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NATIONAL SECURITY RESEARCH DIVISION

The Muslim Brotherhood, Its Youth, and Implications for U.S. Engagement

Jeffrey Martini, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Erin York

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Preface

The Muslim Brotherhood has emerged as one of the most consequential actors in post-Mubarak Egypt. As U.S. policymakers manage relations with Cairo, they will benefit from a deeper understanding of an organization that is far from monolithic. In particular, generational divides constitute a major challenge to the Brotherhood's organizational cohesion. This study provides an account of Muslim Brotherhood youth who were at the forefront of the January 25 Revolution but have been marginalized within the Brotherhood's hierarchy. In addition to examining who exactly are Muslim Brotherhood youth and what drives them, the study also proposes recommendations as to how this constituency can be incorporated into U.S. engagement with the Brotherhood.

This research was sponsored by the RAND Initiative for Middle Eastern Youth and conducted within the RAND Center for Middle East Public Policy, part of International Programs at the RAND Corporation. The center aims to improve public policy by providing decision-makers and the public with rigorous, objective research on critical policy issues affecting the Middle East.

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Summary

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) did not lead the January 25, 2011, Revolution that culminated in the toppling of President Hosni Mubarak, but it has managed to position itself as one of the primary beneficiaries of the uprising. Before the revolution, the MB occupied a tenuous position in Egyptian politics. Many of its senior leaders were in prison, and the group lacked representation in parliament after its boycott of the 2010 elections. More than a year after the revolution, the MB's fortunes could not be more different. As the struggle over how to apportion power in post-Mubarak Egypt unfolds, the MB has emerged as a legal entity operating a sanctioned political party, Freedom and Justice (FJP). The FJP has already demonstrated its electoral clout—first by winning a strong plurality in the parliament,¹ then by taking the presidency when their candidate, Muhammad Mursi, beat former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq in a runoff. President Mursi has already shown a clear willingness to tilt the post-Mubarak balance of power in Egypt away from the military and toward the Brotherhood.

For all its newfound power, the group faces a number of challenges, and among the most notable are generational divides within the organization. Young people, including MB youth, were at the forefront of change in Egypt but remain marginalized in the political transition and within society more broadly. Egyptian youth face acute unemployment, delays in marriage, and a lack of say in decisionmaking despite heightened expectations after the revolution. Just like other institutions

¹ The lower house of the parliament was subsequently dissolved over a dispute in the constitutionality of the electoral law.

and groups, the MB is vulnerable to youth grievances. Although individuals under the age of 35 make up a large share of the MB's membership, their participation is modeled on the principle of "listen and obey,"² reducing them to the status of cogs in a wheel that is turned by senior leaders. This overbearing hierarchy has already led to splits within the MB and will continue to challenge the organization's cohesion going forward.

The Organization of MB Youth

The MB channels youth participation through a variety of programs that cater to specific age cohorts. Children cannot become full-fledged members of the organization but they may affiliate with the Brotherhood through the organization's scout program. When they reach secondary school, they can be incorporated into the MB's student section and begin the process of becoming full-fledged members of the organization. There are parallel structures for incorporating these individuals into the FJP, in which younger members are represented through youth secretariats. There is a secretariat in each of Egypt's governorates and the youth secretary is tasked with strengthening bonds among younger members, recruiting new members, and preparing the party's youth for future leadership.

The Roles of MB Youth

MB youth are central to the Brotherhood's outreach efforts—including its missionary, charitable, and political activities. During election season, MB youth put up flyers, participate in rallies, and direct voters to polling places. And in a role that has taken on greater importance since the uprising, MB youth serve as the organization's "muscle," manning the demonstrations and counterdemonstrations that are used

² *Al-Sam' wa al-Tā'a*, or "listen and obey," is the phrase used by the Muslim Brotherhood to describe the binding nature of leadership decisions within the organization.

to communicate the MB's demands and challenge its political competitors. During the January 25 Revolution, MB youth were crucial to the protestors' ability to outlast regime repression. MB youth helped protect fellow protestors during the "battle of the camels," in which the regime dispatched camel-riding thugs in a failed attempt to drive protestors from Tahrir Square. Similarly, MB youth worked in the field hospitals that treated the wounded and helped hold the square during the evenings when participation dwindled and protestors were most at risk of losing their base to security forces.

MB Breakaway Groups

The MB had already spawned several breakaway parties prior to the revolution, but the political opening that followed Mubarak's fall accelerated the trend. Five groups are now competing for constituencies similar to those of the FJP, although these breakaway parties are small and do not pose a significant electoral challenge. At this point, the real influence of the breakaway parties lies in their ability to lay down markers on issues that the FJP then feels compelled to adopt. The defections are also significant in that many of those who have left the MB are arguably among the organization's best and brightest. The defectors include MB "aristocracy" who are descendants of the Brotherhood's original leadership, others who were selected by their peers to represent the MB in the revolutionary coalitions formed after the uprising, and some of the MB's best interlocutors with non-Islamist groups.

Issues that Divide MB Youth from Senior Leadership

Generational divides within the MB are revealed most starkly in internal debates over four key issues. The first is the reconciling of the Brotherhood's various missions. Many MB youth who split from the organization have reservations over the Brotherhood's lack of separation between its religious and political activities. A second source of division is the organization's positions on social issues, including gender equal-

ity and minority rights, on which MB youth in general—and break-away youth in particular—tend to be more progressive than senior leadership. A third generational divide is the more modest scope and pace of change sought by senior leaders versus the more revolutionary aspirations of its youth cadre. The final source of tension can be traced to internal practices, which are characterized by a strict hierarchy that marginalizes youth voices.

Recommendations on Engagement

MB youth merit attention not only as a challenge to the Brotherhood's organizational cohesion, but also as a potential conduit for expanding U.S. engagement with the group. This study presents several recommendations on how the United States can incorporate MB youth into engagement efforts:

Understand divisions within the MB, but don't try to game them. The rationale for including MB youth in the engagement process is to better understand a complex, diverse organization and not to play on splits within the MB or determine who does and does not speak for the MB.

Regularize and routinize engagement, including among members of Congress and FJP parliamentarians, to reduce politicization of engagement efforts. Engagement will be most effective when it has bipartisan support in the United States and embeds contact with the MB as part of broader engagement with Egypt's profusion of political parties.

Expand engagement to the grassroots level, targeting youth leaders and student union activists outside the major cities. A particular blind spot for the United States are the emerging leaders within the Brotherhood who are based outside major urban areas. It would benefit the United States to expand its contacts with young leaders

from these outlying areas in order to provide a fuller understanding of the MB's rural membership.

Leverage existing outreach programs to include MB youth. In a period of budget constraints and competing priorities, the good news is that the U.S. government already has existing programs that can be used to expand engagement to incorporate MB youth.

Cultivate MB leader buy-in for youth engagement efforts. Due to the hierarchical nature of the MB, outreach to the youth wing will have to be coordinated with senior leadership.

Note on Transliteration

The transliteration style employed in the footnotes mirrors that used by the International Journal of Middle East Studies in terms of distinguishing between short and long vowels. As per this style, long vowels are rendered with a dash (known as a macron) across the top of the letter as in “ā”, “ī”, and “ū” while short vowels are rendered simply as a, i, and u. The font used in this publication does not support the diacritics that distinguish the “sīn” from the “sād”, the “dāl” from the “dād”, etc. So in these instances, the first set of letters are both represented by an “s”, the second set of letters are both represented by a “d”, and so forth. The ‘ayn is represented by the symbol ‘ while the hamza is represented by the symbol ’.

As for individuals’ names, the typical standard is to defer to the spellings used by the individuals themselves when they have established a precedent. If a precedent has not been established by the individual, the standard outlined above is employed with the exception that long vowels are not differentiated from short vowels. The challenge is that individuals are not always consistent in how they render their own name in English and there is considerable variation in how Arabs render the definite article (“al-” versus “el-” or eliding it as in the case of Aboul Foutuh, as his name is often written.) Faced with these imperfect choices, the authors have chosen to always render the name Muhammad in that common form, to always render the definite article as “Al-”, and to show the “‘ayn” and the “hamza” but not the long vowels.

Abbreviations

AIPAC	American Israeli Public Affairs Committee
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
MP	member of parliament
NGO	nongovernmental organization
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
YRC	Youth Revolution Coalition

Introduction

This study is intended as a guide to help policymakers better understand who Muslim Brotherhood (MB) youth are, how generational divides challenge the Brotherhood, and how MB youth can be integrated into U.S. engagement efforts. The study is not intended as a broad treatment of the Brotherhood, an organization on which much has already been written.¹ Instead, it addresses an important but understudied cohort within the Brotherhood: the youth wing that is estimated to comprise between 35–50 percent of the organization’s total membership. As Egypt grapples with a new reality in which youth have emerged as important agents of change, while at the same time remaining marginalized within party politics and formal institutions, the Muslim Brotherhood is just one of many organizations that will have to contend with this disconnect.

Given a lack of research addressing MB youth specifically, Chapter One of this study aims to fill that gap by providing an empirical treatment of exactly who Muslim Brotherhood youth are. It addresses the size of the MB youth cohort, their role in the January 25 Revolution, their representation within the Brotherhood’s organizational structure, and their contribution to the organization’s broader program. In addi-

¹ Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969; Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002; Hosam Tamam, *Tahawwulāt al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, [*Transformations of the Muslim Brotherhood*], Madbuli, 2007; Khalil al-‘Anani, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn fī Misr: Shaikhūkha Tusāri’ al-Zaman*, [*The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt: Old Age Fighting Time*], Dar al-Shuruq, 2007; Nathan Brown, *When Victory Is Not an Option: Islamist Movements in Arab Politics*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012.

tion to the broad swath of MB youth that remain committed adherents, the chapter also considers the various breakaway groups that have split with the MB. One of those groups, the Egyptian Current, is led by former prominent MB youth members, and the others court current MB youth as an important potential constituency.

Having established a baseline for analysis, Chapter Two proceeds to examine the major drivers of schisms within the MB. The chapter analyzes how generational differences map against other issues that have divided the Brotherhood's membership, such as the weight the organization places on missionary work versus political action, the role of women in society and minority rights, and the organization's hierarchical approach to decisionmaking. This section of the report also considers how the Brotherhood's senior leadership has responded to the youth challenge and assesses whether these efforts will be sufficient to avoid further splits along generational lines.

Chapter Three concludes the report with an examination of a major policy implication for the United States: how MB youth can be better integrated into U.S.-MB engagement efforts. Although the frequency of U.S. engagement with the Brotherhood has increased dramatically since the January 25 Revolution, American officials generally have had contact with only with a narrow slice of the MB's senior leadership. In order to broaden U.S. understanding of a diverse and complex organization, the study provides recommendations as to how MB youth can be incorporated into the engagement process. The recommendations are designed to maximize the benefits of engagement with this segment of the Brotherhood while mitigating the potential downsides (e.g., loss of credibility) for MB youth from contacts with Americans.

The study builds on fieldwork conducted in Egypt in May 2011, and January, February, and April 2012. During these visits, interviews were conducted, primarily in Arabic, with 14 current or former MB youth. The set of interviews was split nearly evenly between individuals who remain committed to the organization and those who have left it over differences with senior leadership. The fieldwork also encompassed four interviews with MB senior leaders or leaders of breakaway parties, as well as a number of interviews with journalists and analysts that closely follow the Brotherhood. Face-to-face interviews were also used

to inform the recommendations presented in Chapter Three on U.S.-MB engagement efforts. In total, seven current and former U.S. officials were interviewed regarding the U.S. strategy for engagement with the Brotherhood and how MB youth might be incorporated into future efforts. In addition to interviews, the report builds on other primary sources such as the published accounts of MB youth who have since left the organization.² These accounts are not taken as representative of the experiences of all MB youth, but rather as the perspectives of members deeply frustrated by the organization's internal practices. These less sympathetic treatments of the Brotherhood are also a useful counterpoint to MB-produced material, such as the documentary, "History of the Student Movement in the Muslim Brotherhood",³ which contains the opposite bias of glossing over the serious generational challenge facing the organization.

In the course of the research, the authors also closely monitored MB statements and actions to track how the organization's senior leadership talks about MB youth and how their actions (e.g., candidate selection, internal promotions, organizational structure) reflect the Brotherhood's approach to its youth wing. Lastly, the study mines available secondary source literature on the subject, although this monograph represents the first report that specifically addresses MB youth.

Given that MB youth is itself a diverse constituency, the study cannot provide a definitive account of all its facets. For example, the interview sample was not large enough to provide granular analysis of the effect of regional or class divides, and while some of the interviewees were drawn from outlying governorates including Munufiya, al-Minya, and Qena, all of the interviews took place in Cairo and Alexandria. The female wing of the MB was also not a particular focus of the study. The authors would encourage future research in these areas.

² Intisar 'Abdelmoneim, *Hikayātī ma' al-Ikhwān: Mudhakirāt Ukht Sābiqa*, [My Stories with the Muslim Brotherhood: The Memoirs of a Former Sister], The Egyptian General Body of Writers, 2011 (in Arabic); Ahmed al-'Ajouz, *Ikhwānī: Out of the Box*, [A Brother: Out of the Box], Dawen Publishing, 2011 (in Arabic).

³ *Tarikh al-Haraka al-Tulābiya bi Jamā't al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, [History of the Student Movement in the Muslim Brotherhood], dir. Student Section of the Muslim Brotherhood in cooperation with Ikhwanwiki.com, September 2011 (in Arabic).

Who Are the Muslim Brotherhood Youth?

*Oh youth, you are not weaker than those that came before you, those through whose hands God brought about this program. So do not be feeble and do not weaken.*¹

—Hasan al-Banna, Founder of the Muslim Brotherhood

*My children and my dearest youth: Know that you are the hope of nations, their youthful helpers, their enlightened minds, their bright future, their shining hope, their preserved strength, and most important factor in their renaissance, progress, and ascent. This is your capability and your destiny.*²

—Muhammad Badi‘, Current General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood

Although youth have played an important role in the MB since the organization’s inception in 1928,³ it was their role in the January 25

¹ Hasan al-Banna, “To the Youth and to the Students in Particular,” as quoted in Khalil al-‘Anani, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn fī Misr: Shaikhūkhā Tusāri‘ al-Zaman*, [*The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt: Old Age Fighting Time*], Dar al-Shuruq, 2007, p. 95.

² Muhammad Badi‘, speech delivered to the Student Conference of the Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo, September 24, 2011.

³ The most comprehensive historical treatment of the Muslim Brotherhood student movement is in the documentary film, *Tarikh al-Haraka al-Tulābiya bi Jamā‘t al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, 2011 (in Arabic).

Revolution that has focused the attention of the West on this actor. During the 2011 uprising that led to the toppling of President Hosni Mubarak, MB youth garnered interest as a pressure group within the Brotherhood, a key player in organizing and sustaining demonstrations, and a potential threat to the organization's unity and cohesion. This has given rise to a narrative that MB youth are more "revolutionary" than their cautious senior leadership, a dynamic that could create future schisms within the organization.

While this view contains an element of truth, it obscures the fact that much of what Western academics and policymakers know about MB youth is confined to the narrow slice of individuals most outspoken in their criticism of the parent organization. And while the break-away factions are an important development, the attention they get often obscures the broad swath of MB youth who remain committed adherents. This chapter aims to provide a better understanding of who exactly are Muslim Brotherhood youth—including those who have left the organization and those who have remained.

The Paradox that Is the MB Youth

The central paradox regarding the image of MB youth is that most of what has been written about them is actually about individuals who have left the organization. Put another way, the faces of MB youth best known to the West are mainly ex-Muslim Brotherhood. The youth wing of the Brotherhood first garnered interest in the late 2000s, when a number of MB youth bloggers burst onto the scene.⁴ These individuals attracted attention due to the platform they were employing (social media) and their willingness to criticize the Brotherhood's positions and organizational practices. It also didn't hurt that some of these bloggers—such as Ibrahim al-Hudaiby, the grandson of the group's second Gen-

⁴ Marc Lynch, "Young Brothers in Cyberspace," *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, Vol. 37, No. 245, Winter 2007.

eral Guide⁵—hailed from MB aristocracy, making their criticism of the organization that much more compelling. But al-Hudaiby has since left the Brotherhood, as have fellow bloggers ‘Abdelmoneim Mahmoud and Mustafa al-Naggar.⁶

More recently, the symbols of MB youth are individuals who took leadership roles in the January 25 Revolution. These include the likes of Islam Lutfi and Muhammad al-Qasas, who were chosen as MB representatives to the Youth Revolution Coalition (YRC), which was formed as an umbrella group to coordinate interaction between the youth and the transitional authorities in the early days after the Revolution.⁷ However, Lutfi and al-Qasas, like their counterparts Muhammad ‘Abbas and ‘Abderahman al-Haridy, were separated from the Brotherhood after they formed a political party in violation of the MB’s policy that its membership could only belong to the organization’s own political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP).

Research on these former members points to an important dynamic: The Muslim Brotherhood has lost some of its brightest young talent due to a general inflexibility, strict adherence to hierarchy, and lack of opportunity for youth to hold leadership positions. But focusing on those who have left can mask another dynamic that is just as important: The West has little understanding of the vast majority of MB youth who have remained committed followers of the organization. Some are loyal foot soldiers who adhere to the group’s principle of “listen and obey,” while others hold views similar to their counterparts who have left or been separated from the Brotherhood but have chosen to remain with the Brotherhood to pursue reform from within.⁸ The United States has much to gain in learning more about this broader

⁵ The highest leadership position in the Muslim Brotherhood is the General Guide, who is elected by the organization’s executive apparatus known as the Guidance Bureau.

⁶ Al-Hudaiby and Mahmoud work in journalism while al-Naggar cofounded the Justice Party and was elected as a member of parliament (MP) in the 2011 elections for the now dissolved lower house.

⁷ Ashraf El Sherif, “Egypt’s New Islamists: Emboldening Reform from Within,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, January 12, 2012.

⁸ Interview with a youth leader of the FJP, Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012 (in Arabic).

spectrum of MB youth: Not only could the youth wing be an important avenue for expanding U.S. engagement with the Brotherhood, as argued in this report, but its members will also eventually become the leaders of a powerful organization in a country pivotal to U.S. strategic interests.

The Brotherhood and Its Youth by the Numbers

Analysts differ on the precise size of the Muslim Brotherhood, but MB watchers estimate the organization as comprising 600,000 members, with leadership claiming more than 700,000 adherents.⁹ Of course, determining membership size is complicated by the fact that during the decades in which the group operated as an officially banned—although sometimes tolerated—group, MB leadership was understandably wary of disclosing information that could jeopardize its organizational security.¹⁰

Estimating the size of the Brotherhood's ranks is difficult not only because of the leadership's reluctance to provide an open accounting of its membership, but also because of the different levels of membership within the organization. Affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood can begin as soon as children reach school age, when they can be enrolled in the MB's scout program, known as "cubs and flowers" (*al-Ashbāl wa al-Zaharāt*).¹¹ When the scouts reach secondary school they are eligible for the MB's student program. Becoming a full-fledged member of the Muslim Brotherhood does not begin until at least secondary school and is based on an indoctrination process that can take months or even years. A recruit is initially classified as a *muhibb* (friend), a phase during

⁹ The figure of 600,000 is cited by Eric Trager, "The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood: Grim Prospects for a Liberal Egypt", *Foreign Affairs*, September–October 2011, p. 126. In a May 2011 interview on state television, the General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Muhammad Badi', claimed that membership had surpassed 700,000.

¹⁰ Interview with midranking member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo, Egypt, January 23, 2012 (in Arabic). See also, Hosam Tamam, 2007, p. 9.

¹¹ Interview with former youth member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo, Egypt, April 12, 2012

which the individual is subject to vetting and training. After passing through several stages, the recruit can eventually become an *akh 'amil*, the designation for a full dues-paying member.¹²

Yet another layer of complexity is that the Muslim Brotherhood has established a political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), that is theoretically independent, although that distinction is blurred by the Brotherhood's policy that members are prohibited from joining any other party. This means that the MB has essentially transferred its active membership to the party rolls of the FJP, excepting a relatively small number of individuals who have been separated from the Brotherhood for refusing to abide by this rule. However, it is likely that the size of the FJP exceeds the size of the Muslim Brotherhood because the FJP also includes individuals who support the party but are not official MB members. The FJP claims its membership is 25 percent larger than that of the Brotherhood and approaching one million,¹³ although these figures are sometimes criticized as overly optimistic.¹⁴

Given the weight of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the youthfulness of the country's population, it should not be surprising that MB youth make up a significant demographic. The MB defines its "youth" as members under the age of 35.¹⁵ There is no hard data on the size of the youth cohort, although a reasonable estimate can be derived from the fact that roughly 35 percent of Egypt's population is between the ages of 15 and 35 and that the Brotherhood is thought to be broadly representative of society. This ratio is also consistent with the Brotherhood's own estimates, as those interviewed estimated that Brotherhood youth comprise between 35 percent and 50 percent of

¹² Khalil al-'Anani, 2007, p. 113.

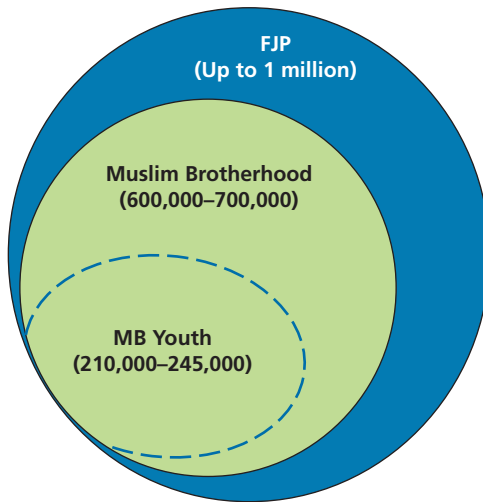
¹³ "25% min 'Adā' Hizb al-Hurriya wa al-'Adala Laysu Ikhwān" ["25 Percent of the Members of the Freedom and Justice Party are not Muslim Brotherhood Members"], *Al-Yawm al-Sabi'*, May 17, 2011 (in Arabic).

¹⁴ "Shabāb al-Ikhwān Yushakikūn fī Tasrīhāt Abu Baraka 'an 'Adad 'Adā' al-Hurriya wa al-'Adala wa alatī Qāl inha Iqtarabat min al-Milyun" ["Muslim Brotherhood Youth Question the Statements of Abu Baraka on the Number of Freedom and Justice Party Members that He Said Is Approaching One Million"], *Al-Muraqib*, November 1, 2011 (in Arabic).

¹⁵ Interview with a youth leader of the Freedom and Justice Party, Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012 (in Arabic).

the organization's total membership.¹⁶ Applying the more conservative 35 percent figure to the estimate of 600,000 members yields a youth cohort of 210,000, while applying that same figure to the Brotherhood's estimate of 700,000 yields a youth cohort of 245,000. For the purposes of this study, suffice it to say that the MB youth cohort is likely to encompass several hundred thousand individuals with varying degrees of commitment to the Brotherhood (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1
Membership of the Muslim Brotherhood



RAND MG1247-1.1

¹⁶ Interview with midranking member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo, Egypt, January 23, 2012 (in Arabic); Interview with four members of the Muslim Brotherhood youth, Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012 (in Arabic); Interview with an FJP youth secretary, Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012 (in Arabic); Interview with MB youth member of the organization's Foreign Affairs Committee, Cairo, Egypt April 10, 2012 (in Arabic).

The Role of MB Youth in the Revolution

In what has proved to be their most influential moment to date, MB youth pushed their senior leadership to support the January 25 Revolution. When activists urged demonstrations to coincide with Egypt's national police day on January 25, 2011, Brotherhood leadership explained their refusal to join on the grounds that the call to protest was issued online and thus the authenticity of the source could not be verified.¹⁷ More likely, MB leadership feared exposing its leaders to arrest before the demonstrations had reached the critical mass that would justify such a risk. Despite the reservations of their leadership, MB youth lobbied for permission to participate in the rallies and eventually got it, but with conditions: They would have to participate as individuals, not under the banner of the Muslim Brotherhood, and they would have to depart Tahrir Square prior to a 5 p.m. curfew set by MB leadership.¹⁸ The youth complied with the first condition but largely ignored the second, and within three days, the leadership's conditional support morphed into the Muslim Brotherhood's full embrace of the uprising.

During the 18 days that culminated in Mubarak's ouster, MB youth distinguished themselves through their prior experience in street politics. Not only did their participation swell the ranks of the demonstrators, they also provided expertise and organizational know-how. By all accounts, this was crucial in beating back the thugs and "counter-demonstrators" dispatched by the state, such as in the infamous "battle of the camels" when MB youth helped stymie the regime's effort to intimidate protestors and clear Tahrir Square.¹⁹ MB youth not only operated as

¹⁷ "Al-Ikhwān Lan Tushārik fī Muzhāharāt 25 Yanayer" ["The Brothers Will Not Participate in the January 25th Demonstrations"], *Al-Dustur*, January 19, 2011 (in Arabic).

¹⁸ Interview with former Muslim Brotherhood member, Cairo, Egypt, January 22, 2012 (in Arabic).

¹⁹ Dina Shehata, "Al-Harakāt al-Shabābiya wa Thawrat 25 Yanāyer" ["The Youth Movements and the January 25 Revolution"], Strategic Papers series, Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 2011 (in Arabic) p. 34; Marwa Awad and Hugo Dixon, "Inside the Egyptian Revolution," Reuters, April 13, 2011; For the Brotherhood's own account of its role in the battle of the camels, see Muhammad Sa'id, "Mawqi'at al-Jamal . . . Yawm al-Furqān" ["The Battle of the Camels . . . Day of Truth"], *Al-Hurriya wa al-'Adala*, February 2, 2012 (in Arabic).

the “muscle” protecting their fellow demonstrators, they also performed important services such as staffing the field hospitals that treated the wounded, and organizing demonstrators to carry out the mundane tasks required to sustain the protestors’ presence in Tahrir.²⁰

Generations as a Unit of Analysis

Other than belonging to the under-35 age cohort and sharing a current or prior affiliation with the Brotherhood, there are no definitive characteristics that can be ascribed to MB youth: Like any category of individuals, MB youth exhibit significant diversity within their own ranks. The differences are further accentuated in this case by the fact that the category encompasses both individuals who belong or once belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. Despite the fact that all MB youth have chosen—at one time or another—to join a religious organization devoted to Islamicizing society from the bottom up, these individuals vary considerably in how they conceptualize the role of religion in public life, how best to operationalize *shari‘a* law, how to prioritize the challenges facing post-Revolution Egypt, etc.

However, this caveat does not mean that generations are not a useful unit of analysis for examining the MB. The particular historical experiences of different generations within the organization affect how each tends to view the Brotherhood and its project. As in most cases, a singular focus on generational divides will miss the fact that age cohorts are not determinative of mentality.²¹ Indeed, if one accepts the notion that MB youth are—in the main—more “progressive” than prior generations, then the twenty-somethings of the organization actually have a great deal in common with 60-year-old ‘Abdelmoneim

²⁰ “Al-Murshid al-‘Āmm: Misr Tahtāj ila Ra’is Tawāfuqi,” [“The General Guide: Egypt Is in Need of a Consensus President”], *Ikhwan*, December 6, 2011 (in Arabic); Interview with MB youth member of the organization’s Foreign Affairs Committee, Cairo, Egypt, April 10, 2012 (in Arabic)

²¹ For readers interested in the challenge of defining generations or employing them as a unit of analysis, the authors recommend: Karl Mannheim, “The Sociological Problem of Generations,” *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge, 1998.

Abu al-Futuh, who also has pressed for democratizing the Brotherhood's internal practices. Similarly, one could argue that urban-rural divides or socioeconomic status are equally good, if not better, predictors of mentality.

This study does not privilege generational divides over other variables such as geography or class. It uses generational divides as a lens for examining splits in the organization while recognizing that age is not the only factor at play. In doing so, the study asserts that the particular historical experiences of different generations are one factor in explaining why MB senior leadership often sees the world differently from the organization's "middle generation" or youth. In particular, the study focuses on the formative experience of the *mihna* (ordeal) for older generations of the Muslim Brotherhood in contrast to the Kifaya movement and January 25 Revolution that are the common points of reference for MB youth.²² These very different historical experiences—and the different world views that they shaped—can help explain tensions within the Brotherhood that challenge its organizational cohesion.

National-Level Politics

One way to analyze MB youth is to look at the various domains in which they are active. The first domain, which has already been alluded to, is national-level politics. Today, current or former Brotherhood youth are active within at least six political parties, although the vast majority are members of the officially sanctioned FJP.

Although Muslim Brotherhood youth played a key role during the January 25 Revolution and many prominent youth figures have demanded a greater say in the group's decisionmaking, MB youth are generally marginalized within both the Brotherhood and FJP leadership structure. For example, the 17 men comprising the Muslim Brotherhood's Guidance Bureau, which operates as the group's executive

²² Kifaya was a broad protest movement that emerged in Egypt in 2004 demanding political reform. Activists held demonstrations against the constitutional amendments introduced by Mubarak in 2005 as well as against Mubarak's bid for a fifth term that same year.

apparatus and highest echelon of decisionmaking authority, have an average age of 61, with no figure under the age of 49 (see Table 1.1). Indeed, according to the Brotherhood's own bylaws, members of the Guidance Bureau must be at least 40 to be considered for the office.²³

Table 1.1
Ages of Guidance Bureau Members^a

Name	Position	DOB	Age
Muhammad Badi'	General Guide	8/7/1943	69
Rashad Bayoumi	Deputy to the General Guide	1935	76
Khairat al-Shater	Deputy to the General Guide	5/4/1950	62
Juma'a Amin	Deputy to the General Guide	1934	77
Mahmoud 'Izat	Deputy to the General Guide	8/13/1944	68
Mahmoud Husayn	Secretary General	7/16/1947	64
Usama Nasir al-Din	Member	1956	56
Mahmoud Ghozlan	Member	1948	63
Mahmoud Abu Zayd	Member	1/2/1956	56
Muhammad 'Ali Bashar	Member	2/14/1951	61
'Abderahman al-Barr	Member	06/1963	49
Sa'd al-Husayni	Member	2/18/1959	52
Muhi Hamid	Member	11/30/1960	51
Mustafa al-Ghunaymi	Member	8/3/1955	57
Husam Abu Bakr	Member	1962	50
Muhammad Ibrahim	Member	1951	61
'Abdelazim Abu Sayf al-Sharqawi	Member	4/16/1950	62
Average Age:			61

^a Dates of birth in this table and subsequent tables were pulled from Ikhwan Wiki, a Wikipedia-like portal that is maintained by the Muslim Brotherhood.

²³ As a point of comparison, 25 is the age threshold to be eligible to serve in Egyptian parliament.

The situation hardly improves when one looks at the FJP: Of the 235 members of the party elected to parliament in the 2011–2012 elections, no representative from the FJP is younger than 41.²⁴ The three highest leaders within the party average 59 years of age with the youngest among them 58 (see Table 1.2). Moreover, given that the FJP operates as a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood and that its designated leaders—Mursi, al-'Arayan, and al-Katatni—were all previously members of the MB Guidance Office, it is doubtful whether the FJP can really be considered independent from the even more aged leadership of its umbrella organization.

Within the FJP's organizational structure, MB youth are represented via the apparatus of the "youth secretariat" (*amānat al-shabāb*). Specifically, the FJP elects a youth leader for each governorate whose role is to represent the youth membership vis-à-vis the senior leadership, as well as to prepare the youth for participation in party politics. According to a youth secretary of the FJP, the goal of the youth secretariat is to provide "political acculturation" (*al-tathqīf al-siyāsī*) for the party's future leaders.²⁵ That said, most of the activities of the youth secretariats, such as meeting with the youth wings of other parties and organizing conferences and soccer tournaments, appear designed for recruitment and strengthening bonds among the party's youth membership.

Table 1.2
Ages of FJP Leadership^a

Name	Position	DOB	Age
Muhammad Mursi	Party Head	1951	60
'Essam al-'Arayan	Deputy Party Head	4/28/1954	58
Muhammad Sa'd al-Katatni	Secretary General	4/3/1952	60
Average Age:			59

^a Since Mursi resigned his post as party head after winning the presidency, al-'Arayan is filling the position until a successor is named.

²⁴ The FJP's youngest representative in parliament is Khalid Muhammad of Cairo.

²⁵ Interview with an FJP youth secretary, Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012.

Where youth do play an important role is in providing outreach for both the MB and the FJP. For example, youth are often used for tasks such as distributing meat during ‘Eid al-Adha, putting up campaign flyers, directing voters to polling places, cleaning public spaces as a public service, etc.²⁶ Put another way, youth serve as the foot soldiers who show the Brotherhood’s commitment to the people’s welfare. Given the importance of street politics in Egypt, MB youth also serve as “muscle” when the organization participates in this arena. MB youth often provide security at public demonstrations, regulating the flow of protestors into public squares. And when demonstrations target the Brotherhood itself, MB youth may be deployed to insulate senior leaders from public outcry or field counterdemonstrations to drown out opposition.²⁷

There is a great deal of historical continuity in the role of MB youth. During the middle of the twentieth century, MB youth were organized into *jawwala*, or rovers, that were used by the organization to implement public service projects and provide internal security during times of political upheaval.²⁸ The rovers were also used as a counterbalance to the presence of the nationalist Wafd party. (This is not meant to imply that MB youth operate as a paramilitary force, but rather to draw attention to the historic role of MB youth as an important actor in Egyptian street politics.)

Breakaway Parties

Much has been made of the MB breakaway parties, but these groups should not be conflated with MB youth. The five breakaway parties, listed in Table 1.3, are slightly younger than the Muslim Brotherhood, but only one, the Egyptian Current, is actually *led* by MB youth. The

²⁶ Freedom and Justice Party website, “Shabāb Hizb al-Hurriya wa al-‘Adala fi Hamlat li Tandhif Shawāri‘ Qariyat Abis al-Thaniya,” [“Freedom and Justice Party Youth in a Campaign to Clean the Streets of Abis al-Thaniya Village”], November 23, 2011 (in Arabic).

²⁷ “Ishtibākāt bi al-Ayadi bayn Shabāb al-Ikhwān wa Alāf al-Mutazhāhirin amam Majlis al-Sha‘b” [“Fistfights Between Muslim Brotherhood Youth and Thousands of Demonstrators in Front of the Lower House”], *Al-Masry al-Yawm*, February 1, 2012 (in Arabic).

²⁸ Mitchell, 1969, p. 202.

Table 1.3
MB Splinter Parties

Party Name (Arabic)	Party Name (English)	Founder	Other Key Figures
الوسط	The Center (al-Wasat)	Abu al-'Ala Madi	'Essam Sultan
النهضة	Renaissance (an-Nahda)	Ibrahim al-Za'frani	Muhammad Habib
السلام و التنمية	Peace and Development	Hamid al-Dafrawi	
الريادة	Exploration	Khalid Dawud	Haithem Abu Khalil; 'Abdelmajid al-Dib; Muhammad Haikel
التيار المصري	The Egyptian Current	Islam Lutfi	Muhammad al-Qasas; Muhammad Abbas; Asma' Mahfouz

largest and most established of those splinter groups is al-Wasat, or the Center party. Founded by Abu al-'Ala Madi in the mid 1990s,²⁹ al-Wasat was driven by its founder's belief that political action must be separated from *da'wa* activities (religious proselytizing) and that political parties should be based on civil norms in which all citizens—regardless of religious affiliation—are eligible to become members of the party.³⁰ These two principles distinguished al-Wasat from the Muslim Brotherhood, which at the time of al-Wasat's defection was still practicing Hassan al-Banna's model of an all-encompassing orga-

²⁹ Al-Wasat was not approved as an official political party until after the January 25 Revolution. Its founders submitted applications to become a party in 1996, 1998, 2005, and 2009, but were refused each time. See the section "About al-Wasat" on the party's website (in Arabic), 2011.

³⁰ Abu al-'Ala Madi, *Ru'iyat al-Wasat fi al-Siyāsa wa al-Mujtama'*, [Al-Wasat's Vision of Politics and Society], Al-Shuruq, 2007, pp. 119–122.

nization that mixed politics, social work, and *da'wa*, and had yet to create avenues for Coptic participation.³¹

The Muslim Brotherhood has since embraced—at least rhetorically—many of al-Wasat's positions. A senior MB leader, Muhammad al-Baltagi, has gone so far as to argue that there is no longer any real difference between the FJP and al-Wasat.³² Even al-Wasat concedes that many of the original positions distinguishing al-Wasat from the Brotherhood melted away after the MB pledged to separate its socio-religious activities from its political activities and admit Copts as members of the FJP.³³ Whether one believes the Brotherhood has sincerely adopted these principles or not, the mere fact that it has embraced many of al-Wasat's positions demonstrates the influence of al-Wasat in laying down issue markers that the Muslim Brotherhood feels compelled to respond to and often co-opts.

While the MB splinter groups do tend to be more “reformist” than the Brotherhood, they are only slightly more youthful. The breakaway parties are considered in this study because while the *leadership* of these groups is often drawn from the same generation as the MB leaders, MB youth are an important *constituency* for the splinter groups. Moreover, these parties' relatively progressive positions on female participation, inclusion of minorities, and interpretations of Islamic law make them potential partners for U.S. engagement with Egyptian Islamists.

The leadership of al-Wasat and an-Nahda tend to share a common profile of having cut their teeth in university politics in the 1970s before

³¹ The Brotherhood's view of itself as an all-encompassing organization that transcends party politics, charitable work, or religious proselytizing is best captured in the oft-quoted address of its founder, Hasan al-Banna, at the group's fifth conference in February, 1939, when he noted, “The Muslim Brothers are a Salafist call . . . Sunni order . . . Sufi truth . . . political body . . . sporting group . . . scientific and cultural league . . . economic company and social thought.”

³² “Egypt's Vote Puts Emphasis on Split Over Religious Rule,” *New York Times*, December 3, 2011.

³³ Interview with al-Wasat spokesman in Cairo, May 12, 2011; According to party officials, of the FJP's 8821 founding members, 93 are Copts. See “Al-Ikhwān Tataqaddam bi Awrāq Hizb al-Hurriya wa al-'Adāla . . . wa al-Katatni: 93 Qutbīan min al-Mu'sasīn” [“The Muslim Brotherhood Submits its Papers for the Freedom and Justice Party . . . and al-Katatni: 93 Copts among its Founders”], *Al-Badil*, May 18, 2011 (in Arabic).

continuing their activism in professional syndicates that were important arenas for Islamist politics in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, al-Wasat's founder, Abu al-'Ala Madi, was the president of the student union at Minya University from 1977–1979 before becoming deputy secretary general of the Egyptian Engineers' Syndicate from 1987–1995.³⁴ Similarly, Abu al-Futuh, an independent figure but close with an-Nahda's leadership, was president of the student union at Cairo University in 1975 before becoming the head of the Egyptian Doctors Syndicate in 1988.³⁵ These individuals are now in their fifties and early sixties but are often associated with a spirit of activism and reform from their university days, and their current political projects are aimed at today's youth.

Within the spectrum of MB splinter groups, the Egyptian Current is the only one that is youth-led. Of the party's eleven parliamentary candidates whose ages could be discerned,³⁶ they average just 31 years of age (see Table 1.4). And of all the parties that contested the 2011 parliamentary elections, the Egyptian Current ran the youngest male and female candidates—Muhammad Gamal and Sumiya 'Adil al-Turki, respectively. The leader of the party, Islam Lutfi, is just 34—about half the age of the Muslim Brotherhood's leader and 26 years younger than his counterpart in the FJP.

The respective orientations of the MB and the Egyptian Current reflect important distinctions. Specifically, the point of departure for the Brotherhood's senior leadership is the so-called *mihna* (ordeal) of the 1960s, a brutal period in which a faction within the group advocated violence and members of the group faced exclusion from public life, large-scale arrests, and often torture. This experience, and in particular the repression that culminated in Sayyid Qutb's hanging,³⁷ reinforced the importance of organization security, the value of strict leadership hierarchy, and the necessity of accommodating political

³⁴ Abu al-'Ala Madi's biography is available at the Marefa website, undated.

³⁵ Abdelmoneim Abu al-Futuh's personal web page.

³⁶ The Egyptian Current ran a total of 30 candidates in the 2011 parliamentary elections.

³⁷ Sayyid Qutb was a leader within the Muslim Brotherhood who argued that the Egyptian state had usurped God's sovereignty and therefore was part of the age of ignorance (*al-jāhiliya*).

Table 1.4
Ages of Egyptian Current Parliamentary Candidates

Name	Position	DOB	Age
^a Islam Lutfi	Head of the Party	6/10/1978	34
^a Muhammad al-Qasas	Candidate	3/5/1974	38
Muhammad al-Tayeb	Candidate	1984	28
Asma' Mahfouz	Candidate	2/1/1985	27
^a Muhammad Gamal	Candidate	10/20/1986	25
^a Hasan al-Baghdady	Candidate	3/13/1979	33
'Abderahman Faris	Candidate	4/10/1981	31
^a Muhammad 'Abbas	Candidate	5/12/1985	27
^a 'Abderahman Haridy	Candidate	12/5/1977	34
Sumiya 'Adil al-Turki	Candidate	1986	26
Yasir 'Abdelsalam	Candidate	6/15/1970	42
Average Age:			31

^a Indicates the individual was a former member of the MB.

authorities so as not to expose the group to out-and-out state repression.³⁸ The result is a cautious, secretive, top-down leadership style that is particularly evident in the persona of the current General Guide, Muhammad Badi', who not coincidentally, was part of the group arrested with Sayyid Qutb.³⁹

On the other hand, the January 25 Revolution imparted very different lessons for the Egyptian Current's leaders. Specifically, the revolution showed the power of direct action, the value of combining

³⁸ Interview with journalist who covers the MB and is a former member of the group, Cairo, Egypt, January 23, 2012.

³⁹ "Al-Qiyāda al-Jadīda lil Ikhwān al-Misrīyīn bayn al-Rādīkālīya al-Qutbīya wa Rafā' Khutūt al-Taswīya ma' al-Sulta," ["The New Leadership of the Egyptian Brothers: Between Qutbist Radicalism and Taking Steps to Make a Deal with the Authority"], *Al-Hayat*, February 9, 2010 (in Arabic).

efforts with non-Islamist forces, and the appeal of an agenda that transcends narrow ideology. These tendencies are reflected in the Egyptian Current's composition, which includes not only former MB members like Lutfi and al-Qasas, but also non-Islamists who made a name for themselves in the revolution. Indeed, the Egyptian Current considers itself "postideological" and does not identify as "Islamist" but rather as a broad coalition seeking practical solutions to the nation's challenges.⁴⁰ This means the party is often more closely associated with a constellation of revolutionary groups than the Islamist milieu its leaders are drawn from. The Egyptian Current's frequent cooperation with other revolutionary groups like the April 6 Movement and its choice to run for parliament on the Continuing Revolution list reinforced its place within that spectrum.

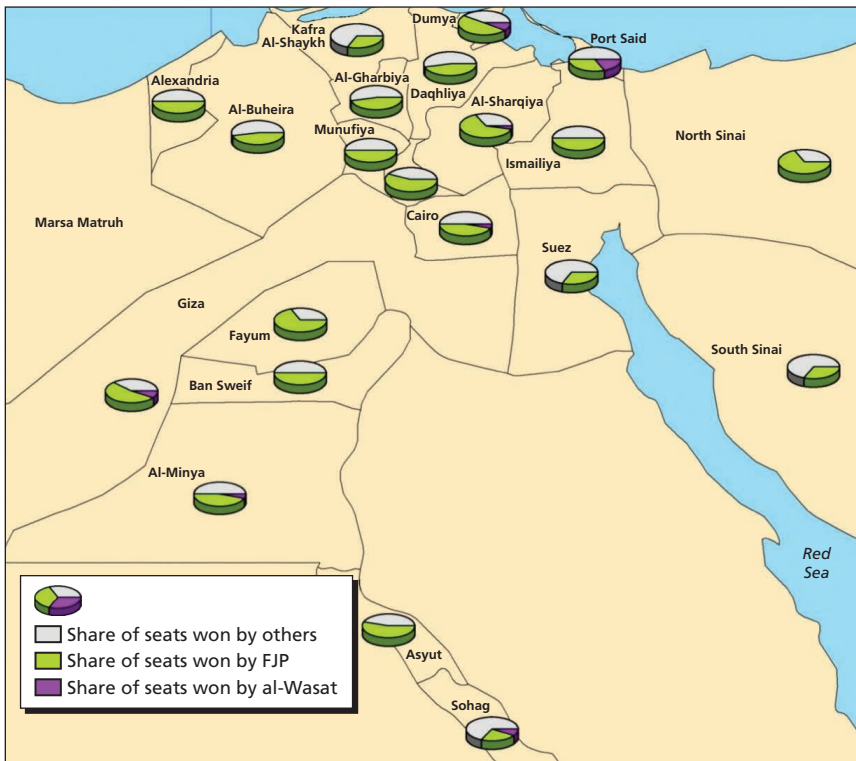
There is also overlap between the perspectives of the Egyptian Current and Abu al-Futuh. Both oppose the Brotherhood's mixing of missionary work with political action. Similarly, they also both chafe at the MB's strict hierarchy and have been targets of MB censure due to their reformist impulses. Abu al-Futuh actively courted the youth vote, for example, promising to select a youth figure to serve as his vice president, and unsurprisingly, many Egyptian Current members supported his presidential run. Abu al-Futuh's campaign coordinator for all of Upper Egypt, Muhammad Gamal, was the Egyptian Current's parliamentary candidate in al-Minya. And Muhammad 'Abbas, a prominent Egyptian Current leader, served on Abu al-Futuh's campaign staff.

While the breakaway parties are more closely aligned with Western attitudes on religious freedom, democracy, and women's empowerment, their potential as a partner for engagement is limited by two basic constraints. The first, which is further developed in Chapter Three, is the vulnerability of these groups to a loss of legitimacy should they become associated with the West. The second is that their political influence pales in comparison to that of the FJP. Indeed, only one of the five breakaway groups, al-Wasat, was able to muster the 5,000 signatures required to form an official political party before the

⁴⁰ Interviews with Egyptian Current members in Cairo and Alexandria, January 22 and 27, 2012, (in Arabic).

2011–2012 parliamentary elections. Al-Wasat invited Renaissance, Peace and Development, and Exploration to run on its party list; however, their combined efforts yielded only ten of the 498 seats in the lower house. For its part, the Egyptian Current ran 30 candidates under the Continuing Revolution list but failed to win a single seat. The weak showing of the breakaway parties stands in stark contrast to the FJP, which won 47 percent of the seats in the lower house despite contesting

Figure 1.2
Electoral Performance of FJP Versus Splinter Groups^a



RAND MG1247-1.2

^a This graphic is derived from the final election results published in *al-Ahram*, January 21, 2012. Special thanks to Steve Worman, who created the map.

less than 80 percent of the total seats. Figure 1.2 illustrates the strength and breadth of the FJP's performance in contrast to al-Wasat.⁴¹

The University

In addition to national-level politics, MB youth are also active in student unions in Egypt's universities. The significance of the university as an arena of Brotherhood activism is the result of several factors. Most importantly, the university serves as a fertile ground for recruitment. Indeed, when tracing the initiation of many Egyptians into Islamic activism, the university experience—in addition to family ties—is frequently cited as the initial point of entry.⁴² The university is an ideal venue for recruitment given that students are at an age when they are open to new ideas, enjoying greater independence, and refining their adult personalities and world views. It is also a setting that plays to MB strengths, and in particular, the organization's ability to provide a sense of purpose, belonging, and social services to those removed from their communities. The Brotherhood has traditionally filled this vacuum by involving students in Islamic study circles, sponsoring social activities, and defraying some of the costs of a university education by providing services such as subsidized books, field trips, and even clothing.⁴³

The second important role of the university is to hone messaging and provide young leaders a forum in which to build their political skills. Thus, the MB's issue sets and campaign themes are remarkably similar for both parliamentary elections and student union races. For example, many of the campaign slogans employed by the Brotherhood in the 2011 parliamentary elections were poll tested in student union elections in late 2010, including *al-Mushāraka la al-Mughālaba* (Par-

⁴¹ The Salafist bloc won 24 percent of the seats in the lower house but is not considered a splinter group of the Muslim Brotherhood.

⁴² See Muntasir al-Zayyat, *Al-Gama'at al-Islamiyah: Ru'iah min al-Dakhil*, [The Islamic Groups: An Inside Perspective], El-Mahrosa Publishing and Distribution, 2005; and Geneive Abdo, *No God But God: Egypt and the Triumph of Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

⁴³ Al-Anani, 2007, p. 121.

icipation not Domination).⁴⁴ That theme was embodied in the MB's approach of limiting its field of candidates so as not to sweep elections and play into fears of "one man, one vote, one time." In 2011, for example, MB students limited themselves to contesting 30 percent of the seats in the student union elections of Suez Canal University,⁴⁵ mirroring an approach the MB took in previous parliamentary contests.⁴⁶

Student unions also serve as an important conveyor belt and testing ground for MB leaders. 'Essam al-'Arayan, the FJP's deputy leader, got his start as head of the student union at Cairo University before becoming president of the National Student Union for all Egyptian universities. Nearly all of the breakaway parties are headed by former icons within the student movement, including Abu al-'Ala Madi of al-Wasat, Ibrahim al-Za'farani of an-Nahda, and presidential candidate Abu al-Futuh. Indeed, Abu al-Futuh is perhaps best known to this day for brazenly challenging President Anwar Sadat in a forum at Cairo University when Abu al-Futuh was still a young student leader.⁴⁷

Today, many prominent MB youth have developed political experience—and cache among their peers—by establishing a parallel student union to the state-sanctioned union in Egypt's universities. Protesting what they alleged was the rigged nature of student elections and a student code that outlawed political activity, MB youth led the effort to set up an independent student union in the 2007–2008 academic year that eventually included branches in 19 different universi-

⁴⁴ "Tulāb al-Ikhwān Yutiqūn Hamla Islāhiyūn al-Yawm lil Ta'arīf bi Fikr al-Jamā'a wa Jama' Tawqī'āt al-Matālib al-Sab'a" ["Muslim Brotherhood Students Kick Off the Reformers Campaign Today to Collect Signatures for the Seven Demands"], *Al-Masry al-Yawm*, September 27, 2010 (in Arabic).

⁴⁵ "Al-Ahad: Intikhābāt Ittihād al-Tulāb bi Jāmi'at al-Qanā ["Sunday: Student Union Elections in Suez Canal University"], *Ikhwan*, March 29, 2011, (in Arabic).

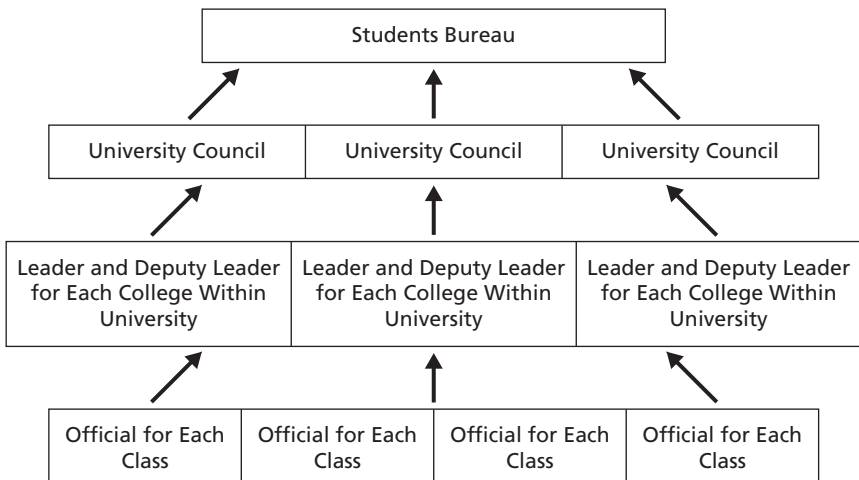
⁴⁶ In 2005, the Muslim Brotherhood (running as independents) contested 150 of the 434 seats open to direct election, or 35 percent of the seats. In 2011–2012, the FJP initially promised not to contest more than 50 percent of the seats, but actually contested more than 75 percent of the seats in the lower house.

⁴⁷ Abdo, 2000, pp. 130–131.

ties.⁴⁸ By attracting broad participation and high electoral turnout, the effort succeeded in embarrassing the regime's attempts to control student politics. It also demonstrated the flexibility of MB youth in reaching out to students from different ideological orientations. In fact, the MB youth specifically created an organization, The Student Front for Change, which was intended to accommodate liberal-leaning students who shared the Brotherhood's opposition to the regime but differed in their preferred prescription.

The importance of the university as an arena of activity for the Muslim Brotherhood is further demonstrated by the presence of a "Students Bureau" that reports directly to the Brotherhood's Guidance Office. The MB's integration of students into its organizational hierarchy is depicted in Figure 1.3. In this organizational model, a student leader is designated as responsible for each class (i.e., freshman through senior) in each college of each university. From that broad pool of class officials, a leader and deputy leader are selected to represent each col-

Figure 1.3
Organizational Structure of MB Students Bureau



RAND MG1247-1.3

⁴⁸ Interview with a youth leader of the Freedom and Justice Party, Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012 (in Arabic).

lege within a university. Those leaders are then further winnowed down to form a council for each university. Finally, a subset of those council members form the Muslim Brotherhood Students Bureau, which reports directly to the MB Guidance Office—the equivalent of the organization’s executive apparatus.⁴⁹

Conclusion

While MB youth do share certain characteristics (namely, that they are current or former members of the MB under the age of 35), they are not monolithic. The term encompasses those who broke off from the organization and those who remain committed to it. In addition to variable levels of commitment to the MB, these individuals are active in several different political parties the Brotherhood has spawned. The greatest concentration of MB youth rests, not surprisingly, in the Brotherhood’s official political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party. In addition to the FJP, smaller constellations of MB youth are members of various breakaway parties, and one of those constellations actually leads the Egyptian Current party.

While current MB youth are marginalized within the leadership of both the Brotherhood and the FJP, they are integrated into the overall organizational structures. In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, the youth wing is represented through the Students Section, which reports directly to the organization’s executive apparatus, the Guidance Bureau. As for the FJP, youth are represented through the youth secretariat, which channels youth participation at the governorate level. MB youth play an important role as foot soldiers who deliver outreach, charity, and public services. Universities also serve as a key source of recruitment and a testing ground for MB youth to develop organizational skills and political acumen.

As for the breakaway parties that have attracted MB youth, most are led by a generation of leaders who cut their teeth in student politics in the 1970s. Only one, the Egyptian Current, can truly be described

⁴⁹ Adapted from al-‘Anani, 2007, p. 118.

as youth-led. The breakaway parties do tend to be more progressive on issues the United States has identified as of particular interest in its bilateral relations with Egypt, including female empowerment, religious freedom, and commitment to the civilian—as opposed to religious—basis of the Egyptian state. On the other hand, these parties have little weight in electoral politics. Only one, al-Wasat, succeeded in capturing any seats in the 2011 parliamentary elections, but won just 10 seats in comparison to the FJP's 235 seats, or 47 percent of the total seats in the lower house. The real significance of the breakaway parties is in laying down markers that the Muslim Brotherhood feels compelled to respond to. Indeed, many of the MB's recent reforms—to include the separation of *da'wa* from political activities and the recruitment of Copts into the membership of the FJP—are drawn straight from the program of al-Wasat.

The factors that drive splits within the Muslim Brotherhood and the MB's ability to maintain organizational unity are explored in the next chapter. But for the purposes of understanding who exactly Muslim Brotherhood youth are, it should be noted that the vast majority of MB youth remain within the fold of the Brotherhood and the FJP. The organization's inflexibility, top-down hierarchy, and lack of opportunity for youth to hold leadership positions have led to a loss of talent as prominent youth figures defected from the organization. But whether out of deference to the organization's principle of "listen and obey" or a preference for reforming the organization from within, the bulk of MB youth remain committed members of the Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood's Generational Challenge

*The Brotherhood is able to control its youth.*¹

—Mahmoud Ghozlan, Official Spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood

Given that Hasan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood when he was just 22 and its membership has always been tilted toward younger generations, it is ironic that today MB youth pose the greatest challenge to the Brotherhood's organizational cohesion. While the Brotherhood is not yet threatened by large-scale defections, an aged leadership and strict adherence to hierarchy is having a stultifying effect on the development of the youth wing. So far, the organization has lost a relatively small number of young adherents, but those who have left are arguably some of the best and brightest. In addition to organizational practices, other drivers of generational splits include differing views on social issues and the appropriate balance between the Brotherhood's missionary work and political activity. These generational divides have been exacerbated by the January 25 Revolution, which increased youth expectations that the role they played in the uprising should entitle them to a greater say in decisionmaking.

¹ "Misr: Ma'rakat Kasr 'Azhm bayn al-Ikhwān wa al-Salafiyīn," ["Egypt: Bone-Breaking Battle between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists"], *Al-Hayat*, December 16, 2011 (in Arabic).

In response to the generational challenge, the Brotherhood has taken a number of mitigating measures to shore up youth support. Leadership has increased dialogue with youth, offered the carrot of internal reform, and selectively used the stick of expulsion. However, these efforts are largely cosmetic and fail to adequately address the deeper problem—adherence to the principle of “listen and obey” that stifles independent thinking. Absent greater say from younger members in decisionmaking, the Brotherhood faces a long-term challenge in sustaining its organizational cohesion.

How Generational Splits Are Treated in the Existing Literature

In the literature that examines generational divides within the Muslim Brotherhood, one particular generation that is variously described as “the middle generation,”² “the younger generation,”³ or even more generically as “the reformists,”⁴ has received particular attention. These terms are used as short hand for the generation of activists who came to prominence through student politics in the 1970s and were subsequently elected to leadership positions in syndicates and professional associations in the 1980s and 1990s. Some of these individuals later became parliamentarians when the Muslim Brotherhood contested seats as independents or in electoral coalitions with recognized political parties. Now in their fifties and early sixties, prominent members of this generation include ‘Essam al-Arayan (born in 1954) and Khairat al-Shater (1950)—two influential figures in today’s MB—as well as ‘Abdelmoneim Abu al-Futuh (1951), and Abu al-‘Ala Madi (1958)—two individuals who have left the MB to pursue their own political projects.⁵

² Wickham, 2002, pp. 189–203.

³ Mona El-Ghobashy, “The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2005, pp. 373–395.

⁴ El Sherif, 2012.

⁵ Muhammad Mursi (b. 1951) is also a member of the “middle generation” although he does not fit the profile of early activism. Mursi did not join the MB until he had already

The principal reason why the “middle generation” is set apart from the other generations of the Muslim Brotherhood is because they did not enter Islamic activism through the door of the Brotherhood but rather as part of *al-Gamā'at al-Islamiya*, or the Islamic Student Associations, that flourished in Egypt's universities in the 1970s.⁶ Only later were the activists from this movement formally integrated into the Muslim Brotherhood. As assessed in these studies, the other defining characteristics of this “middle generation” are their emphasis on direct political action, openness to cooperation with non-Islamists, and more progressive views on women and minority rights. While advancing the field and drawing attention to the importance of generational divides within the organization, one shortcoming of the literature is its tendency to narrowly focus on contrasting a single generation of MB cadre with the organization's most senior leaders, reducing generational divides to a simple dichotomy.⁷ Of course, the Brotherhood is a multi-generational organization with divides that go beyond this single split.

The first scholar to expand on the literature was Khalil al-'Anani, who presents a fuller depiction of the Brotherhood's generational divides. Specifically, al-'Anani identifies four generations within the Muslim Brotherhood that he refers to as the 1960s generation, the 1970s generation, the 1980s and 1990s generation, and the blogger generation.⁸ According to al-'Anani, the defining features of the 1960s generation—meaning those who joined the organization as youth in the 1960s and are now in their late sixties and seventies—is their political cautiousness and conservative interpretation of Islamic values. This generation, of which the current General Guide Muhammad Badi' is the example *par excellence*, was shaped by experiencing the *mihna* (ordeal) firsthand. Many leaders from this generation spent a decade or more in prison and the repression they suffered at the hands of the

received his master's degree and was not active in syndicate politics.

⁶ The Islamic Student Associations should not be conflated with the group of a similar name, *al-Gamā'a al-Islamiya*, that engaged in violence against the state before it eventually renounced that tactic.

⁷ Tamam, 2007, p. 79.

⁸ Al-'Anani, 2007, pp. 112–115.

state is manifested in the prioritization of secrecy and organizational security.

As for the 1970s generation, and again by this al-'Anani means those who came of age in the organization in the 1970s and are now in their fifties and early sixties, this is the same generation described in Wickham's work as the "middle generation" and in el-Ghobashy's work as the "younger generation." Like Wickham and el-Ghobashy, al-'Anani ascribes to them an inclination toward direct political action as well as more liberal views on social issues. To this dichotomy, al-'Anani adds two other generations. He argues that the 1980s and 1990s generation—now in their forties and early fifties—is highly influenced by the conservative old guard, and through the latter's support, controls much of the lower-level administrative positions within the organization. Calling them "neo-traditionalists," al-'Anani argues that this generation is essentially an extension of the old guard. Finally, al-'Anani identifies what he calls the blogger generation, which came to prominence in the mid-2000s through their use of social media. Al-'Anani was writing prior to the January 25 Revolution, but this is the same generation that was most forward-leaning in joining the protests that toppled President Mubarak.

While it is notable that the under-35 generation of MB youth is more tech savvy than its predecessors, the literature tends to exaggerate the importance of the technology itself. What matters is not that many MB youth are bloggers or have Facebook accounts, but that growing up with technology has made many MB youth view the secrecy of the organization as an anachronism. Indeed, until the January 25 Revolution, MB members were prohibited from even bringing pens and paper into meetings for fear that information would be leaked to state security.⁹ These practices are rejected by many MB youth who have grown up in a different environment—one in which technology has enabled information sharing and in which youth are not exposed to the same levels of brutal repression suffered by the senior leadership who lived through the *mihna*.

⁹ Interview with MB youth member of the organization's Foreign Affairs Committee, Cairo, Egypt April 10, 2012 (in Arabic).

The blogger generation's use of technology has also facilitated greater contact and exchange of ideas with other social, political, and religious movements. As noted by one analyst, MB youth "are more open to diverse cultures ranging from liberalism to Salafism since [MB youth] more capable of operating in cyberspace and using modern technology to interact with the world in all its various facets."¹⁰ As a result, these individuals often serve as interlocutors with groups from other ideological orientations—helping to coordinate activities across opposition groups during both the Kifaya movement and the 2011 demonstrations that culminated in the ouster of Mubarak.

The desire by scholars to create clean typologies has also obscured important differences among this generation. The characteristics typically assigned (e.g., tech-savvy, self-critical, socially progressive) are much more applicable to MB youth from urban areas than their counterparts in rural regions. Indeed, MB leadership is banking on the deference to authority and more conservative social values found in Egypt's outlying governorates acting as a check on generational divides. An MB leader interviewed for the project confidently predicted that youth defections would be rare outside of Cairo and Alexandria—Egypt's first and second largest cities.¹¹

The point is also echoed by MB youth themselves. One youth member from a small town in Munufiya governorate remarked that there haven't been any defections in his branch (*shu'ba*) and that in the 2012 presidential elections he only knew of one member supporting Abu al-Futuh rather than the FJP's official candidate and eventual winner, President Mursi.¹² In contrast, a former MB member from Cairo estimated that a fifth of his branch has left the organization since the Revolution and predicted that 40 percent of his youth counterparts

¹⁰ Muhammad 'Abdelhalim, "Fajwa Jiliya: Aba'ad al-Azma bayn Shabab al-Ikhwan wa Qiyadat al-Jama'a ba'd al-Thawra," ["Generational Gap: The Dimensions of the Crisis Between MB Youth and the Leadership of the Brotherhood after the Revolution"], *Al-Siyasa al-Dawliya* journal, April 7, 2012 (in Arabic).

¹¹ Interview with midlevel leader of the MB, Cairo, Egypt, January 23, 2012 (in Arabic).

¹² Interview with MB youth member of the organization's Foreign Affairs Committee, Cairo, Egypt April 10, 2012 (in Arabic).

would vote for Abu al-Futuh.¹³ Even when the urban-rural divide is less stark than a small town in Munufiya governorate versus the national capital, regional differences are clear. Comparing the university experience in Bani Swaif with his return home to al-Minya after graduation, a former MB youth noted that the more cosmopolitan setting of the university—and Bani Swaif’s closer proximity to Cairo—made for a much more dynamic environment in which youth members asserted themselves.¹⁴ The student leader complained that after graduation he felt stifled by the “listen and obey” culture in al-Minya, where youth were more apt to fall in line.

A second body of literature treats the emergence of breakaway Islamist groups under the rubric of “post-Islamism”. First coined by Asef Bayat, the term was intended to describe the reformist trend of Islamism that emerged in 1990s Iran.¹⁵ As defined by Bayat, post-Islamism is “an endeavor to fuse religiosity and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty. It is an attempt to turn the underlying principles of Islamism on its head by emphasizing rights instead of duties, plurality in place of a singular authoritative voice, historicity rather than fixed scriptures, and the future instead of the past.”¹⁶ And while not strictly associated with younger generations, many of the prominent figures cited as post-Islamist are youthful.

The concept of post-Islamism is also associated with the works of Olivier Roy and Giles Kepel, who argue that the emergence of moderate, reform-minded groups signals a failure of traditional Islamist projects that aim to restore an Islamic order that transcends the nation state.¹⁷ Their studies are particularly focused on the role of post-Islamism in marginalizing groups that seek to restore the caliphate or

¹³ Interview with former MB youth member, Cairo, Egypt, April 8, 2012 (in Arabic).

¹⁴ Interview with former youth member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo, Egypt, April 12, 2012.

¹⁵ Asef Bayat, “The Coming of a Post-Islamist Society,” *Critique: Critical Middle East Studies*, No. 9, Fall 1996.

¹⁶ Asef Bayat, “What is Post-Islamism?” *ISIM Review*, No. 16, Autumn 2005.

¹⁷ For a useful discussion of the different conceptualizations of post-Islamism, see Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam*, Routledge, 2007, pp 343–348.

use violence as a means of achieving their goals.¹⁸ Roy and Kepel argue that post-Islamists suffer from a type of false consciousness, inadvertently advancing secular agendas by relegating religion to the private sphere. Unfortunately, their emphasis on post-Islamism as a counter to radical Islam has polarized the term and muddied its meaning among scholars who now mean different things by it.

In the context of MB youth, it is tempting to classify groups such as the Egyptian Current as “post-Islamist.” Indeed, the leaders of this party do not self-identify as Islamist and describe their project as transcending traditional ideological boundaries.¹⁹ The Egyptian Current takes as its starting point that Egyptian society is religious in its orientation and that this influence will necessarily inform politics. Indeed, the party’s name is derived from a book, *The Basic Egyptian Current*, by Islamic thinker Tariq al-Bishri, who describes Egyptian society as religious but not doctrinal. The Egyptian Current embodies this same orientation, attracting individuals who see religion as part of their lives but without espousing a narrow ideological agenda or seeking to implement a specifically Islamist program. This mentality approaches the original meaning of post-Islamism articulated by Bayat but should not be conflated with the more polarized definition of Roy and Kepel.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s Own View of Generational Divides

Former and current MB members rarely talk about generational divides in the same terms as these academic treatments. A common refrain from members of the organization is that while the Muslim Brotherhood, like any organization, must navigate generational differences, its principles transcend these divides. One former member went so far as

¹⁸ Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004; Gilles Kepel, “Islamism Reconsidered,” *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 22, June 2000.

¹⁹ Interview with former Muslim Brotherhood member, Cairo, Egypt, January 22, 2012 (in Arabic); Interview with former Muslim Brotherhood member, Alexandria, Egypt, January 27, 2012 (in Arabic).

to dismiss classifications of the MB along generational lines as part of the imagination of “library researchers.”²⁰

More thoughtful members acknowledge generational divides but tend to see these typologies as overspecified. One leader interviewed for the project assessed the generational challenge facing the Brotherhood as one of competing legitimacies.²¹ He noted that there are three legitimating narratives at play in today’s MB. The first is the “historical legitimacy” of the organization’s senior leadership. Having seen the organization through the crackdown of the 1960s—for which they paid a heavy price—this generation claims leadership on the basis of having kept the MB’s flame alight during its darkest period. The second narrative is the “institutional legitimacy” claimed by the likes of ‘Essam al-Arayan, Khairat al-Shater, Muhammad Mursi, etc., who have held elected positions inside and outside of the organization and can take credit for having positioned the MB to be a strong player in Egypt’s current political scene. While they too have endured hardship, their leadership is based on participating in institutions and developing the MB’s organizational strength. And finally there is the “revolutionary legitimacy” claimed by the MB youth, given their role in the uprising that led to the overthrow of Mubarak. Their claim to leadership comes from having been catalysts in revolutionary change that their predecessors were unable to achieve.

At present, the claimants to historical legitimacy coexist with the claimants to institutional legitimacy in the sense that there is close coordination between these two bases. They do occasionally come into conflict—most notably during the 2009 elections for the Guidance Bureau, and again when Mahdi ‘Akef moved to elevate ‘Essam al-Arayan into an empty seat on the Bureau—but in general they are able to iron out differences and share authority. Since the January 25 Revolution, this has been helped by a natural division in which those who claim institutional legitimacy tend to have a higher profile in

²⁰ Interview with journalist who covers the MB and is a former member of the group, Cairo, Egypt, January 25, 2012 (in Arabic).

²¹ Interview with midlevel leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo, Egypt, January 23, 2012 (in Arabic).

the FJP (as opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood) while those who claim historical legitimacy dominate the Brotherhood's Guidance Bureau.

On the other hand, the most recent legitimating narrative—that MB youth deserve greater say in decisionmaking given their pivotal role in the January 25 Revolution—is not tolerated within the organization. Senior leaders commend the youth on their participation in the Revolution, with the General Guide acknowledging that it was “the youth who changed the face of history” in the 2011 uprising.²² But these statements carefully situate the youth's contribution as part of a broader popular movement—and, conveniently for MB leadership, as the culmination of 80-plus years of activism by the Muslim Brotherhood. Typical of this view is the statement of Muhammad Husayn 'Aysa, a member of the Shura Council—the equivalent of the MB's legislative branch—that the youth “were the basic catalysts of the Revolution but that the Revolution did not stand on their shoulders, it stood on the shoulders of the Muslim Brotherhood and is the product of eighty years of activism.”²³

Put another way, MB youth are lauded for their role in the Revolution so long as they do not claim authority on its basis—or seek to eclipse their elders. So, for example, when several prominent MB youth figures presented demands to their senior leaders at a conference in Cairo in March 2011 and then participated in a demonstration not officially sanctioned by the organization, the leadership showed little tolerance for this independent action and responded by denying the existence of any entity called “Muslim Brotherhood Youth” and withdrawing MB representation from the Youth Revolution Coalition.²⁴

²² Muhammad Badi', speech to the Student Conference of the Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo, September 24, 2012.

²³ “Muhammad Husayn 'Aysa 'Udū Majlis Shūra al-Ikhwān: al-Thawra Qāmat 'ala Aktāf al-Ikhwān wa Lam Taqum 'ala Aktāf al-Shabāb” [“The Revolution Stood on the Shoulders of the Brotherhood and Not on the Shoulders of the Youth”], *Misr al-Jadida*, April 2, 2011 (in Arabic).

²⁴ “Shabāb al-Jamā'a: La Yujad Khilāfāt ma' Qādatina wa al-Ba'd Yuhāwil al-Waqay'a” [“Muslim Brotherhood Youth: There Are No Disagreements with the Leadership and There Are Some Trying to Drive a Wedge”], June 6, 2011 (in Arabic); “Al-Ikhwān Tansahib min I'tilāf al-Thawra ba'd Mushāraka Mumathaliha fi Jum'at al-Ghadab” [“The Brotherhood Pulls Out of the Revolution Coalition after the Participation of its Representatives in the Friday of Rage”], *Al-Badil*, May 28, 2011 (in Arabic).

This amounted to leadership disowning younger MB members such as Muhammad al-Qasas and Islam Lutfi, who belonged to the YRC. When the youths continued to press their case—including demands that they be consulted in decisionmaking inside the organization, for MB members to have the right to join other political parties, and for a genuine separation between the Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party²⁵—they were further ostracized. The episode eventually culminated in the expulsion of five MB youths after they defied the leadership by starting their own political party, the Egyptian Current.

MB youth who supported ‘Abdelmoneim Abu al-Futuh’s presidential candidacy faced a similar response. When the Brotherhood hosted its 2011 annual student conference under the title, “A Generation Builds . . . A Nation Rises,” a young participant asked the organization’s leadership to clarify their position on Abu al-Futuh’s candidacy. The response, which came from the eldest member of the Guidance Bureau, Rashad Bayoumi, left no room for ambiguity. Bayoumi lectured that, “the most important quality of a Brother in the Muslim Brotherhood is commitment [to the principle] of ‘listen and obey’ . . . Those who support [Abu al-Futuh] are committing a clear violation of the Brotherhood’s decision and the decisions of the Guidance Bureau must be carried out.”²⁶ MB youth who ignored the warning and continued to support Abu al-Futuh were separated from the organization. Demonstrating a policy of zero tolerance, the leadership even prohibited MB youth from being among the 30,000 signatories Abu al-Futuh needed to enter the race, threatening to separate the estimated 300 MB youth who took this step of formally endorsing Abu al-Futuh’s candidacy.²⁷

²⁵ The complete demands put forward are available on the Muslim Brotherhood Youth Conference page on Facebook, March 2011 (in Arabic).

²⁶ “Tulāb al-Ikhwān Yasā’lūn wa al-Murshid al-‘Āmm Yujīb,” [“MB Students Ask and the General Guide Answers”], *Ikhwan*, September 26, 2011 (in Arabic).

²⁷ “Azmat al-Ikhwān Tatasā‘ad ba’d Tammasuk al-Shabāb bi Da‘im Abu al-Futuh” [“The Crisis of the Brotherhood Escalates after the Youth Hold Fast in Supporting Abu al-Futuh”], *Al-Masry al-Yawm*, March 15, 2012 (in Arabic).

This divide was only exacerbated when the Brotherhood backtracked on its own promise not to field a presidential candidate by entering Khairat al-Shater (who was later disqualified by the elections board and replaced by Muhammad Mursi) into the race. Many members opposed this flip-flop on the grounds that it would hurt credibility just at a time that the organization was trying to allay fears that it was seeking to dominate Egypt. MB youth who supported Abu al-Futuh were particularly outraged by the seeming hypocrisy of the Brotherhood separating Abu al-Futuh in response to his launching a presidential campaign, only to put forward a candidate of their own.²⁸

Factors Driving Generational Splits Within the Organization

Generational splits within the Muslim Brotherhood are linked to a broader set of issues that threaten organizational cohesion. Most prominent among these are disagreements within the MB's membership over the mission of the organization, views on gender equality and minority rights, the scope of change sought, and the impatience of younger members with strict organizational hierarchy. This issue set has led to historical fractures within the organization and remain animating for today's MB youth as well.

The comprehensiveness of the Muslim Brotherhood's mission is both a strength and weakness of the organization. The broad conception put forth by Hasan al-Banna is ideally suited for embedding members in a community, attracting followers with diverse interests and backgrounds, and maintaining links between the organization and society; assets that help explain the Brotherhood's success in growing its base and commanding popular support. On the other hand, these multiple missions also create challenges when members disagree over how to prioritize among them.

One source of tension is from those who oppose the group's increasingly political orientation, given the view that the organiza-

²⁸ Abdelhalim, 2012.

tion's primary mission should be missionary work that Islamicizes society from below. Not surprisingly, research shows that the bulk of the Brotherhood's membership join for religious reasons rather than political ones, and would reject the transformation of the organization into a narrow political party.²⁹ 'Abdelmoneim Abu al-Futuh and Abu al-'Ala Madi are two figures from the "middle generation" who have been particularly vocal critics of the MB's blending of missionary work with political activism. Madi argues that a lack of separation between these two roles undermines the concept of a civil state, benefits religious leaders in elections, and leads to the election of politicians who do not possess the appropriate skill set for policymaking.³⁰

Many of the MB's current youth—particularly urban, well-educated youth³¹—share Madi's reservations about the mixing of *da'wa* and politics. Indeed, this is the principal disagreement between the MB leadership and the breakaway youth who formed the Egyptian Current, with the latter demanding the right to pursue political projects other than the FJP. Another MB youth group calling itself the Brotherhood Cry (*Sayha Ikhwānīa*) actually organized demonstrations in front of MB headquarters warning that, "The mixing of educational-missionary work and party activism in its competitive political context exposes the Muslim Brotherhood to the dangers of polarization and division just as it threatens Egypt with dictatorship dressed in the cloak of religion."³²

Granted, after the January 25 Revolution the Muslim Brotherhood did, at least theoretically, separate its political activities from the socioreligious aspects of the organization. As evidence, the MB points to al-'Arayan (Deputy Leader of the FJP), al-Katatni (Secretary General of the FJP), and Mursi (then head of the FJP) resigning their posts on the Guidance Bureau upon taking their party leadership positions. Notwithstanding the gesture, the MB's own rhetoric undermines the

²⁹ Al-Anani, 2007, pp. 75 and 87–88.

³⁰ Madi, 2007, pp. 119–122.

³¹ Interview with midlevel leader of the MB, Cairo, Egypt, January 23, 2012 (in Arabic).

³² Brotherhood Cry, 2nd Declaration, March 26, 2012 (in Arabic).

extent of the separation between the two entities. The General Guide has stated plainly that “the party is the child of the Brotherhood and the Brotherhood will not leave political action with the emergence of the party”³³ Moreover, the MB's commitment to compartmentalize *da'wa* from politics is undermined by such policies as its prohibition of its members from joining political parties other than the FJP.

A second major driver of generational divides is differing views between younger generations and the senior leadership on gender equality and minority rights. It was the MB's “middle generation” that was first associated with a more progressive outlook on these issues, a perspective also reflected in today's youth. For example, al-Wasat party preceded the MB by more than a decade in opening its doors to Egypt's Coptic minority, an important benchmark for the group's commitment to a conception of citizenship that transcends religious affiliation. The MB has since followed al-Wasat's lead, and even succeeded in recruiting some of al-Wasat's first Coptic members to join the FJP.³⁴ But just as in the case of the MB's separation of *da'wa* from politics, there is ambiguity in the MB's position that calls into question the extent of its commitment to women's equality or full minority rights. The Brotherhood does not have a single woman on its Guidance Bureau and some of its more prominent female members have been forceful opponents of expanding women's rights, such as the right of females to request a divorce.³⁵ And while the Brotherhood has said it will accept a Coptic president if that is the choice of the people, it continues to argue that Muslim males are uniquely qualified for that position.³⁶

It would be an oversimplification to say MB youth are universally more progressive than their leadership; some younger members are just as conservative—or even more conservative—on social issues. In the

³³ “Tulāb al-Ikhwān Yasā'lūn wa al-Murshid al-Āmm Yujīb” [“Muslim Brotherhood Students Ask and the General Guide Answers”], 2011.

³⁴ The most prominent example is Rafiq Habib.

³⁵ “An Mujtama' al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn Kama Basharatna bihi Nā'ibatuhim al-Misriya” [“The Society of the Muslim Brothers as Brought to Us by Their Female Representative”], *Al-Hayat*, January 29, 2012 (in Arabic).

³⁶ Muhammad Badi', interview, *Al-Hayat*, March 27, 2011a.

main, however, younger generations within the organization are more progressive on issues such as gender equality and minority rights. This is validated by the most comprehensive survey work done on the Brotherhood to date, with al-'Anani building on structured interviews he ran with more than 50 MB rank and file to support his conclusion that the organization's younger generations "are more intellectually open than their elders, and this makes them, like other young reformists, more accepting of democratic principles such as freedom, equality, justice, and citizenship."³⁷ Fieldwork for this study validates al-'Anani's findings, with MB youth acknowledging that—while there are many exceptions—in general, the organization's younger generations mirror overall trends in society, in which youth are more socially progressive than older cohorts.³⁸

A third driver of generational divides in the Brotherhood is the scope and pace of change sought. A common distinction made by both current and former members is that the organization is *islabi* (reformist) as opposed to *thawri* (revolutionary).³⁹ As noted earlier, the firsthand experience of the MB's older generations with fierce state repression reinforced a cautiousness that reveals itself in the privileging of organizational security over confrontation. Moreover, having lived through a period when the secular Left was actually a stronger trend than Islamism, the elder members of the MB have shown themselves open to accommodation with authority if it comes at the expense of their ideological competitors.

This outlook often puts them at odds with MB youth who are more revolutionary in their orientation. The divide was particularly apparent when leadership refused to join the initial demonstrations of the January 25 Revolution, ostensibly because they were unable to authenticate the source of the protest call, but more likely because they feared expos-

³⁷ Khalil al-'Anani, "The Young Brotherhood in Search of a New Path," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 9, October 2009.

³⁸ Interview with four members of the Muslim Brotherhood youth, Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012 (in Arabic); Interview with an FJP youth secretary, Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012 (in Arabic).

³⁹ Interview with former Muslim Brotherhood member, Cairo, Egypt, January 22, 2012 (in Arabic); Interview with midranking member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo, Egypt, January 23, 2012 (in Arabic).

ing their cadre to mass arrests. In contrast, MB youth were supportive of the protests and pressed their leadership to become involved. As an illustration of who drove Brotherhood participation in the uprising, a former MB youth member showed the authors a mobile phone picture of MB youth carrying 'Essam al-'Arayan on their shoulders to Tahrir Square, noting wryly that the youth did not raise al-'Arayan onto their shoulders in a victory march; rather, they were actually dragging their leaders to the demonstrations.⁴⁰ And in the months after the Revolution, MB youth often defied their leaders to join follow-on demonstrations, just as they have opposed signs of accommodation between their leadership and the country's interim military rulers.⁴¹

The fourth and final driver of generational divides is the Muslim Brotherhood's stifling enforcement of strict organizational hierarchy. The tight control is instilled from a new recruit's first exposure to the organization insofar as new members must progress through a series of phases before they are accepted as an *akh 'amil*, or "active brother," which is the designation for a full dues-paying member. This includes a process of indoctrination that is accomplished through readings, study circles, and the recruit being embedded in a "family" composed of five to seven members who meet weekly.⁴² It can take several years for a recruit to become a full member, and even after achieving that status, they remain embedded within this hierarchical structure.

Independent thought is also stifled by a strict adherence to the "listen and obey" principle that governs junior members' interactions with their senior leadership. There are opportunities for MB youth to raise issues with leadership, but always with clear deference to authority and no tolerance for dissent after decisions are made.⁴³ A female former

⁴⁰ Interview with former Muslim Brotherhood member, Cairo, Egypt, May 22, 2011 (in Arabic).

⁴¹ "Al-Mashhad fi al-Tahrir Yuhrij al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin" ["The Scene in Tahrir Embarrasses the Muslim Brotherhood"], *Al-Hayat*, November 23, 2012 (in Arabic).

⁴² Al-'Anani, 2007, p. 96.

⁴³ Interview with four members of the Muslim Brotherhood youth, Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012 (in Arabic); Interview with an FJP youth secretary, Cairo, Egypt, February 1, 2012 (in Arabic).

member of the Brotherhood, Intisar ‘Abdelmoneim, writes in her account of life within the MB that, “members of the Brotherhood’s Guidance Bureau and Shura Council wrap themselves—and wrap those close to them—with a halo of saintliness that prohibits even discussion of them or the examination of their positions. If someone dares to do that, a battalion of Brotherhood youth is dispatched to attack him in rebuke . . . under the pretext of preserving the code of the Brotherhood and unity of its ranks.”⁴⁴ Intisar’s account is consistent with another interviewee’s description of the Brotherhood as suffering from a “cult of leadership.”⁴⁵

Another way in which strict organizational hierarchy manifests itself is in the promotion of members to leadership positions. A young MB member who left the organization writes that “the principles of loyalty and listen and obey are among the cornerstones of the Brotherhood’s oath. They are instilled in the individual throughout the period he remains inside the Brotherhood. The more these rules are solidified and strengthened in the individual, the greater the chances he will rise to higher levels within the Brotherhood”⁴⁶ Indeed, a frequent criticism of the MB is that promotions are used to reinforce obedience by elevating the loyal (*sāhib al-thiqa*) over the capable (*sāhib al-kafā’a*).⁴⁷ Those who remain within the organization dispute any assertion of blind obedience and counter that both loyalty and capability are valued. Moreover, they justify the cultivation of loyalty given the MB’s very real concerns with maintaining organizational security.⁴⁸ The overall effect, however, is the loss of highly talented youth who feel stifled by the system.

⁴⁴ ‘Abdelmoneim, 2011, p. 196.

⁴⁵ Interview with journalist who covers the MB and is a former member of the group, Cairo, Egypt, January 25, 2012 (in Arabic).

⁴⁶ al-‘Ajouz, Ahmed, *Ikhwānī: Out of the Box* [“A Brother: Out of the Box”], Dawen Publishing, 2011, p. 55 (in Arabic).

⁴⁷ Interview with journalist who covers the MB and is a former member of the group, Cairo, Egypt, January 25, 2012 (in Arabic).

⁴⁸ Interview with four members of the Muslim Brotherhood youth, Cairo, Egypt, January 30, 2012 (in Arabic).

The Muslim Brotherhood's Response to the Challenge of Generational Divides

Despite criticism that the senior leadership is disconnected from the broader rank and file, they are not oblivious to the generational challenge facing the organization and have taken a number of measures to mitigate it. These include instituting a transition process that could lead to younger General Guides, a new initiative that would lower the age requirement for members of the Guidance Bureau from 40 to 25, increased opportunities for MB youth to have dialogue with senior leaders, and reliance on the “middle generation” as a bridge between the youngest and eldest members of the organization.

One of the most significant developments within the Muslim Brotherhood in recent years was Mahdi 'Akef's decision to step down as the General Guide to allow for the indirect election of a successor through the Shura Council. Although not stipulated as such in the organization's bylaws, past practice was for General Guides to remain in office until their deaths, at which point a successor would be named with little consultation with the organization's members. Of course, lifelong appointments often meant octogenarian leadership. For example, the six General Guides who held the office between Hasan al-Banna's assassination and the accession of the current leader all held the post until they were between the ages of 80 and 83.⁴⁹ The election of the current General Guide did not culminate in the accession of a particularly youthful leader, as he is 66 and likely to hold the post well into his seventies. However, the change did open the door for a future leader to be drawn from the organization's younger members just as it signals more frequent handovers of authority.

While the new succession practices are significant—and affect youth equities—the MB's announcement of the “Osama Bin Zayd project” stands as its most direct attempt to placate MB youth. The name alludes to a companion of the prophet who commanded an army when he was a teenager—a fitting symbol for an initiative aimed at

⁴⁹ All of these General Guides—with the exception of Mahdi 'Akef—led the organization until their deaths. They are Hasan al-Hudaybi, 'Umar al-Tilmasani, Muhamed Hamid Abu Nasr, Mustafa Mashhur, Ma'moun al-Hudaybi, and Mahdi 'Akef, respectively.

empowering MB youth. Among the specific proposals of the Osama Bin Zayd project is to lower the required age for members of the Guidance Bureau from 40 to 25.⁵⁰ But the initiative has yet to be put into practice, and tellingly, none of the MB youth interviewed for this project were able to identify any of the initiative's details, including the provision that would lower the age threshold for eligibility to serve in the Guidance Bureau.

In parallel to these reform initiatives, the Brotherhood has also stepped up opportunities for dialogue between leadership and younger members. This helps explain the Brotherhood's emphasis on the 2011 student conference, which brought together more than three thousand representatives from 30 universities to hear their leadership's views on the role of youth in the organization. The forum also provided an opportunity for students to ask questions of the current General Guide and members of the Guidance Bureau in a forum mirroring a town hall format.⁵¹ In addition to the student conference, the Brotherhood's General Guide Muhammad Badi' undertook a listening tour in the governorates in which he estimates that he met with 900 youths to get a better feeling for the concerns of younger members.⁵²

The Brotherhood is also making increased use of social media to help identify points of friction with MB youth as well as to counteract the online criticism of MB youth defectors. In this realm, the most prominent initiative is the Brotherhood's solicitation of member suggestions via Khairat al-Shater's personal web page. This is one aspect of a wider project known within the Brotherhood known as *milf tatwir al-jamā'a*, or the Development of the Brotherhood File. In this effort, members are invited to fill out a questionnaire posted via Survey-

⁵⁰ Muhamed Badi' interview, 2011a.

⁵¹ "Tulāb al-Ikhwān Yasā'lūn wa al-Murshid al-Āmm Yujīb" ["MB Students Ask and the General Guide Answers"], 2011; "Ayman 'Abdelghani: Mu'tamir al-Tulāb Najah raghm al-Mu'awaqāt" ["Ayman 'Abdelghani: The Student Conference Succeeded Despite Obstacles"], *Ikhwan*, September 24, 2011 (in Arabic).

⁵² "Murshid al-Ikhwān: Al-Hizb Lan Yu'ārid Tarshīh Imrā'a aw Qubtī lil Ri'āsa . . . Wa Abu al-Futuh La Yumathil al-Jamā'a" ["The Brotherhood's Guide: The Party Will Not Oppose the Candidacy of a Woman or Copt for the Presidency and Abul Fotouh Does Not Represent the Brotherhood"], *Al-Masry al-Yaum*, March 28, 2011.

Monkey, a service that allows organizations to administer surveys online.⁵³ The questionnaire solicits member opinions on issues ranging from how the Brotherhood can better meet its various missions to how it can create opportunities for advancement within the organization. According to the Brotherhood, the organization has received more than 4,000 responses to the survey.⁵⁴

Of particular importance is that this effort is led by Khairat al-Shater, a deputy to the General Guide and the Brotherhood's first choice to run as a presidential candidate.⁵⁵ Al-Shater is known for his organizational skills and financial savvy, which have earned him a strong following among MB youth in particular. In interviews with MB youth for this project, al-Shater was cited time and again as one of the figures most looked up to. Even a former member critical of al-Shater conceded that he "dazzles" youth with his organizational prowess.⁵⁶ Indeed, al-Shater is one of the key bridge figures within the MB who has mitigated the defection of youth.

In addition to the use of the Internet to connect youth with leadership, social media is also employed to counteract online campaigns from MB defectors. For example, in response to a rash of MB youth defections in the spring of 2012 supporting the presidential campaign of 'Abdelmoneim Abu al-Futuh, a Facebook page was established under the unwieldy heading, "I'm a Muslim Brotherhood Member and I'm Committed to the Decisions of the Brotherhood regarding the Presidential Elections."⁵⁷ Spontaneous or not, the page exists as a forum for MB youth to demonstrate that the broad swath of MB membership remained committed to following their leaders' directions on presidential voting. And while a demonstration of fealty to senior leadership is

⁵³ Khairat al-Shater, online survey.

⁵⁴ "Tulāb al-Ikhwān Yasā'lūn wa al-Murshid al-'Āmm Yujīb" ["Muslim Brotherhood Students Ask and the General Guide Answers"], 2011.

⁵⁵ Al-Shater was disqualified from the race based on his past prosecutions.

⁵⁶ Interview with former Muslim Brotherhood member, Cairo, Egypt, May 22, 2011 (in Arabic).

⁵⁷ "I'm a Muslim Brotherhood Member and I'm Committed to the Decisions of the Brotherhood regarding the Presidential Elections," Facebook.

an unlikely premise for attracting social media users, in fact, the aforementioned page received nearly 12,000 “likes” while the online campaign of MB youth dissenters known as the Brotherhood Cry received just over 800 “likes.”⁵⁸

Another approach by the MB to contain and co-opt its youth wing is to use the “middle generation”—with which today’s MB youth have much in common—as an intermediary. As mentioned previously, Khairat al-Shater is an important conduit in this strategy. Another key figure in this effort is Muhammad al-Baltagi, now a parliamentarian for the FJP who was among the most forward-leaning members of the “middle generation” in supporting the revolution. In addition to his strong revolutionary credentials, his son ‘Ammar is a prominent MB youth member, giving him a direct connection to and better understanding of the mentality of the group’s younger generation.

Although these various efforts have helped stem defections and solidify youth support, the organization continues to face a generational challenge. A segment of MB youth simply refuses to be reconciled, and in these instances, the Muslim Brotherhood takes a more coercive approach. When MB youth openly defy leadership, they are typically given an opportunity to walk back their dissent. This usually takes the form of a reminder of the MB’s official position, such as when spokesman Mahmoud Ghozlan appeared on television to repeat the MB policy regarding support for presidential candidates and the consequences of not abiding by it.⁵⁹ However, should MB youth ignore the warning and persist in challenging leadership, they are separated. The two most visible examples of this came when the MB expelled members of the breakaway Egyptian Current party and when it later expelled MB youth who registered as supporters of Abu al-Futuh’s presidential bid.

From the perspective of MB senior leadership, separation is the least preferred option insofar as it exposes schisms within the organi-

⁵⁸ The two Facebook pages were compared on May 16, 2012.

⁵⁹ “Azmat al-Ikhwān Tatasā‘ad ba’d Tammasuk al-Shabāb bi Da’im Abu al-Futuh” [“The Crisis of the Brotherhood Escalates after the Youth Hold Fast in Supporting Abu al-Futuh”], 2012.

zation to the broader public and sets a precedent for future splits. For this reason, the MB typically gives its members an opportunity to correct their actions. And even for members who are expelled, MB leaders tend to talk about them as wayward sons rather than openly attacking them.⁶⁰ Similarly, only the most alienated youth publicly break with the leadership. As noted by a former MB member, the costs of doing so are enormous given that members are embedded in a broader community.⁶¹ Thus, the individual who breaks away loses more than an organizational affiliation; he also loses the social network, structure, and sense of purpose that comes with membership.

Conclusion

Generational divides pose a significant challenge to the Muslim Brotherhood's organizational unity. The dissatisfaction of a segment of MB youth with the leadership's hierarchical approach and reticence to more fully adopt democratic practices within the organization has already led to a number of defections. But senior leadership is not oblivious to the challenge and has taken cosmetic as well as more substantive steps to solidify the support of its youth wing. In the short run, the Brotherhood is unlikely to see broad splits that threaten the viability of the organization. The vast majority of the rank and file remains committed to the Brotherhood, and the ascent of the organization in the post-Revolution political scene creates further incentives for youth to stay within the fold of the strongest player.

The incentives for youth to maintain their affiliations with the MB and with its political wing, the FJP, are underscored by the poor electoral performance of breakaway factions in the 2011 parliamentary elections. In that contest, the most youth-oriented breakaway faction, the Egyptian Current, lost all 30 seats it contested. In addition to political bandwagoning, MB youth are further dissuaded from defecting by

⁶⁰ Interview with midlevel leader of the MB, Cairo, Egypt, January 23, 2012 (in Arabic).

⁶¹ Interview with journalist who covers the MB and is a former member of the group, Cairo, Egypt, January 25, 2012 (in Arabic).

the social costs of doing so. The organization embeds its members in a broader community that is characterized by shared sacrifice, cultural and ideological bonds, and even intermarriage. Thus, breaking away imposes costs on the individual that go beyond organizational affiliation or political membership.

That said, generational divides are a very real threat to the MB's organizational unity over the longer term. The Brotherhood's political fortunes have benefited from the January 25 Revolution, but like many Egyptian organizations and institutions, it has not adequately adjusted to societal changes or youth expectations. In particular, the top-down hierarchy and adherence to the principle of "listen and obey" impedes the recruitment and retention of younger generations. This disproportionately affects the best and brightest, who seek a greater role in decisionmaking and opportunities based on merit as opposed to obedience and loyalty. Attracting and retaining talented youth will require the Brotherhood to address deeper problems in its organizational culture and to begin devolving decisionmaking authority beyond senior leadership.

Engaging the Muslim Brotherhood and Its Youth

With the Muslim Brotherhood emerging as the most prominent political actor in post-revolutionary Egypt, the question is no longer *whether* the United States will engage this Islamist organization, but *how*. Despite some early caution from both sides, engagement between U.S. officials and MB leaders is quickly becoming the norm. One former high-level U.S. official called the shift in engagement after the fall of Mubarak a “revolution in U.S. policy.”¹ Indeed, the tempo and level of U.S. engagement has expanded rapidly, reaching up to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in July 2012. Because the MB is the strongest political force in Egypt today, a current U.S. official in Cairo explained that U.S. engagement with the MB is a simple “recognition of reality.”² Another U.S. official noted that it would be strange *not* to meet with the MB as part of regular American diplomacy in post-revolution Egypt.³ Indeed, dealing with President Mursi entails dealing with the MB.

But how can policymakers most effectively engage this key player in order to communicate critical areas of concern for U.S. policy and to better understand this complex organization? We suggest that while current engagement with the leaders of the MB and FJP has proved productive, such efforts should expand over time to include wider seg-

¹ Interview with former State Department and National Security Council official, Washington, D.C., March 2, 2012.

² Interview with U.S. official, Cairo, Egypt, April 9, 2012.

³ Interview with U.S. official, Washington D.C., March 1, 2012.

ments of the Brotherhood, particularly its youth. With young people comprising approximately a third of the MB's and FJP's membership, numbering in the hundreds of thousands (see Chapter One), engaging the younger generation of Islamists could reap U.S. policy benefits for years to come.

Youth are not well represented within the MB's current leadership structure but they are playing an increasingly important role in grass-roots politics. Moreover, the emergence of the MB youth as a pressure group inside the Brotherhood has led the group's leaders to increase their own sometimes halting efforts to reach out to younger members. While this report has demonstrated that generational divides and differing outlooks on social policies and governance issues are not likely to fracture the MB or challenge its hierarchical structure in the near term, the youth segment of the organization can become an influential player in shaping the organization's future positions. Exploring new ways to reach this constituency is thus an important component for future engagement efforts. After exploring the evolution and purpose of U.S.-MB engagement both before and after the Egyptian revolution, this chapter proposes recommendations for effective ways to broaden engagement with MB youth.

Engagement in the Mubarak Era

U.S. engagement with the MB began well before the revolution, but dialogue with Islamists was constrained under the Mubarak regime. Mubarak feared U.S. talks with Brotherhood members would enhance the MB's legitimacy, leading the government to halt talks in the late 1990s. U.S. officials were also wary of MB intentions and questioned whether the Brotherhood's moderate rhetoric was genuine or calculated to appease Western audiences. Moreover, other U.S. interests, particularly requests for Egyptian help with the Middle East peace process, often trumped efforts to reach out to Islamists. U.S. policy-makers were reluctant to antagonize the Mubarak regime by speaking to the Brotherhood, as the regime's support was necessary for broader regional policies. As former State Department diplomat Aaron Miller

suggests, “When we muck around in the opposition of governments we support, we end up pissing off just about everyone”⁴

However, the 2005 Egyptian parliamentary elections led to a resumption of U.S. engagement with MB affiliated parliamentarians, whose strong performance—the MB won a fifth of the seats in the lower house—gave the group enhanced political legitimacy. The U.S. embassy in Cairo quietly reached out to the Brotherhood following this success; State Department officials have confirmed that contact with the group was “on and off” after the 2005 elections.⁵ Senior Bush administration advisor Elliott Abrams has also made reference to such meetings, noting that parliamentarians with connections to the Brotherhood were deemed “worth talking to.”⁶ While this initial contact was not publicized, in 2007 two separate congressional delegations (one led by Representative Steny Hoyer, the other by Representative David Price) met publicly with Muhammad Sa’d al-Katatni, a prominent member of the Brotherhood and then leader of its parliamentary bloc (see Table 4.1).

These meetings were billed as parliamentary interactions rather than U.S.-Brotherhood engagement, as the U.S. congressional representatives also met with multiple non-Brotherhood MPs. From the Brotherhood’s perspective, billing the engagement as part of normal parliamentary contact was beneficial in shielding the group from claims that it was bypassing official channels of diplomacy. According to al-Katatni, “[The Muslim Brotherhood] as a group still emphasizes that . . . it does not meet with Americans except with the permission of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. However, we do play our parliamentary role as delegates in the People’s Assembly.”⁷ The Brotherhood described this outreach as “popular diplomacy” in contrast to the “official diplomacy” carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Egypt’s

⁴ Quoted in Eli Lake, “Look Who’s Talking, What America Learned from Speaking to the Muslim Brotherhood,” *The New Republic*, March 24, 2011, p. 16.

⁵ U.S. State Department, daily press briefing, June 30, 2011a.

⁶ Lake, 2011.

⁷ Salah al-Din Hassan, *al-Gamā’a fī Azma: Hiwārāt ma’ Qāda wa Mutamarridīn [The Brotherhood in Crisis: Dialogues with Leaders and Rebels]*, Madbouli, 2011 (in Arabic), p. 285.

Table 4.1
Public U.S. Engagement with the Muslim Brotherhood (2007–January 2012)^a

Date	U.S. Attendees	MB Attendees
April 5, 2007	Rep. Steny Hoyer (MD)	Al-Katatni, MP (then leader of MB parliamentary bloc)
May 27, 2007	Reps. David Price (NC), Gwen Moore (WI), Jeffrey Fortenberry (NE), Nick Rahall (WV)	Al-Katatni, MP (then leader of MB parliamentary bloc)
October 6, 2011	Amy Destefano (First Secretary at U.S. embassy in Cairo) and Prem Kumar (Director of the Egypt desk at U.S. National Security Organization)	Al-Katatni (FJP Secretary-General)
November 15, 2011	Jacob Walles (NEA); Peter Shea (2nd Secretary at Political-Economic desk of U.S. embassy in Cairo)	Al-'Arayan (FJP Vice Chair)
December 10, 2011	Sen. John Kerry (MA), Ambassador Anne Patterson	Mursi (then FJP Chairman), 'Al-Arayan (FJP Vice Chair), Al-Katatni (FJP Secretary-General)
January 7, 2012	Assistant Secretary of State for NEA Jeffrey Feltman	Al-'Arayan (FJP Vice Chair)
January 11, 2012	Deputy Secretary of State William Burns, Undersecretary of State Robert Hormats	Mursi (then FJP Chair)
January 12, 2012	Former President Jimmy Carter	Mursi (then FJP Chair)
January 13, 2012	Former President Jimmy Carter	Badi' (MB chairman) and Al-Shater (First deputy to Badi')
January 18, 2012	Ambassador Anne Patterson	Badi' (MB chairman) and Hussein (MB Secretary-General)
January 24, 2012	Ambassador Anne Patterson; Assistant Secretary of State Michael Posner	Al-Barr (member of MB Guidance Bureau)

^a The table was derived from a variety of both Western and Arabic language reporting. It represents only those meetings between U.S. officials and the Muslim Brotherhood that were made public. It is well known that other engagements did take place, particularly in the immediate period after the January 25 Revolution, although the choice not to publicize those meetings is an important indicator of the sensitivities surrounding engagement.

diplomatic corps. To further inoculate the MB from being seen as a tool of foreign influence, al-Katatni was also quick to note that the topic of his meetings with U.S. congressional delegations was not political reform in Egypt but rather American policies in the Middle East.

However, the Mubarak regime frowned upon contact with what it deemed an illegal organization,⁸ and open meetings between American and Brotherhood officials ceased. There is some evidence that unofficial contact continued (for example, the U.S. embassy in Cairo ensured that members of the Brotherhood were in attendance at President Obama's 2009 Cairo address),⁹ but no meetings were made public until after the popular uprising in early 2011, when engagement efforts rapidly escalated as the FJP was recognized by Egyptian authorities as a legal entity.

Notwithstanding the many constraints placed on U.S.-MB engagement during the Mubarak period, both sides remained open to contact. Ideologically, the Brotherhood took issue with aspects of American foreign policy in the Middle East, notably supporting more pressure on Israel and opposing the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, but Brotherhood officials frequently declared their openness to the prospect of dialogue. In a 2004 interview, Mahdi 'Akef, the Muslim Brotherhood leader at the time, stated that contact with the United States should proceed on a government-to-government basis, and that the Brotherhood therefore would not engage with U.S. officials. However, in the same interview, he expressed a willingness to engage with American social and intellectual organizations.¹⁰ Following the Brotherhood's success in the 2005 elections, there was a clear path for government engagement via elected MPs, consistent with the organization's previously expressed stance.

Despite its limited nature, contact with the United States during the pre-revolutionary period helped enhance the Brotherhood's international legitimacy. The organization also benefited from U.S. efforts

⁸ "Egypt Complains about U.S. Lawmakers' Meeting with Muslim Brotherhood Member," *New York Times*, May 28, 2007.

⁹ "Muslim Brotherhood Members to Attend Obama's Cairo Speech," *Fox News*, June 3, 2009.

¹⁰ Tamam, 2007, p. 137

to pressure the regime on democratization and reform issues. Additionally, engagement with the United States offered the MB an opportunity to rehabilitate its image as it sought to differentiate itself from radical Islamist groups. And since the Mubarak regime was using the “scarecrow” of the Brotherhood to present authoritarian rule as the lesser of two evils, the MB had an interest in dispelling that characterization. Simply put, dealing with the United States helped the Brotherhood acquire international legitimacy to support its existence as a popular social movement and political force in Egypt.

For the United States, contact with the Brotherhood also had some strategic advantages. Although the United States was reluctant to take the relationship too far out of fear of damaging relations with the ruling regime, ongoing communication with the MB was, to some extent, a way of hedging bets. Despite Mubarak’s seemingly firm grip on power, the movement, with its substantial membership and popularity, represented a possible future outcome for Egypt.¹¹ Additionally, the United States had an interest in pressuring the Egyptian government on democratization in keeping with the Bush administration’s “Freedom Agenda.” Promotion of regional reforms and political openness would require “mobilization of popular domestic opposition.”¹² In Egypt’s case, this clearly included the Brotherhood. Contact with such popularly supported organizations also served as a counterweight to the negative perceptions in the Arab world regarding the American presence in Iraq.

Finally, the Brotherhood represented an opportunity to engage with, and promote, Islamist forces with moderate, nonviolent positions to counter the radical movements seemingly enveloping the region.¹³ A similar rationale drove President Obama’s approach to the MB before

¹¹ U.S. State Department officials recognized the need for further engagement with Islamists before the Egyptian revolution, when efforts to design a strategy accelerated. Interview with former State Department official, Washington, D.C., March 2, 2012.

¹² Amr Hamzawy, “The Key to Arab Reform: Moderate Islamists,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, August, 2005.

¹³ Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, “The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2007.

the revolution, with his Cairo speech reflecting a desire to broaden engagement to reach diverse groups of people across the region based on core principles (rejection of violence, respect for elections and respect for equality under the law).¹⁴

Engagement in Post-Revolution Egypt

As visible in Table 4.1, the prospects for, and scale of, U.S.-MB engagement altered considerably following Mubarak's departure and the Brotherhood's resounding success in the subsequent parliamentary elections. Early in the revolution, U.S. officials made several statements declaring their willingness to deal with any group chosen by the Egyptian people, subject to certain red lines "adherence to the law, adherence to nonviolence and a willingness to be part of a democratic process."¹⁵ While this opened the door for official contact with the MB and other Islamist groups, that reality did not materialize immediately. Directly following the revolution, some Egyptian youth movements—such as the YRC, which included representation from MB youth—refused to meet with high-level U.S. officials (including the Secretary of State) because of the perceived weakness of U.S. support for the revolution, the longstanding American support for Mubarak, and U.S. positions on Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine.¹⁶ Similar concerns led the Brotherhood to exhibit the same caution regarding meetings with U.S. officials. The MB leadership feared being seen as courting U.S. support—or worse, as an instrument of U.S. influence. The Brotherhood's detractors have successfully cultivated the narrative that the MB is willing to cut deals with foreign parties to advance its own agenda. This line of attack was particularly prevalent under the previous regime, which accused the MB of being

¹⁴ Interview with former State Department official, Washington, D.C., March 1, 2012.

¹⁵ Jackie Northam, "U.S. Reviews Relationship With Muslim Brotherhood," *NPR*, February 3, 2011; U.S. State Department, daily press briefing, December 1, 2011b.

¹⁶ Interview with former youth member of the Muslim Brotherhood, January 22, 2012, Cairo.

pawns in a U.S. push for political reform in Egypt.¹⁷ The January 25 Revolution has fueled a second trope; namely, that the Brotherhood has come to power through U.S. support. This sentiment was visible during Secretary Clinton's July 2012 visit to Egypt, when protestors warned that U.S. acceptance of the MB's electoral victories amounted to abandoning minorities and undermining the Egyptian military as the guardian of the state's secular values. Protestors went so far as to allege a "U.S.-Muslim Brotherhood alliance to impose a mandate over Egypt."¹⁸

The need for the MB to balance the advantage of engagement (e.g., international legitimacy) against domestic political costs has led the group to approach contact with the United States cautiously. On the one hand, the Brotherhood has been keen to appear with U.S. officials on the heels of electoral victories, aware that these interactions legitimize the victories and take the steam out of the Islamist bogeyman. At the same time, those involved are aware of the need to burnish the group's nationalist credentials by appearing to stand up to the Americans when U.S. involvement is seen as heavy-handed. A good illustration of the latter dynamic was the MB's response to the complimentary statement from Senator John McCain regarding the MB's role in resolving the crisis in which Americans and foreign nationals representing nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Freedom House and the National Democratic Institute were charged with operating in Egypt without official licenses. Taking pains to distance themselves from the lifting of the travel ban on these NGO workers, the Brotherhood issued an official statement that it was "surprised by what was reported in different media regarding the Americans directing thanks to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt for what they called its 'constructive and responsible' position towards the NGO issue . . . The Brotherhood categorically denies that it served as an intermediary for the purpose of allowing the foreign accused to leave

¹⁷ For an example of the attacks launched by Egyptian state media on the Brotherhood in the wake of the 2007 resumption of U.S.-MB engagement, see "Asrār Fatah Hiwār bayn al-Wilāyāt al-Mutahida wa Gamā'at al-Ikhwān" ["Secrets of the Opening of Dialogue Between the Muslim Brotherhood and the U.S."], *Al-Ahram*, April 14, 2007 (in Arabic).

¹⁸ "Shabāb Maspero Yada'ūw li Waqfa amam al-Sifāra al-Amrīkiya li Rafd Ziyārat Clinton" ["Maspero Youth Call for a Protest in Front of the American Embassy to Reject Clinton's Visit"], *Al-Yawm al-Sabi'*, July 12, 2012 (in Arabic).

[Egypt].”¹⁹ The MB’s official spokesman followed this up by noting that the lesson the organization took away from the experience was the need to be more cautious in its interactions with U.S. officials.²⁰

High-level U.S. officials were also somewhat guarded in the first months following the revolution. State Department officials were not used to meeting Islamists, and the White House was concerned about domestic repercussions, especially from Congress (during the early March-April 2011 period, some House Foreign Affairs members floated the prospect of aid cutoffs if the MB came to power).²¹ But in a June 2011 speech, Secretary Clinton declared the U.S. intention to engage with all peaceful parties competing for seats in parliament and the presidency, further stating that the United States would “welcome, therefore, dialogue with those Muslim Brotherhood members who wish to talk with us.”²² By the summer of 2011, U.S. officials began to engage the Youth Revolution Coalition, which included former MB youth. The U.S. government then started requesting meetings with high-level FJP leaders but were met with hesitation, as those individuals were still worried about maintaining their revolutionary credentials. By August 2011, however, U.S. officials were meeting directly with MB and FJP members.²³

The United States framed these meetings as “unexceptional,” showing that the Americans were willing to meet with all political actors and not singling out any particular party.²⁴ Secretary Clinton noted it was in U.S. interests “to engage with all parties,” but that the United States would emphasize commitment to democratic prin-

¹⁹ “Statement of the Muslim Brotherhood on the Issue of Foreign Funding of Civil Society Organizations,” *Ikhwan*, March 2, 2012.

²⁰ Freedom and Justice Party website, “Ghozlan: Lam Na’id Ay Murashah Ri’āsi bi Shay’ wa Nata’arrad li Harb I’lāmiya Munazhama” [“Ghozlan: We Haven’t Promised Any Candidate Anything and We are Facing a Systematic Media War”], March 9, 2012

²¹ Interview with former State Department official, Washington, D.C., March 2, 2012.

²² Hillary Rodham Clinton, remarks with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, June 30, 2011.

²³ Interview with former State Department official, March 2, 2012, Washington, D.C.

²⁴ Interview with former State Department official, March 2, 2012, Washington, D.C.

principles, nonviolence, and respect for women and minorities in all of its contacts.²⁵ This precept of nonexceptionalism toward parties in Egypt, including Islamists, led to U.S. efforts to meet with all political actors. In the run-up to the parliamentary elections, the United States was careful to emphasize its neutrality regarding the result. Ambassador Anne Patterson made it clear that the United States would deal with “any party” elected by the Egyptian people.²⁶ By the fall of 2011, engagement with the MB escalated rapidly as it became clear that the Brotherhood would emerge as a major force in Egyptian politics.

On two occasions in October 2011, embassy officials met with al-‘Arayan and al-Katatni as leaders of the recently formed FJP. Since then, FJP and MB leadership have met with an increasingly prominent series of U.S. officials, including Deputy Secretary of State William Burns, Secretary Clinton, and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, as well as former President Jimmy Carter. There were six publicized meetings in January 2011 alone—a remarkable increase in contact that came as a clear response to the parliamentary election results, in which the Brotherhood captured nearly half of the available seats, and a sign that the United States viewed the organization as a key force in post-Mubarak Egypt. According to one U.S. official, U.S. embassy staff in Cairo regularly meet with MB and FJP members, possibly more than any other Egyptian party.²⁷ In April 2012, a delegation of FJP leaders made the organization’s first official U.S. visit, meeting with U.S. officials in Washington and making appearances at a number of U.S. think tanks.²⁸ In conversations with visiting American officials and analysts, MB members have also raised the possibility of opening a Brotherhood office in Washington.²⁹

²⁵ Clinton, 2011.

²⁶ “U.S. Respects the Egyptian People’s Choices: American Ambassador,” *Abram Online*, December 14, 2011.

²⁷ Interview with U.S. official, Washington, D.C., March 1, 2012.

²⁸ Public discussion with a visiting delegation from the FJP at Georgetown’s Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, April 4, 2012; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “Islamists in Power: Views from Within,” April 5, 2012.

²⁹ According to multiple interviews, this issue was raised in a number of meetings. One former State Department official favoring engagement believes such a move could be danger-

Just as in the case of the parliamentary elections, the June 2012 presidential contest was also a focal point for U.S. engagement. Once again, the United States maintained a position of neutrality and Secretary Clinton's call on the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) to "fulfill its promise to the Egyptian people to turn power over to the legitimate winner" communicated a willingness to accept a democratic outcome even if it led to the election of the Brotherhood's candidate.³⁰ After Mursi was eventually declared to have won Egypt's first democratic presidential election, the second highest-ranking official at the State Department, Deputy Secretary William Burns, was dispatched to Cairo to meet with Mursi. Shortly thereafter, Secretary Clinton and Secretary Panetta met with Mursi.³¹

Both sides have made positive statements about the future of continued engagement, although the Brotherhood's willingness to criticize U.S. actions has increased as its political influence in Egypt has expanded. Shortly after the Egyptian parliamentary elections, Mursi welcomed further dialogue with U.S. officials, stating that he "believes in the importance of U.S.-Egyptian relations."³² Some MB leaders, however, have issued more reproachful statements, suggesting that they "doubt the seriousness" of U.S. intentions to support Egyptian democracy.³³

The group has also been outspoken of what they view as U.S. missteps in its handling of relations with Egypt, such as in the afore-

ous, as it would lead to the impression that the United States is treating the MB differently (as there are no other comparable offices from other types of parties in Washington) and could backfire by leading to congressional attacks that the MB is coming to the United States to "Shariatize" Americans. Interview with former State Department official, Washington, D.C., March 2, 2012.

³⁰ Charlie Rose, "Conversations on Diplomacy" with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and former Secretary of State James A. Baker III, Washington, D.C., June 20, 2012.

³¹ "Al-Ri'āsa: Obama Yada'uw Mursi li Ziyārat al-Wilāyāt al-Mutahida al-Amrīkiya fi September al-Muqbil" ["The Presidency: Obama Invites Mursi to Visit the U.S. Next September"], *Al-Badil*, July 8, 2012 (in Arabic).

³² Jailan Zayan, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Hails Ties with US," *AFP*, January 11, 2012.

³³ Hany El-Waziry and Ghada Mohamed Al-Sherif, "Brotherhood Figure Meets U.S. Officials at U.S. Ambassador's Residence," *Egypt Independent*, January 25, 2012.

mentioned fallout from the NGO case and the United States' inability to stop the issuing of the anti-Islam video that was met with fury in the region.³⁴ The Brotherhood has also issued public statements requesting that the United States not interfere in Egyptian politics. Prior to the first round of parliamentary elections, al-'Arayan insisted that America must "deal respectfully and cooperatively with the new Arab government" regardless of who was elected.³⁵ Notwithstanding these sometimes scolding statements, it is clear that the Brotherhood regards continued contact with the United States as necessary. As one American analyst put it, once the MB moved from an opposition movement to governing, engaging the United States became a "fact of life."³⁶ U.S. statements have also indicated that prospects for a sustained relationship are strong and that the conditions for engagement remain unchanged.³⁷

Rationale for Engagement

What do the United States and the Muslim Brotherhood gain from their heightened contact? Engagement offers both sides an opportunity to dispel misunderstandings, spell out major areas of concern and policy positions, and begin coordination on issues of mutual concern (such as the Egyptian economy). Engaging the MB is also a useful way to signal to the SCAF that the United States has relationships with other Egyptian actors, enhancing its leverage with the military lead-

³⁴ "Brotherhood Denies McCain Allegations It Helped U.S. NGO Workers Leave Egypt," *Abram Online*, March 3, 2012.

³⁵ Mohamed Khiyal, "Shahin: El-Erian's Meeting with Officials from the American Administration Reflects Development in Relations," *Al-Shorouk*, January 16, 2011.

³⁶ Interview with American analyst, Washington, D.C., March 2, 2012.

³⁷ See for example, State Department Assistant Secretary Michael Hammer's comment that, "So we're comfortable, clearly, dealing with the newly elected president of Egypt, with members of the Muslim Brotherhood as they accept Egypt's constitution and work within the constitutional framework." Washington Foreign Press Center, July 26, 2012.

ership.³⁸ Most critically, the meetings have allowed both sides to get to know each other better and express major issues of concern—for the United States, protecting women and minority rights, upholding the democratic process, and preserving the peace treaty with Israel; for the Brotherhood, securing U.S. foreign aid, winning support from the U.S. in international lending institutions, and achieving recognition of the FJP as a legitimate actor so as to avoid the type of isolation imposed on Hamas after its election victory in 2006.

In early conversations, U.S. policymakers often asked their MB counterparts for clarification on the group's positions toward Israel and Hamas in order to discern if their policies matched their public statements.³⁹ For their part, MB representatives would take the opportunity to state the group's formal positions as well as “get rid of their baggage” by venting on issues such as U.S. support for Mubarak and tolerance for Israeli policies on settlements and other issues.⁴⁰ As the relationship has developed, however, the talks have become more informal, and there is an exchange of views on specific issues such as the transition calendar and security in the Sinai; these are essentially the same issues U.S. officials regularly discuss with the SCAF.⁴¹

According to U.S. officials who have participated in these dialogues, the Egyptian economy has loomed large in all discussions. U.S. officials detect more flexibility from the MB on issues such as International Monetary Fund loans than from other actors on the Egyptian political scene, and the MB appears to be better briefed on the reality of Egypt's economic issues.⁴² While the United States hopes to influence perceptions and policies of MB officials in directions that are more closely aligned with American interests, U.S. officials also recognize that MB positions are evolving and are more likely to be influenced by their own domestic pressures (particularly from the SCAF and the

³⁸ Interview with American analyst, Washington D.C., March 1, 2012.

³⁹ Interview with former State Department official, Washington, D.C., March 1, 2012.

⁴⁰ Interview with U.S. official, Washington, D.C., March 1, 2012.

⁴¹ Interview with U.S. official, Washington, D.C., March 1, 2012.

⁴² Interview with U.S. official, Washington, D.C., March 1, 2012.

Salafists) than by discussions with the United States.⁴³ Still, such dialogue allows U.S. officials to better understand the MB's domestic constraints and how they are shaping their positions in response.

U.S.-MB engagement has progressed largely without incident and with surprisingly little domestic pushback within the United States. Positive statements about MB positions from Republican leaders such as Senator McCain and regular congressional meetings with MB members insulate the administration from domestic criticism of engagement policies. That said, future challenges to continued dialogue are possible. The MB's relationship with Hamas is a potential point of friction. Since Hamas lost its foothold in Damascus, a decision by Hamas to relocate to Cairo could pose a serious dilemma for Washington. As some analysts note, Hamas leaders already visit Cairo regularly, so a Hamas headquarters in Cairo probably would not be enough to halt U.S.-MB engagement. However, if a regional flare-up between Israel and Hamas were to spark hostile MB rhetoric against Israel, the relationship could face more domestic scrutiny. And MB operational support for Hamas would certainly cross a U.S. red line. Still, some analysts say that rather than Hamas radicalizing the MB, the MB is moderating Hamas, particularly as Hamas understands this is a "regional moment" for the MB and does not want to undermine the group's opportunity.⁴⁴

Exclusionary positions on social issues affecting women or minorities are also likely to create a chill in U.S.-MB relations. According to one analyst, while the United States should avoid creating conditions for engagement that will set the stage for failure, there should be a "smell test" to gauge if MB policies are moving in ways that counter U.S. interests.⁴⁵ Secretary Clinton has called religious freedom "a bedrock priority of [American] foreign policy" and has underscored that engagement with the MB is conditional "on their commitment to universal human rights and universal democratic principles."⁴⁶ For

⁴³ Interview with former State Department official, Washington, D.C., March 1, 2012.

⁴⁴ Interview with Jordanian scholar, Washington, D.C., March 2, 2012.

⁴⁵ Interview with American analyst, Washington D.C. March 1, 2012,

⁴⁶ Hillary Rodham Clinton, remarks at the release of the 2011 International Religious Freedom Report, Washington, D.C., July 30, 2012.

its part, the MB has tried to assuage these concerns, first by opening membership of the FJP to Coptic Christians and then by Mursi choosing a Copt as one of his close presidential advisers.

Of course, any MB moves that would jeopardize Egypt's peace treaty with Israel could also rupture its relations with the United States, although one former senior U.S. official who has met with Brotherhood leaders says the MB made it clear they are "not going to touch" the peace treaty because they understand the negative implications of doing so for continued U.S. assistance.⁴⁷ And apparently the Israelis are not raising alarm over the Egyptian MB with the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) or congressional leaders because they do not want to jeopardize the peace treaty.⁴⁸ As long as the Brotherhood adheres to nonviolence and remains the predominant force in Egyptian politics, U.S. engagement efforts are thus likely to continue and expand over time.

Recommendations for Future Engagement with the MB and Its Youth

As this report has outlined, some of the MB's best and brightest youth have splintered off from the organization, but these breakaway groups represent only a fraction of MB youth today. Additionally, these groups are largely marginal in the new political landscape, with most failing to secure even a single seat in Egypt's first parliamentary elections following the revolution. Yet because U.S. policymakers and analysts often view these groups as more progressive, they are attractive interlocutors. While reaching out to splinter groups and individuals outside the MB is important, engagement will also need to expand to a wider segment of youth who remain *within* the MB and the FJP. This group could provide a useful conduit for messages to the older leadership and over time may assume important positions of power. The following recommendations

⁴⁷ Interview with former senior U.S. official, Washington, D.C., March 2, 2012.

⁴⁸ Interview with former senior U.S. official, Washington, D.C., March 2, 2012.

suggest a way forward for continuing effective engagement with the MB and expanding its reach beyond a limited number of leaders.

Understand divisions within the MB, but don't try to game them. While understanding splits within the MB and reaching out to actors who have left the organization is important, U.S. officials should take care not to show preferences for one actor or individual over another, continuing policies of “nonexceptionalism.” For one, those who appear more progressive on social issues will not necessarily pursue policy positions that are in line with other U.S. positions (such as on Israel). Second, embracing a particular group or leader may only undermine their credibility in the Egyptian domestic arena, particularly if Egyptians perceive the U.S. leaders as attempting to “select a new elite.”⁴⁹ And finally, splinter groups do not seem to hold much clout in the Egyptian political scene today. So, attempts to game the divisions among Islamists may only backfire and prove counterproductive to advancing U.S. interests.

Regularize and routinize engagement, including among members of Congress and FJP parliamentarians, to reduce politicization of engagement efforts. The more regular and normalized that contact becomes, the less engagement is vulnerable to becoming a target of political attacks in the United States and the more it will be viewed as the normal course of diplomacy. As Nathan Brown argues, now that the MB operates a legal political party and has become a dominant player in Egyptian politics, “having normal diplomatic contact with the [MB] makes sense. But trumpeting the policy . . . is a mistake—it generates exaggerated expectations and fears all around.”⁵⁰

Engagement can also be insulated from domestic political attacks by having more members of Congress, rather than just administration officials, directly meet MB members. The Obama administration has already reached out to the Hill to educate members on the MB, address concerns, and plan more parliamentary exchanges.⁵¹ Exchanges

⁴⁹ Interview with Egyptian analyst, Cairo, January 23, 2012.

⁵⁰ Nathan Brown, “What Does the U.S. Want to Talk to the Brotherhood About?” *The National Interest*, August 9, 2011.

⁵¹ Interview with U.S. official, Washington D.C., March 1, 2012.

between American congressional and Egyptian parliamentary staff could also prove fruitful. In addition, Congress can host FJP parliamentarians and staff to observe American political processes, such as nominating conventions.

Expand engagement to the grassroots level, targeting youth leaders and student union activists outside the major cities. While U.S. engagement with the MB has expanded rapidly since the summer of 2011, contacts are still limited to a relatively small group of MB figures. According to one American official, there are approximately two dozen MB leaders with whom the United States engages, in addition to a number of FJP parliamentarians (including those MB members who toured the United States in April 2012).⁵² New avenues of engagement are already developing with FJP parliamentary leaders, including meetings with the head of the Defense and National Security Committee and the head of the upper house.⁵³ But engagement is not well developed with youth leaders and activists, including those residing outside of Cairo and other major cities like Alexandria. The U.S. embassy in Cairo appears to be sending officers to other parts of Egypt and is expanding engagement with religious institutions but, as one analyst noted, Americans need to seek out the up-and-coming MB youth within the organization who are not used to engaging the West, suggesting that target groups could include student leaders and youth activists who help run elections in the provinces.⁵⁴

The path of least resistance would be to engage MB youth through the Brotherhood's Foreign Affairs Committee, which is the body the group uses to organize its outreach to the West and which includes many youth who have studied at English-speaking universities.⁵⁵ This is a good start but it is not sufficient. These youth are selected on the

⁵² Interview with U.S. official, Cairo, April 9, 2012. This official observed that U.S. engagement tends to be with a nexus of people close to Khairat al-Shater in particular.

⁵³ Interview with U.S. official, Cairo, April 9, 2012.

⁵⁴ Interview with U.S. official, Washington, D.C., March 1, 2012; Interview with American analyst, Washington D.C., April 9, 2012.

⁵⁵ This should not be confused with the parliamentary committee of the same name headed by the FJP deputy, 'Essam al-'Arayan. The Brotherhood has its own internal body that it

basis of their aptitude in English, familiarity with Western culture, and comfort level with Western audiences, but they are not broadly representative of MB youth and generally avoid any airing of generational differences within the Brotherhood.

As Chapter One discussed, MB and FJP youth are actively involved in street and university politics. FJP youth leaders who are selected for each governorate and who help prepare youth for party politics may be particularly good interlocutors for an expansion of engagement efforts. Student union leaders from universities across the country are also good candidates. To improve and broaden communication and dialogue with such groups, U.S. officials can request and help facilitate American speakers for MB student union events and invite MB youth leaders to speak to American university audiences. But in order to advance such initiatives, the U.S. government will need to involve more Arabic speakers—resources that it currently lacks—to reach young audiences outside the major cities, who are not as likely to be fluent in English.⁵⁶

Leverage existing outreach programs to include MB youth. U.S. policymakers do not need to establish new programs targeted specifically at the MB; doing so would risk the perception that the United States is favoring the MB over other political actors. Instead, the United States can utilize existing outreach programs to reach MB youth. For example, youth leadership programs could help identify future MB leaders and give them exposure to the United States. The Middle East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) student leader program is one example of a program that could be broadened to include MB student leaders.⁵⁷

MB leadership has demonstrated an interest in learning how to engage Western audiences better, so there is reason to believe they would be responsive to opportunities for MB youth to study in the United

calls its Foreign Affairs Committee, which operates similar to an outreach or external affairs office.

⁵⁶ Interview with U.S. official, Washington D.C., March 1, 2012.

⁵⁷ In this program, the American embassy chooses 60–70 students a year to attend American universities and participate in intensive programs on democracy and human rights.

States.⁵⁸ (Egyptian President Mursi and Prime Minister Hisham Qandil both pursued graduate study at U.S. universities.) Other programs, such as the State Department's visitor program, which brings foreign leaders to the United States for two-week visits, could similarly include MB youth figures. Citizen diplomacy programs could also expand to include Islamist youth, enhancing interaction and exposure to the United States. Egyptian leaders are likely to look more favorably at programs that are not overtly political and bring young Egyptians not only to study in the United States but also to gain relevant experience with NGOs focused on issues such as development and microfinance.⁵⁹ Over time, such people-to-people exchanges could have more impact on U.S.-Egyptian relations than official meetings between high-level politicians.⁶⁰

Cultivate MB leader buy-in for youth engagement efforts.

Building trust with MB leaders will be critical for expanding engagement, as the MB's hierarchical structure suggests that leaders largely regulate engagement efforts and younger members are likely to defer to those leaders for approval and guidance on engagement with Americans and participation in U.S. government-run programs. For example, one U.S. think tank attempted to invite a young female MB member to a conference but she could not attend in person as she lacked permission from the MB leadership (although she was permitted to participate via videoconference).⁶¹ An FJP youth leader expressed a willingness to meet with American officials directly if he received an official invitation and MB leadership approval.⁶² Direct contacts with MB leaders can help build the necessary trust and address leadership concerns about American attempts to include MB youth in civil society programming.

⁵⁸ Interview with American analyst, Washington, D.C., March 2, 2012.

⁵⁹ Interview with Egyptian analyst, Cairo, January 23, 2012.

⁶⁰ Interview with Egyptian analyst, Cairo, January 23, 2012.

⁶¹ Interview with American analyst, Washington D.C., March 1, 2012.

⁶² Interview with MB leader of youth secretariat, Cairo, February 1, 2012.

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