The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan

Since its founding in 1945, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has enjoyed decades of almost continuous parliamentary presence and state acceptance in Jordan, participating in elections, organising events and even establishing a hospital. In this detailed account of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideological and behavioural development in Jordan, Joas Wagemakers focusses on the group's long history and complex relationship with the state, its parliament and society. It shows how age-old concepts derived from classical Islam and the writings of global Islamist scholars have been used and reused by modern-day Jordanian Islamists to shape their beliefs in the context of the present-day nation-state. Far from its reputation as a two-faced global conspiracy bent on conquering the West, the Muslim Brotherhood is a deeply divided group that has nevertheless maintained a fascinating internal ideological consistency in its use of similar religious concepts. As such, it is part of, and continues to build on, trends in Muslim thought that go back hundreds of years.

Joas Wagemakers is Associate Professor of Islamic and Arabic Studies at Utrecht University. He has published extensively on Islamist ideology and Islamic movements, including *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (2012) and *Salafism in Jordan: Political Islam in a Quietist Community* (2016), which won the British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize in 2017.

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Preface

It is not very often that, a few weeks before finishing a book, one realises that one has been writing about something that apparently barely even existed, yet this is what happened to me with this study. After having read about, researched and written on the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood for years – an organisation founded in 1945 and still in existence today – it was reported in June 2019 that a court of cassation in Jordan had ruled that the group was actually dissolved in 1953 for failing to rectify its status. As a result, the Brotherhood has been illegal since that year. This was somewhat surprising, as the Brotherhood has frequently participated in parliamentary elections, organised numerous events and even founded a hospital – among other activities – since 1953, which is surely an extraordinary feat for an organisation that does not actually exist.

If the Jordanian Brotherhood had really only existed for eight years, it might not have merited a book, but the reality is, of course, that the organisation has a long history in the Kingdom of Jordan and that the court ruling mentioned above is merely the latest chapter in a much longer saga of the state's relationship with the organisation. Unlike in some other countries, the Brotherhood in Jordan has never experienced mass military repression, but has always enjoyed a more complex relationship with the Jordanian state, its parliament and its society. This book deals with how the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has negotiated its way through this relationship in the Islamic terms that characterise the organisation. As such, it shows that – ideologically speaking – the group relies on a discourse and a tradition that is far broader and deeper than the Brotherhood itself and also much older than the eight years the court gives the organisation credit for.

Acknowledgements

In 2011, when I received a Veni grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) to start a research project on Islamic activism in Jordan, I had a pretty good idea about what I wanted to do. It became clear to me rather quickly, however, that the subject of Salafism, which was included in my original research proposal, did not really fit in with my specific plans. I therefore decided to write a book on Salafism in Jordan first (published by Cambridge University Press in 2016) and then focus on my original plans with regard to the Muslim Brotherhood. The present publication, which deals with this organisation, is close to my original research plan and, in its set up at least, represents more or less the book that I had initially wanted to write. Although the grant ran from 2012 to 2016, I would still like to thank the NWO for providing me with the funds to make this book possible.

The initial research for the proposal that formed the basis of this book was done at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. I thank the staff there for helping me to get started and for providing me with sources I could not find elsewhere. The research for the book itself was partly done while working at the Department of Religious Studies at Radboud University in Nijmegen and I thank my colleagues there for providing me with a pleasant working environment. Further research was done at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Utrecht University, where I started working in 2015 and where the book was also written, and at the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, where I was a visiting fellow in 2016. I thank my colleagues at Utrecht, particularly Nico Landman, Christian Lange, Kadir Türkmen, Corné Hanssen and Mehdi Sajid, for helping to make our Islamic and Arabic studies section a joy to work at. I also thank the staff at Princeton, particularly Bernard Haykel, for putting up with me for a few wonderful months.

During my fieldwork in Jordan, I stayed at the Institut Francais du Proche Orient (IFPO), the American Center for Oriental

Research (ACOR) and the British Institute in Amman (BIA). I thank the staff at all of these institutes for their hospitality and help. Part of my research involved work at the newspaper archive of the University of Jordan in Amman, where Lama al-ʿUsayli, Faris al-Zaghal and particularly Afnan al-ʿAlawina and ʿAbdallah Damdum helped me sort through literally thousands of copies of *Al-Kifah al-Islami* and especially *Al-Sabil*. Thanks are also due to Hasan Abu Haniyya, Marwan Shahada and Usama Shahada, who were always willing to discuss my findings with me. I am particularly grateful to Usama for providing me with several issues of the Islamist daily *Al-Ribat* from his impressive personal archive. My greatest thanks, however, go out to the many members of the Muslim Brotherhood and experts in Jordan who were willing to talk to me about the organisation and without whom this book would not have seen the light of day.

As was the case with my previous book, this one was also enthusiastically received by Cambridge University Press's African and Middle Eastern Studies editor, Maria Marsh, for which I am truly grateful. While Maria was away on leave, Daniel Brown took the helm and did an excellent job. Also, Lisa Carter, Vigneswaran Viswanathan and Muhammad Ridwaan guided the book through the various stages of the production process, for which I thank them. I would also like to thank the anonymous peer reviewers for reading and commenting on the manuscript. I am particularly grateful to Shadi Hamid, Roel Meijer, Jillian Schwedler and Morten Valbjørn for taking time out of their busy schedules to read large parts of the manuscript or even the entire text and providing me with useful and sometimes quite detailed comments. This book has become better because of them, although all remaining mistakes are, of course, my own.

On a more personal note – and as usual – AccuJazz.com as well as lots of other jazz accompanied me throughout my research. After finishing a chapter, I always rewarded myself by listening to Rachael Price's truly wonderful rendition of Fred Coots and Haven Gillespie's 'You Go to My Head', which – to me at least – is as great as Billie Holiday's version. I can think of no greater compliment for a jazz singer. Unfortunately, finishing this book also more or less coincided with the passing of Harald Motzki, a former professor of mine, the supervisor of my dissertation and a lasting source of influence. Although the subject of the Muslim Brotherhood is far removed from what his research focussed on, I sincerely hope that traces of his impact on my academic work can still be seen in this book. Finally, I would like to thank my wife and children, who not

only had to cope without me for several months when I was doing field work in Jordan, but who also had to put up with my being in my study for most of the day for a period of five months or so when I was writing this book. I do not know if they think the end result was worth it, but I hope they will understand that I think it was.

Note on Transliteration

The system of transliteration used in this book generally follows that of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) though, as a notable exception, the Arabic *alif maqṣūra* is transliterated as '-á' to distinguish it from a *tāʾ marbūṭa* ('-a') and an *alif ṭawīla* ('-ā'). Like IJMES, however, I have fully transliterated common words (e.g. Qurʾan/Qurʾān), names and titles of books in the notes, but not in the text itself. Finally, some words, such as *ḥadīth*, have not been given their accurate Arabic plural forms (*aḥādīth*) but anglicised equivalents instead (*ḥadīth*s).