognized conflict between authoritarianism and democratization in the region as a whole to explain why democracy in the Western sense is implicitly unfeasible in Egypt. He states that the history of the Middle East is one of alternating shifts in power between authoritarian and democratic forces and their impact on economics and politics have changed as they have developed over time. In this regard, he examines these changes during the Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak regimes. He cites the fact that, after 1952, the Nasser regime followed planned economic development that resulted in nationalization and some form of income redistribution. Zahid notes that some liberalization occurred after Nasser's death. This is in line with his idea of shifts in economic and political change. He argues that Sadat shifted to a model involving liberalization especially after the 1973 war with Israel. Zahid identifies this model as infitah, openness, which seems to have been market-oriented. Like Nasser’s policies, Sadat’s program had an unforeseen and unfortunate impact on the poor: deepening the differences between the rich and poor. The Egyptian leadership under Mubarak had a technocratic and business oriented perspective supported by the military which systematically resisted civil reform and Islamists, most notably the Brotherhood. He maintains that this approach was not a new phenomenon, that it reflected the Nasser and Sadat regimes in following a tradition of promoting top down economic models. After 1991, Mubarak adopted policies that called for the privatization of industries that were state owned. Zahid notes that the policy lacked direction and, as a consequence, negatively affected workers and created a socio-economic crisis. Zahid argues that these shifts during the Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak regimes permitted the Brotherhood to gather strength and support due to its social services to the poor. Zahid contends that the Brotherhood was, thus, able in the 1990s to contend with the government as evidenced by its participation in parliament and syndicates.

Zahid continues to develop these ideas in Chapter Four by reflecting on the early history of the movement. He asserts that, whereas in the 1920s and 1930s the Brotherhood limited itself to spiritual matters, the 1990s were a period for political action. He claims in Chapters Five and Six that a juxtaposition of these periods reveals a re-orientation of the Brotherhood from a religious Islamic movement to a political movement. His theme is that syndicates and alliances with political parties provided the format for Brotherhood activism. In Chapter Five, for example, he distinguishes the positions of Hasan Al Banna and Sayed Qutb in terms of political activism, associating the former with the early period of the Brotherhood and associating the latter with the political activism that began in the 1950s. Zahid, thus, perceives a trail of development that led
to what he contends constituted the conflation of the Brotherhood's assertive activism of the 1990s. He sees this trend in the fact that Sayed Qutb actively criticized the secularity of Nasser and believed that the mission of the Brotherhood was to actively seek the establishment of an Islamic state. The spiritual goal of Al Banna remained as the essence of the Brotherhood, but the means for its achievement evolved from one dependent on persuasion to one "materializable" through active political mobilization. Zahid argues that this change in means in the Brotherhood's political involvement became evident through the agency of alliances. A case in point was the decision of the Brotherhood to establish an alliance with the al Wafd Party in 1984 that led to winning eight seats in the parliament. Subsequently, the Brotherhood formed other alliances with such parties as the Amal Party and the Hizb al Ahrar Party. In Chapter Six, Zahid describes how professional syndicates also functioned as mediums for political participation.

Zahid in Chapter Seven deals with the issue of succession on the eve of the revolution. It is interesting to note that Zahid believed that there was a real possibility that Gamal Mubarak, the son of Hosni Mubarak, had a chance to succeed his father in office. He traces the political career of Gamal Mubarak and, if one were to exclude the events of 2011 and focus on events in 2010, indeed Zahid's fears had some foundation. Chapter Eight provides a view of the political issues antecedent to the 2011 revolution that attended those concerns. The "Conclusion" and the "Preface" tie his arguments to the reality of the February revolution to his themes. Zahid's "Preface" was written in December 2011 and it operates as a postscript on the revolution. The basic text relates to events prior to 2010 and many of his observations therein may be considered speculation. However, his basic argument of conflict between authoritarianism and liberalization remains significant. He observes that the outline of the arguments that he dealt with had grown sharper on the eve of the revolution. In the "Preface," dated December 2011, he states that the Brotherhood is now free to insert itself more fully in the political scene. He cautions that whatever action the Brotherhood undertakes it still must deal with the military, the Salafists, the secular forces that started the revolution and Mubarak's partisans who remained in powerful positions.

Carrie Rosefsky Wickham is an associate professor of political science at Emory University. Two significant preliminary parameters that characterize her text need to be kept in mind in reviewing her book. Firstly, whereas Zahid covers the period before the revolution, Wickham includes observations dealing with the Brotherhood right after the revolution, but before Morsi was ousted from power and, as such, offers a perspective more immediate than that provided by Zahid. The book was published before July 2013, the month that the Brotherhood was overthrown in Egypt. In addition, as opposed to Zahid's focus on shifts in economic and political matters, she approaches the Brotherhood from a singular direction. Secondly, her text focuses on the evolution of the Brotherhood's political awareness. She does not stress the economic dimension that so concerns Zahid nor does she develop Zahid's concern with succession, a fact that delimits the range of text. This approach is apparent in her first chapter.

Chapters One through Eight provide information on the movement's evolution, as the subtitle suggests. By employing the word "evolution," Wickham seeks to convey the idea that the Brotherhood underwent a political process of change from its date of origin to the eve of the revolution that permitted the organization, by 2011, to develop the capability of maintaining itself in power. The idea of evolution, as used here, does not mean to suggest that, by 2011, the Brotherhood had successfully evolved into a monolithic unitary force. Quite the contrary; Wickham, in Chapter One, makes it clear that the Brotherhood was "factionalized" with the conservative elements still in command and at odds with its lower reformist membership. In her fifth chapter, however, Wickham notes that the dominant issue in this regard centered on the organization's assertion and restraint, i.e., the Brotherhood wished to maintain its acquired status and yet assert that status.
without risking its loss. One example of this balancing act was the call by some members of the organization for the formation of a political party. As Wickham and Kandil point out, the Brotherhood formed the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) only after the revolution was successful.

For Wickham, moderation in the Brotherhood does not prioritize participation in politics. In chapters Two through Six, for example, Wickham demonstrates these observations as they applied to the Brotherhood in its early years. She notes that the Brotherhood was founded by Al Banna in 1928, and, like Zahid, she classifies it, at this juncture, as a Sunni revivalist movement with a focus primarily on religious tenets with no overt political goals. At this stage of its development, the Brotherhood movement, she makes clear, eschewed participation in politics. As an organization, it was anti-establishment without a desire to change political matters in an overt way. The underlying basis for the origin for this orientation lay in Al Banna's conclusion that the dire straits of the Islamic world had its roots in the secular impact that the West had had on Islamic society and his belief that matters would change only if the Islamic world, and especially Egypt, returned to Islamic purity. Such a return, Al Banna believed, could be achieved in a practical way and that the Brotherhood represented that "way." Accordingly, Al Banna constructed the Brotherhood as a hierarchical organization which provided a series of steps to prospective members for development of religious commitment (*tabiya*). Wickham does not concentrate on this aspect of the Brotherhood as much as Kandil does (see below). The Brotherhood's objective was to expand the revivalist commitment to encompass the whole of the country. Apparently, once religious commitment had been achieved, it would logically follow that the nature of government would also change. This process did not precisely incorporate the idea of political participation in the normal Western sense.

Wickham points out, however, that this insular perspective of the Brotherhood did change so that, by the early 1940s, the fielding of candidates was deemed acceptable. However while the Brotherhood’s leadership had changed its perspective so that political action could be taken, they would do so without the Brotherhood forming its own political party. Al Banna himself even ran for office during these years. When Nasser came to power, the Brotherhood's growth had reached a point that Nasser considered threatening. The Brotherhood was persecuted throughout Nasser's regime. With Nasser's death in 1970 and the rise of Sadat, the Brotherhood was again able to legally operate. Sadat permitted the Brotherhood to engage in political activity, albeit with reservations. He used the Brotherhood as a counter-weight to socialist-leaning Nasser supporters. Islamist student associations arose during this period and the Brotherhood created relationships with them. The associations functioned as another agency for political action. Chapter Three describes this new stage in the Brotherhood's evolution. Wickham notes that the Brotherhood participated in electoral politics, still without the formation of a political party. Over the ensuing years, the Brotherhood allied itself with several political parties. The idea of forming a political party was entertained in the mid-1980s, but did not materialize. The Brotherhood at this time propounded the adoption of Shari'a law, but not at a level of intensity that would draw the ire of Mubarak. By this time the Brotherhood had some of its members in parliament. Reformist elements in the Brotherhood challenged the organization’s leadership and advocated change for more democracy. Chapters Four and Five focus on this internal conflict in the Brotherhood. Chapter Six details the actions of the Mubarak regime to contain the Brotherhood during the period between 2005 and 2010, but Wickham makes the point that the Brotherhood did not respond violently as it still adhered to its non-violent principles.

Chapter Seven brings the Brotherhood to the Egyptian Revolution (January 25, 2011). Wickham notes that the uprising started without formal Brotherhood participation. She observes that the secular revolution changed the Egyptian leadership, i.e., that Mubarak and his immediate
cohort resigned; but, that neither the authoritarian apparatus in place nor the leadership of the secular forces sponsoring the uprising gained power. Mubarak resigned on February 11, 2011 because the military withdrew its support for him. The military simply assumed power and ordered new elections with the military as arbiter during the transition. Wickham does note that, even though the Brotherhood did not participate in the revolution as an organization, some of its young reformist members did contribute to the revolution within the context of their relationship with other non-Brotherhood student organizations. Zahid deals more with this aspect of the Brotherhood in relation to syndicates in the pre-2011 period than do Wickham and Kandil. Wickham notes that the senior Brotherhood leadership at first remained neutral. After the Brotherhood realized that they could be blamed if the revolution failed, its leadership ordered members to join the protests, fully engaging on January 28, 2011, the Day of Rage. Subsequently, the Brotherhood's leadership decided to establish its own political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). The chapter makes clear that, subsequent to the revolution, the Brotherhood endured some fragmentation; conflict between the old guard and the more politically motivated membership caused tension. One special form that this tension took within the Brotherhood was the dispute arising between the adherents of Shari'a and the proponents of democracy. The issue concerned the question of whether the two were reconcilable. This tension is significant in that the non-Brotherhood secular general public feared the consequences of that conflict if the proponents of Shari'a within the Brotherhood would be victorious over the organization's advocates of democracy. In Chapter Nine, Wickham addresses the state of the Brotherhood after Mohammad Morsi's election.

Thus, Wickham overall points out that the Brotherhood in 2013 confronted two challenges and that those challenges constituted two dilemmas. For one, the Brotherhood’s leadership could exercise its power in having been elected in such a way as to adhere to the demands of the Egyptian electorate to follow the principles of the revolution and, perhaps, thereby alienate those members of the organization who wished to maintain their spiritual goals. For another, the Brotherhood’s leadership could follow the dictates of its own Islamist principles and, thus, risk the wrath of the secular and military forces arrayed against that focus. Both challenges and dilemmas turned out to be the death knell for the Morsi presidency. Wickham points out the prospective missteps that the Brotherhood should have avoided, but which, one now knows, it did not avoid. The Kandil book deals, in part, with this latter subject.

Hazem Kandil is a lecturer in political sociology at the University of Cambridge and also a Fellow of St. Catharine's College. As the title of his book suggests, the topic of the book is how the Muslim Brotherhood operates. Unlike Zahid and Wickham, Kandil does not concentrate on either the economic or the evolutionary nature of the political aspects of the Brotherhood. The text takes a micro approach to events. The subjects are addressed largely as they relate to three sub-topics: (1) the nature of the Brotherhood's conception of its relationship with the divine, (2) the internal workings of the Brotherhood as a reflection of that conception, and (3) the historical, present, and future ramifications of that interrelationship. Kandil contends that existing literature on the Brotherhood does not address these topics from the perspective of the membership of the organization itself. To achieve this and to prove his observations, Kandil relies on his personal contact with members of the Brotherhood and his experience as a participant observer in the organization.

Kandil describes his work as "a political sociological study of how the movement's ideology contributed to its downfall" (p. 4). To develop his thesis, Kandil organizes his book into an introduction, a conclusion, and five intervening chapters. The introduction specifies his purpose, as duly noted; the conclusion provides observations. The substance of the book consists of the five intervening chapters. Chapter One shows how the Brotherhood "cultivates" its membership
through a cultivation curriculum. That is, Kandil details how the Brotherhood follows a pattern of hierarchical indoctrination of prospective members. For example, in his initial chapter, he illustrates that membership is a matter of being chosen, convincing prospective members that they are chosen. The Brotherhood’s pedagogy involves highlighting sentiment and the emotions over reason. A prospective member is placed in groups that regiment a neophyte’s exposure to non-Muslim ideas. Pedagogical curriculum focuses on moral and behavioral goals, receiving instruction and engaging in practical goals relating to that instruction. A prospective member advances to more integral membership as his mentors evaluate the prospective member’s progress. Discord and criticism are discouraged if not suppressed. In Chapter Two, Kandil focuses on the interaction of the brothers and sisters. One major point that Kandil makes is that the interaction of members of the Brotherhood is controlled by the inculcation of the idea that members must subsume themselves to the movement, which means that family and friends are secondary to the organization. In Chapter Three, Kandil specifically examines Islam as an ideology. He addresses the 2013 fall of the Brotherhood in light of that ideology. He contends that the ideology of Islam was the basis for that failure. Specifically, he argues that, as the Brotherhood saw it, simply by asserting the curriculum objectives discussed in Chapter Two the Brotherhood would remain in power and be able to extend that ideology throughout Egypt. He additionally suggests that the Brotherhood believed that a new era of Islam would emerge which would encompass the world. Kandil points out that Islamic theological history as interpreted by the Muslim Brotherhood supported these contentions. In this connection, Kandil, for example, argues that the Brotherhood’s understanding of Islamicism is tied to religious determinism. According to Kandil, the members’ standard response to questions and doubts as to Islamic failure is ascribed to lack of faith. Kandil ties the idea that this history logically led to the removal of Muhammad Morsi and the debacle at the Rab’a al-‘Adawiya sit-in. He describes the day and night prayers of the protesters expressing the belief in the restoration of Morsi by the performance of miracles.

Given the logic of his analysis, Kandil seems to say that this perspective dooms the Brotherhood to eternal failure. These observations in Chapter Three undergird those in the ensuing chapter wherein the slow rise and rapid fall from power of the Brotherhood is delineated. In that chapter, Kandil asserts that the peculiar orientation of Islam as viewed by the Brotherhood and other Muslims lies in the fact that Muslims have not, like the West, separated religion from the state. Kandil declares that Muslim Brothers still have not adjusted to the real world. He maintains that the Muslim Brotherhood, in particular, arose out of the fall of the caliphate. The Brotherhood, thereafter, considered itself, under Al Banna, as an organization destined to be the savior of Islam. Kandil traces the history of the Brotherhood, pointing out that that history was one of repression. He notes that the Brotherhood was repressed in 1948 and that the organization adapted to authoritarian rule. In the latter part of the chapter, Kandil relates the events leading to the secular revolution of 2011. Like Zahid and Wickham, he notes that the Brotherhood did not initially participate in those events. The Brotherhood participated in the Day of Rage in January of that year. After Mubarak's ouster on February 11, Kandil states that the Brotherhood chose appeasement to secular forces in order to secure a leadership role in the new status quo, the objective being its historical mandate to spread their ideology: transformation through religious faith. The Brotherhood counted on divine intervention and, as a result, it failed. In the last chapter, Chapter Five, Kandil describes the secular reforms and the militants and the Brotherhood in other Muslim countries. In his conclusion, Kandil speculates on the possible end of the Brotherhood's version of Islamism; Kandil posits that Islam as viewed by the Brotherhood constitutes an ideology that holds that real world success is due to religiosity and that this perspective leads to a lack of focus on real life problems. Kandil concludes that the Brotherhood is at a juncture at which it needs to decide whether to add a practical dimension to its religious views or not. The Brotherhood will
either continue on its historical course and be doomed to failure or it will choose to adapt. If the Brotherhood adapts to the modern world, then the movement may have a realistic chance of success.

The book offers much food for thought. Kandil's study is seemingly objective. It provides an "inside" look at a secretive organization in operation. The tools that he uses include participant observation, interviews, primary sources such as Islamist memoirs and secondary sources such as published writings as well as online and audio/video materials. The text is organized logically and flows thematically. There is, however, one particular limitation that poses a major difficulty for the reader. This is the obvious lack of an explanation as to how the Brotherhood leadership as well as the membership, given the stringency of its structure, permitted an "outsider" to enter the organization. One says "outsider" because, as Kandil asserts, membership, even in its initial form, would have required that Kandil himself be chosen. Kandil asserts that selection for membership usually requires that the prospective member have little education and Kandil is not an uneducated person. Kandil does explain that a friend of his invited him to present lectures to a group of members and that he was able to observe the members over a five year period at close quarters. But, given the depth of detail provided in the first and second chapters, not to mention the insider status suggested by the book's title, it would seem that Kandil somehow became much more intimately connected with the organization than this account suggests, but he does not disclose how he attained this level of intimacy within the Brotherhood.

In sum, in the introductory part of this essay, it was pointed out that there were four topics that were explicitly covered by these three books. As is apparent, all four topics are interrelated and, in brief, provide different perspectives on the Brotherhood. On the topic of the developmental history of the movement, all three books begin, more or less, from the organization's date of origin. However, the three books adopt different dimensions of that history in conformity with their respective themes and objectives. Zahid focuses on the Brotherhood in the context of economics and political issues; Wickham also focuses on the Brotherhood in the context of the subject of politics, but with a concentration on its evolutionary aspects; and, Kandil emphasizes the ideological dimension of the Brotherhood as it developed from the organization's date of origin.

All three books, thus, trace the historical development of the Brotherhood.

However, in reviewing the books, one can construct an interesting conflation of the four topics. Five overarching major points can be made: Firstly, Zahid provides a meta-historical context that gives substance to the linearity of the Wickham book since both deal, in large part, with political subject matter as noted above. One must remember in this regard that Wickham purports to see an evolutionary element in the Brotherhood's history, one that, from the perspective of the book's ending, is definitively progressive. From the perspective of the old guard, that progressive aspect was not totally acceptable as part and parcel of the spirituality espoused by the original founders of the movement. Perhaps this is why Wickham concentrates on the political and its attendant evolutionary character. For a certainty, one can say that Wickham does not give the spiritual aspect of the events of 2011 due consideration as Kandil does.

Secondly, looking at events from Wickham's perspective, one can say that the Brotherhood "evolved" from a strictly spiritual origin to one not completely political. Her book, having been written just after the assumption of power by the Brotherhood, colors her concluding comments. Wickham hazards to suggest in her last chapter that the Brotherhood has to avoid disturbing the equilibrium of the various forces confronting it in 2013. The fact that Wickham addresses this danger suggests that, given her evolutionary history of the Brotherhood, Wickham suspects that the failure of the Brotherhood may have been imminent if not foreordained if the Islamic spirit
uality that governed the Brotherhood’s origin was permitted to guide Morsi’s and the organization’s goals. This suggestion by Wickham is the major subject of Kandil’s book. Kandil’s concern is the vitality of the spiritual side of the Brotherhood, i.e., in the form of its ideology and its impact on the events of 2013. For Kandil, Morsi and the Brotherhood ignored the balance that was needed to maintain power. Instead, Morsi and the Brotherhood chose to follow the organization’s essential nature, not knowing that it was doomed to failure. In a sense, Kandil is, thus, correct in maintaining that ultimately, and perhaps ironically, determinism, as an ideological and spiritual commitment, played a major role in the Brotherhood’s downfall. In his ”Conclusion,” Kandil ruminates on the question as to whether the Brotherhood will be able to resurrect itself after the events of 2013.

Thirdly, Kandil states that the Brotherhood’s leadership and membership must realize that belief and faith per se will not prevail in the real world. The Brotherhood essentially experienced realpolitik in 2013. The organization must re-assess its political and theological postures in order to have a chance to make a comeback. Kandil, like Wickham, seems to infer that this will not happen. Unfortunately, the Brotherhood in Egypt might very well adopt the violent path of its sister organization, Hamas, and devolve into violent action. In Chapter Three of his book, Kandil explains this perspective in terms of Hegelian and Marxian dialectics. Kandil seems to suggest that the synthesis of the Brotherhood’s dialectic was a failure. Of course, the reader is left to identify the spiritual goal of the movement with the Hegelian thesis and the political goal with the antithesis. He explains that this deterministic feature of the Brotherhood is due to the fact that the Brotherhood did not prepare itself for a contest for power in realpolitik terms. Within the dialectic, the mantra of the movement was logically constricted by the dialectic of its religious ideology. The Brotherhood, Kandil asserts, could have taken a more assertive posture, but its “mindset” (p. 82) did not permit the leadership of the organization to take any course of action other than what its ideology dictated. The ideology held that the piety of a follower would be rewarded by victory. Thus, the Brotherhood in 2013 believed that its adherence to its code of belief would inevitably lead it to ultimate success. For example, Kandil contends that, in not modifying or compromising its promotion of Shari’a, an advocacy that frightened the secular public, the Brotherhood was asking for the assistance of Allah and that Allah would answer such a call. In a nutshell, he designates this dialectic "religious determinism" (p. 85). Interestingly, Kandil notes that the Brotherhood's Islamism developed without a Lenin; had the Brotherhood had a Lenin to lead the organization in 2013, events might have led to a different conclusion. Morsi was no Lenin. This, then, Kandil seems to suggest, was the missing element in the calculus of the Brotherhood's ascension to power. The religious determinism of the organization's ideology kept it in a straitjacket. That is, the peculiar brand of Islamism adopted by the Brotherhood left no room for change in a realpolitik direction. Kandil, however, does not develop this analysis as his main theme. The analogy may not be too far off and suggests an area for further study and research. In short, retrospectively, Kandil's position on the future of the Brotherhood is not a positive one.

Fourthly, the three books’ different approaches provide the reader with a multidimensional perspective on the Brotherhood. One interesting corollary feature of the three books, for example, includes the fact that they reveal the dynamics of how the Brotherhood was able to rise to prominence and how inevitably it was destined to fail in achieving its primary goal, an Islamic state. Zahid points to the economic and political consequences of the liberalization and democratic conflict that rules the Middle East and especially Egypt. Zahid also points to the internal transformation of the Brotherhood from an organization that was initially spiritually-motivated to an organization that finally adopted political goals. Kandil sees this transformation as inevitable in
that the Brotherhood’s ideology was by its very nature deterministic. This aspect of the Broth-
erhood, perhaps, explains why Morsi was unable to recognize the pitfalls that his position as pres-
ident entailed.

And finally, Wickham points out in her text, as noted above, that, in order to succeed, the
Brotherhood had to balance the various forces of the revolution and the secular status quo. Morsi
and the Brotherhood failed to do so and, thus, lost control of the government. An explanation for
the ease with which the Brotherhood fell lies in the fact that the organization did not have an
armed auxiliary wing as, for example, Hezbollah has. As a matter of fact, one can point to the
sister organization of the Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip, Hamas, as a model for effective seizure
of power. The Brotherhood lacked the ruthlessness and tenacity that these two sister organiza-
tions had in abundance. And, even if the Brotherhood had had these particular characteristics, the
organization lacked the wherewithal, the armed wing, to exercise them. Interestingly, none of the
three books raised this “deficiency” in the Brotherhood. What the Brotherhood did have in its
arsenal is described by Zahid and to a lesser degree by both Wickham and Kandil. Zahid, for
example, examines two specific instruments, the syndicates and alliances with political parties,
as agents for political action used by the Brotherhood, but notes the danger of succession of
power that Gamal Mubarak represented. Interestingly, neither Wickham nor Kandil develop this
theme. Reading these last two books would seem to suggest that Gamal Mubarak did not exist
or, at the minimum, posed no danger to the Brotherhood and the secular opponents of Mubarak.
Wickham’s book, as noted, approaches the Brotherhood’s history as evolutionary and presents
that the political orientation of the Brotherhood developed in linear fashion. The macro back-
ground provided by Zahid is lacking in Wickham’s book and, to an extent, in Kandil’s book.
Perhaps, as a final note, one can hazard that future studies of the Brotherhood as well as studies
of other Islamist organizations should endeavor to adopt such a macro approach.