

Current Research Seminar (Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific
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“Re-Configured Islamist Geopolitics in the Arab Spring:
Emergence of new Islamic Community in Muslim
Brotherhood’s International Nexus”

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Objectives

- Re-configured geopolitics image and practice in the Middle East with special reference to the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) movements in Egypt, Jordan and Syria
- Comparative, cross-national research in regard to
 - the essence of trans-national / regional idea in the discourse of MB founder
 - geo-political interactions among the three MBs before / after the Arab Spring

MB founder Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906-1949)

- Al-Bannā founded the MB, the first mass-based Islamic movement in the world
- *Da'wa* (Islamic calling)
- Al-Bannā tried to counter the Western colonialism and the de-islamization in the society
- Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (**EMB**) and local branches
 - Syria (**SMB**), Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan (**JMB**), and the Sudan

Da'wa beyond Geopolitical Boundaries: From al-Bannā's Thought

- Geopolitical images in al-Bannā's Writing "To the Youth."
- Bottom-up
 - Muslim individuals
 - Muslim families
 - Muslim people
 - Muslim government
- Da'wa beyond national boundaries
 - Islamic countries
 - Islamic "lost lands"
 - making the MB's *da'wa* well-known throughout the world

The EMB after al-Bannā

- The EMB was outlawed and dissolved under the Nasser regime.
- The EMB was allowed to reconstruct in the 1970s then became one of the most influential socio-political forces.
- 25 January Revolution in 2011 and the EMB's rise as a dominant political party.
 - The Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) was established/
 - Mohammad Mursi won the presidential elections.
- Military coup in 2013

The EMB's Geopolitical Views Today

- “Reform Initiative” in 2004
- Four circles
 - Arab circle
 - African circle
 - Islamic circle
 - the international circle
- The EMB's geopolitical view had evolved from al-Bannā's Islam-oriented program to more concrete agendas.
- Mursi's foreign policy

The Jordanian MB (1945 –)

- JMB's privileged status as a perfectly legal organization made it
 - playing the role of an established organization in line with the government
 - never construct its original Islamic interpretation
- JMB's limited boundaries: Eastern Arab, Palestine outside / inside Jordan
- JMB's failed mobilization in 2011
 - other oppositions preferred Hashemite monarchy to JMB's "democracy"
 - fluctuate regional transformation surrounding MBs makes JMB choose pragmatism

The Syrian MB (1945 –)

- SMB's transnational geopolitical image and (un)practice
 - Ideologically, Islamization of Syria, Greater Syria, Arab & Islamic *umma*
 - Practically, anti-secularist force within Syrian → *de facto* **local actor**
- However, 2011 Arab Spring fostered “**internationalization**” in positive/negative aspects
 - (1) enjoying financial and material aids through MB “int’l nexus” (11-13)
 - (2) stigmatized as “terrorists” and targeted in new “war on terror” (13-)
- → **rise and fall**, eventually losing int’l credibility and support

Conclusion

- The MB network after al-Bannā
 - has gradually diffused as a nexus of local and state-based
 - were localized as time passed, albeit they continued to be international
- The Arab Spring as a catalyst
 - pushed MBs toward both localization and internationalization
 - brought revitalization of the “international nexus” in a different manner from al-Bannā’s original vision, as well as new agendas and even obstacles to MBs