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## The Muslim Brotherhood's seven sins

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Not being able to run a country is one thing, but turning against it is something completely different. The Muslim Brotherhood could have conceivably survived the ineptness of its year in office, but what brought the group to its knees was its decision to hang on to power at any cost.

Rewind to 26 June 2013, the day Mohamed Morsi delivered a catastrophic speech at the Nasr City Conference Hall □ just one week before he was removed from office. In his speech, an agitated Morsi told his supporters to rally for battle, to squash political enemies, to defend his rule against all opponents.

This was the Muslim Brotherhood's first sin. When push came to shove, its leaders denied that they could not rule alone. Regimes fall when those in power refuse to see the writing on the wall.

Morsi had just turned down a request for early presidential elections that could have kept the Muslim Brotherhood in the game, if not in power. A national campaign had managed to collect millions of signatures calling for early presidential elections, but the Muslim Brotherhood acted as if none of this was its concern.

Its ironclad organisational discipline and immense resources would save it from the crisis, the Muslim Brotherhood thought, with disastrous consequences.

Well-informed sources say that the Muslim Brotherhood made plans to throw members of the civil opposition in prison the day after the 30 June demonstrations were held. Lists of the people

to be detained were prepared even before Morsi took to the stage in Nasr City and threatened his opponents with fire and brimstone.

The opposition had made three demands: replacement of Public Prosecutor Talaat Abdallah with someone approved by the Supreme Judiciary Council; dismissal of Hesham Qandil's government and its replacement with one led by a consensual figure; and the holding presidential elections.

In hindsight, any attempt by the Muslim Brotherhood to meet the opposition halfway could have defused the crisis, putting the country on a totally different course. But the Muslim Brotherhood was not in the mood to compromise.

Morsi, it is said, was not the one calling the shots. In fact, it is believed that he would have opted for a compromise to defuse the tensions. Or at least this is what he told army strongman Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi in a private encounter back then. But anything the two men agreed upon was forgotten on 26 June, the day Morsi delivered his last public speech.

In hindsight, this shouldn't have come as a surprise. The decisions Morsi made were dictated to him by the Moqattam-based Muslim Brotherhood Guidance Office.

On 1 June 2013, two days before the protests that changed the country's political course, three Arab figures visited the Guidance Office to try to talk sense into Muslim Brotherhood General Guide Mohamed Badie. One was Tunisia's Rached Ghannouchi, the Ennahda leader. Another was Monir Shafiq, a key Palestinian intellectual figure. And the third was Khayr Al-Din Hasib, an Iraqi public figure and founder of the Arab National Conference.

The three failed in their mission, for the Muslim Brotherhood had made up its mind. Muslim Brotherhood leaders were not open to a political settlement. Their hold on the country was unshakable, and power-sharing was the last thing on their minds.

According to its allies in the Nour Party, the Muslim Brotherhood grabbed more than 10,000 government jobs within only a few months. Its lack of interest in power-sharing was shocking, more so to its friends than foes. This was the Muslim Brotherhood's second sin.

On 30 June, the Muslim Brotherhood's third sin surfaced. As millions marched to demand an end to its rule, the group became even more adamant. It claimed that the protests were Photoshopped. It claimed that the signatures demanding early elections were fakes. It claimed that, if it so desired, it could bring even larger numbers of protesters into the streets.

Instead of understanding the country and rallying to the middle of the political spectrum, the Muslim Brotherhood travelled a path of its own, ending up in a political wilderness □ befriending only the Islamists, and edging closer to known terrorists.

The Muslim Brotherhood confused Sharia for legitimacy, forgot the goals of the revolution and played down public outrage, and thus ended with no tangible political support.

Then it went into denial, which was its fourth sin. The Muslim Brotherhood refused to admit that

its failure to run the country was at the heart of its unpopularity. It refused to see that its failure to engage in serious partnership was wrecking its chances.

When public outrage led to one of history's clearest moments of revolt, the Muslim Brotherhood lost its senses. With its fate in the balance, the Muslim Brotherhood decided that its future was better ensured by relying on US and Western support than on Egypt's ballot boxes. This was its fifth sin.

At a time when it was clear that the Muslim Brotherhood was losing its grip on power, the group pretended □ with a little help from foreign friends □ that it could ride out the storm.

The Muslim Brotherhood was also convinced that the army would not interfere in the power struggle. Perhaps because of US assurances, relayed by US Ambassador Anne Patterson to Khairat Al-Shater, the Muslim Brotherhood concluded that it could afford to challenge the entire nation.

What the Muslim Brotherhood didn't understand is that the army's decision to intervene wasn't the decision of one man alone, but of an institution that Morsi once praised as composed of "men made of gold." The Muslim Brotherhood also ignored the fact that millions in this country were clearly asking the army to intervene. Indeed, some members of the opposition were at this point accusing the army leadership of dragging its feet.

Because of US promises, however, the Muslim Brotherhood hardened its position. In fact, Al-Shater threatened then Defence Minister Al-Sisi that the country would erupt in civil war in the event of army intervention. This threat was made in a meeting on 24 June. Two days later, Morsi repeated the same threat in his speech in Nasr City.

The Muslim Brotherhood's sixth sin came right after that. When the army removed Morsi from power, the Muslim Brotherhood still had a chance to admit its errors and go for some sort of damage limitation. But it didn't.

This was its last chance, and the Muslim Brotherhood didn't take it. One of its leaders, former parliamentary speaker Mohamed Saad Al-Katatni, suggested a meeting with other political players to discuss the roadmap. But the rest of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders didn't go along.

Had the Muslim Brotherhood sought a compromise solution at this point, early elections could have been arranged, even without dissolving the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Shura Council or suspending the Muslim Brotherhood-authored constitution.

This was the Muslim Brotherhood's last chance for damage limitation. But the group opted instead for violence, rejecting any political compromise.

This, the option of violence, was the Muslim Brotherhood's seventh sin. It launched the Muslim Brotherhood down a path of sabotage against the state and its institutions, a path that was bloody for others but most fatal to the group itself.

These sins are of such magnitude that no presidential pardon can absolve them. These crimes are not ones that any court can ignore. Even if all the charges against criminals such as Mohamed Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood associates were dropped, these sins cannot be forgiven, for they are written in history and live in the memory of millions. And there is nothing the Muslim Brotherhood □ or its American, European, Turkish or Qatari friends can do to change