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Fragmenting Under Pressure

Egypt's Islamists Since Morsi's Ouster

By Hardin Lang, Mokhtar Awad, and Brian Katulis   March 2014

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Introduction and summary

In January, Egyptians voted in the third constitutional referendum since the 2011 revolution. The ballot was a milestone in the interim authorities' roadmap for the next steps in Egypt's political transition. Only 10 days later, Cairo was rocked by a wave of bombings that killed at least six people and injured more than 70.[1] The juxtaposition of the referendum and the most dangerous terrorist attacks in recent memory provides a poignant reminder of the security threats and political polarization that grip Egypt today.

On one side of the divide sit the military-backed interim authorities that currently have the upper hand and enjoy popular support in the struggle for power. On the other side sit the Muslim Brotherhood and its Islamist supporters, who until eight months ago led Egypt's first-ever Islamist-dominated government. The military is the cornerstone of the Egyptian state. The Muslim Brotherhood is the country's oldest and until recently most organized religious and social force. The dynamic between the two groups has shaped Egypt's transition since a popular uprising threw out then President Hosni Mubarak in 2011 and will continue to determine Egypt's long-term stability and prosperity.

The January constitutional referendum continued the dramatic reversal of fortune for the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist movement that shares an ideological and historical lineage with a wide range of Islamist groups, including some of the most radical in the region. The ouster of the President Mohamed Morsi by the Egyptian military and the ensuing crackdown has profoundly affected the Brotherhood and the Islamist landscape more broadly. The Brotherhood faces significant challenges to its coherence and structure. It has already parted ways with the country's second-largest Islamist movement—the Salafi Daʻwa—and new Islamist forces are taking shape. Some of these groups are asserting themselves in confrontations with the state in the streets and have turned to violence. Some are challenging their more established counterparts, while others are planning to compete in the next round of elections.

To better understand the impact of President Morsi's ouster on the Islamist landscape, a research team from the Center for American Progress interviewed more than 30 leading politicians, Islamists, and observers in the Egyptian cities of Cairo and Alexandria over a two-week period in December 2013 and conducted follow-up interviews in January 2014. Those interviewed included current and former mid-level to senior-level members of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafi Da'wa and its Nour Party, other Salafi movements, Islamist youth with responsibility for the street demonstrations or other forms of protest, and non-Islamist politicians.

This report provides a snapshot of current trends among Islamists in Egypt, including the Muslim Brotherhood. It offers an overview of the enduring weaknesses and divisions that plague the country's political landscape; explores the impact of the military's overthrow of the previous government and repression of a broad range of independent political actors, including the Muslim Brotherhood; and examines the Salafi response to these events. It concludes with a summary analysis of the situation and suggested recommendations for U.S. policymakers. In brief, the report's key findings include:

- **Egypt's political transition remains in a fragile state, affected by growing security threats and enduring economic challenges.** More than three years after the fall of the Mubarak regime, Egypt remains locked in an unresolved struggle for power. The country currently faces security threats and economic challenges, such as widespread unemployment, mounting government debt, and problems with basic services. Excessive spending on energy and food subsidies, fiscal deficits, pressures on foreign currency reserves, and low tax-collection rates continue at a time when demographic and social pressures from a youth bulge trying to enter the workforce are increasing. Egypt's leaders face overwhelming challenges in meeting the basic needs of its citizens. The polarized, dysfunctional, and increasingly violent political landscape will impede progress on these fundamental issues.

- **The landscape of political Islam in Egypt is fragmenting.** The Muslim Brotherhood considers the Salafi Da'wa to be traitorous—a view shared by smaller Salafi parties. The Da'wa sees the Brotherhood as incompetent and delusional. Under pressure from the current governing authorities, independent political forces are fracturing and, in some cases, seeking to realign themselves. This trend is particularly acute amongst Egypt's political Islamists. A trend toward increased radicalization and violence appears to be underway.

- **The Muslim Brotherhood lacks a strategic vision and faces a historic challenge.** The Brotherhood seeks to disrupt and exhaust the state but has no clear understanding of what victory means or how to achieve it. Its reliance on youth and outsiders to mobilize in the streets threatens its traditional structure and hierarchy. Less than a year after Morsi's ouster, the Muslim Brotherhood exhibits few signs of serious introspection and lessons learned from its time in power. The crackdown is rapidly closing off options for those inside the Brotherhood who still consider politics and dialogue to be part of the solution.

- **The Salafi Daʿwa has aligned itself with the current ruling powers and remains a key political actor.** The Salafi Daʿwa is isolated vis-à-vis other Islamists but displays a strong tactical ability to maneuver. Its political wing—the Nour Party—is the only Islamist party that remains above ground. Nour might be better organized than the non-Islamist parties, but its failure to mobilize strong support among its ranks for the constitutional referendum should be a cause for concern amongst its leadership.

- **The threat of continued violent radicalization is real.** The Muslim Brotherhood is increasingly structurally incoherent in Egypt's largest urban areas. Radicalization is taking place at the individual level both inside and outside the organization. This trend is clearest among the youth. Egypt is poised to experience the rise of more militant strands of Islamism, and the specter of terrorist violence experienced in the 1980s and 1990s under former Presidents Anwar Sadat and Mubarak has already returned.

- **A strong overt political role for the Egyptian military risks its independence and standing with the Egyptian people.** The security institutions may be exposing themselves to significant risk of backlash as they continue to close down space for basic freedoms of speech and assembly while at the same time taking ownership of Egypt's herculean social and economic challenges.

- **Regional forces are gaining influence.** Until Egypt becomes more cohesive and unified, regional forces in the Gulf and Turkey will seek leverage and influence among those actors inside Egypt with whom they are most aligned.

These trends leave U.S. policymakers with few good options and limited influence. Nevertheless, Egypt remains one of the most important strategic priorities for U.S. policy in the Middle East. At a time when the Obama administration is focused on Iran's nuclear program, advancing a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict, and the growing threats posed by Syria's civil war, the security, political, and economic trends in Egypt will have a longstanding impact on stability in the region. Going forward, Washington should consider the following actions:

- **Advocate for political inclusion as a means to support stability, effective governance, and economic growth.** The United States should insist that interim authorities open up political space to all nonviolent political actors, end the suppression of dissent, and cease the brutality of their response to the street protests. The Obama administration should support the certification of Egypt's democratic progress by enabling assistance to flow only if the ruling authorities take serious steps toward greater respect for basic rights and freedoms.

- **Promote political dialogue.** The United States should encourage the government to open a broad-based dialogue that includes all nonviolent political actors. While true reconciliation may not be possible, dialogue and de-escalation should be a top priority.

- **Engage the Gulf region on the Egyptian economy.** The United States should renew its engagement with Egypt's partners in the Gulf to build better coordination in support of Egypt's economy. It should work to ensure that the support international actors provide to Egypt helps build a framework for inclusive politics and open economic competition.

- **Reform U.S. security assistance to help the country meet today's pressing security challenges.** The U.S. security assistance program is not well positioned to help Egypt meet the threats the country currently faces. The United States and Egypt should develop a common security agenda to address the core roots of militancy by developing stronger tools to root out violent elements. There should be a renewed focus on strengthening police forces that operate with greater respect for the rule of law and basic civil liberties.

The state of Egyptian politics

"The problem with Egyptians is that they are like a pilot who could fly the plane but has no idea how to land it. As a surgeon myself, it is like opening up the patient but having no idea how to close the wound. Both camps have no idea what to do now."[2] – Senior Salafi leader

Prisoner of the past: Lack of experience in open politics

More than three years after Egypt's 2011 revolution that toppled then President Mubarak, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian state are locked in a bitter zero-sum struggle, with few on either side prepared to compromise. The lack of interest in, or space for, negotiation has its roots not only in the past three years but also in decades of Egyptian history. The central struggle in Egypt's politics is about power and identity, without a well-developed political ideology and a clear set of ideas about an effective governing agenda. As one interlocutor close to the Brotherhood put it, "Egypt has suffered from a lack of political life for over 30 years."[3] This experience has left it deprived of a pragmatic political class schooled in the art of compromise.

The thin policy and governing agenda is recognized across the spectrum in Egypt. As a former senior member of Mubarak's now-dissolved National Democratic Party put it, the "lack of change" in the political order and its failure to "answer the demands of the opposition" set the stage for the overthrow of Mubarak.[4] The outcome is an Egyptian political order best understood less as a balance of power and more as a "balance of weakness"[5] in which competing centers of power lack strong popular legitimacy. The resulting system is susceptible to political forces with meager governing agendas and open to intervention by cohesive national institutions, such as the military, as well as by external players backing their favored political forces inside Egypt.

Part of the problem lies with state institutions themselves.[6] Their behavior often resembles that of "fraternities or sects"[7] dependent on loyalty and competing for resources. Political analysts point to the military's decision to not back up the police in their confrontation with protesters in 2011 as a watershed moment in the countdown to Mubarak's ouster. The security institutions found greater unity of purpose in moving against Morsi in 2013. But they remain handicapped by internal rivalry and a struggle for self-preservation and, in some cases, a desire to settle the score with those who faced them down in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Egypt's security institutions are poorly equipped to manage the country's social and economic challenges.

The Muslim Brotherhood is also a prisoner of its past. Its hierarchy, rigid internal discipline, and grassroots base made it the only civilian movement strongly positioned to step into Egypt's political vacuum in 2011. But it arrived in power with little understanding of how to govern or play politics out in the open. Its ideological lineage places it within the same overall camp of many of the most extreme Islamist groups in the region, but its initial willingness to participate in elections and politics made it distinctive. The Brotherhood's record in office proved abysmal. Morsi's governing agenda was out of step with the Egyptian public. "We only knew how to be against the Mubarak regime. We did not understand how to create a strong party. … Our strength was in others being weak,"[8] said a senior Freedom and Justice Party official. As a result, Morsi and the team around him were neither prepared to govern nor ready to engage with political rivals or other stakeholders to build consensus or achieve buy-in. According to a Brotherhood leader, "We did not know what to do … We bit off more than we could chew."[9]

The non-Islamists who helped bring down the Brotherhood have not fared much better. Their ranks include nationalists, socialists, liberals, and elements of the private sector. These groups are unified only in their objection to Islamists.[10] "They are the ones pressuring [Field Marshal] Sisi and the government not to have a dialogue or reconciliation,"[11] said a senior non-Islamist politician. Speaking of the liberals and leftists, he also reflected, "[They're] nothing but a big failure … They would like to jump to power with no effort. They still think they're living in the 1960s."[12]

Polarized politics: No mood to compromise

The resulting political landscape is bereft of institutions or actors positioned to help the parties find a way out of the conflict. As a leading Da'wa sheikh put it, "This zero-sum problem has only grown worse and now is in the direction of destroying society."[13] Supporters of Morsi's overthrow exhibit overconfidence and downplay the risks of the current course. For them, June 30, 2013, was the "State's revolution." In the words of one the country's most senior officials, "Political Islam is dead … we will not allow it to come back."[14] Others, including a former National Democratic Party official speaking about the Muslim Brotherhood, say that "it will take another 10 to 15 years before the [Muslim Brotherhood] is able to recover from June 30 … Egypt has set in motion the undoing of the Muslim Brotherhood."[15]

The security crackdown has not been limited to the Brotherhood. Other Islamists who had reluctantly accepted the political roadmap but were poised to vote down the new constitution found their activists in jail on the eve of the referendum. The scope of the repression widened to include non-Islamists opposed to the government and the new powers afforded to the military, including revolutionary organizations such as the April 6 Youth Movement.[16] A few restrained voices close to the regime's governing circle question the efficacy of this heavy-handed approach. One such observer cited the dangers inherent in the application of widespread repression, underscoring the importance of "distinguishing between the different types of demonstrations or at least participants in the demonstrations."[17] His advice was to deal with the non-Islamist opposition through means other than a crackdown. Instead, since last summer, the regime has taken steps to try to close what little political space existed.[18]

Those who do not object in principle to sitting down with the Brotherhood put preconditions on such talks that the Brotherhood would be hard pressed to accept. "First, the Muslim Brotherhood should renounce violence. Second, they should eliminate the first row of leadership—the top leadership. Third, the Brotherhood must accept the roadmap. But I can assure you that they will not accept the roadmap,"[19] said a president of a non-Islamist party. Others consider it simply unrealistic to talk about reconciliation with the current Muslim Brotherhood leadership. "We must wait until the next generation emerges in order to undertake negotiations,"[20] said a senior leader of a non-Islamist party. These perceptions are not lost on the Islamists. While some inside the Brotherhood approach the question of reconciliation or even de-escalation with

"It will take another 10 to 15 years before the [Muslim Brotherhood] is able to recover from June 30."

a measure of pragmatism, they are in the minority. Most Brothers remain committed to a strategy of confrontation in which they aspire to outlast the interim authorities in a struggle of endurance.

Perhaps the most dangerous and unpredictable element in this ongoing power struggle is the impact of this pressure on Islamists overall. The struggle in Egypt increasingly takes on a life of its own as harder-line Islamist elements inside and outside the Muslim Brotherhood fill the engine room of the demonstrations. Radical Islamists push the envelope of violence and recast their struggle in regional and apocalyptic terms: "This is just a strategic retreat and not the final battlefield we are facing. And so we must cooperate with outside Islamists and even the armed struggle in Syria. We either play this game or we meet our end. There is no third option. I either eat, or I will be eaten,"[21] said an Islamist youth activist who is an advocate for violence.

Specter of continued economic collapse in Egypt

Three years of political instability have only worsened the economic situation that led to the downfall of Mubarak. The Egyptian public sector has burned through much of its foreign reserves. Last year, the government spent more than $24 billion on food and fuel subsides. That is roughly 30 percent of public expenditure, or 9.7 percent of the country's gross domestic product, or GDP.[22] The public debt stands at nearly 90 percent of GDP. Economists and politicians close to the interim authorities acknowledge that the country is only kept afloat by the nearly $15 billion pledged from Gulf countries.[23] But this money cannot flow forever.

Egypt's lack of experience in open and competitive politics has compounded the country's economic and social problems. A succession of transitional governments with an average shelf life of nine months has made any serious attempt at economic reform impossible. The next government will have no choice but to tighten belts and tackle economic reform in a country more impatient than ever for economic progress. But to do so, some form of functional politics is required. The last Egyptian president to try to take major steps on subsidies was Anwar Sadat in 1977. He was forced to reverse course quickly in the face of riots that killed dozens of Egyptians.[24] A basic level of compromise and common purpose will be required to implement the changes that Egypt's economy requires to provide enough food, energy, and jobs to its people.

Egypt has one of the youngest populations in the region, and the intersection of demography with stability plays a critical role. Many of the state's institutions and economic policies were structured during the Nasser era in the 1950s to 1960s, but Egypt has grown more than 300 percent in population size since then and is expected to grow by more than 50 percent in the next 50 years.[25]Nearly 54 percent of Egyptians are under 24 years old—24 million of whom are between the ages of 15 and 29, which experts consider the "fighting age."[26] This demographic time bomb places further stress on the country's fragile political and security dynamics.

The current political standoff threatens to damage social cohesion in Egypt in the coming decades. The trauma of the past three years has been significant, and its effects are taking on a generational character. Adding to that is the devastation of the more than 1,000 Egyptians killed in the span of less than six months following the July 2013 overthrow.[27] Most of the casualties belong to the Islamist camp, but an increasing number are drawn from the ranks of the security services. The longer the battle for the streets continues and the more violent it becomes, the deeper the societal scar tissue will run. As one senior Salafi politician reflected:

> *I cannot imagine how the second generation of police and the second genera-*
> *tion of the Brotherhood are going to deal with the legacy of violence and*
> *bloodshed. We will have to live with this legacy for decades. The younger gen-*
> *eration will be angry about what was done to their fathers. This will damage*
> *social cohesion for decades.*[28]

Impact of unprecedented pressure on the Muslim Brotherhood

The crackdown since the ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013 is the most intense since the movement's founding. Unlike in previous crackdowns, Egyptian security institutions have killed several hundred Brotherhood activists. At the same time, the Brotherhood suffers from a major backlash after an unpopular year in power.

Who are the Muslim Brothers?

The Society of the Muslim Brothers, or the Muslim Brotherhood, is Egypt's oldest and largest Islamist movement. The Brotherhood is a tightly knit, socially conservative organization that has largely survived due to a rigid vertical hierarchy. (see Figure 1) Its founder, Hassan al-Banna started his career in 1928 when he invited young men sitting in cafes to mosques, and ended with his assassination 20 years later in retribution for one of his 500,000[29] followers' murder of then-Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud al-Nuqrashi Pasha. Al-Nuqrashi was the first government official to take steps to dissolve the group, citing its use of violence as a political tactic and plot to overthrow the monarchy to gain power.

The Muslim Brotherhood shares a historical and ideological lineage in common with many of the leading Islamist extremist groups in the world, including the global Al Qaeda movement. But in recent decades, the Muslim Brotherhood's views have evolved, morphed, and mutated, and radical Islamist groups have long criticized it for its decision to engage in politics. The group defines the purpose of its founding as "reviving the spirit of Islam and awakening faith in the hearts of society … for the nation to rise again, to restore its historical position and vital role and achieve its duty."[30] It stands to preserve what it believes to be Egypt's Islamic identity and has historically advocated for the implementation of Sharia law. The group believes that gender equality can only exist so long as it does not contradict what its religious scholars interpret from Islamic law and has opposed international treaties on human and women's rights out of fear of "legalizing homosexuality or allowing sexual relations outside of wedlock."[31]

The movement has endured previous calamities, with the harshest of periods occurring during the reign of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, when thousands of Brotherhood leaders were put in jail and the group faced near-certain destruction.[32] Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, breathed new life into the group, as he let many of its followers and leaders out of prison to counter the growth of leftist and communist activists on university campuses.[33] Relations with President Sadat soured over Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, and many activists were back in prison following the assassination of Sadat at the hands of the terrorist Islamic Group.[34] Conditions changed yet again during the presidency of Hosni Mubarak, who largely tolerated the group and did not seek to eradicate it as it spread into professional syndicates and others parts of society.

What has traditionally allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to bounce back is its reliance on a vertical organizational structure, the members of which often share familial bonds. If a Brother is not born into a Brotherhood family, he spends many years being vetted and tested before being allowed to formally join the group. There is also a heavy focus on youth acculturation, and the organization has invested heavily in youth camps and learning centers, along with thorough religious education.

The shock of the 2011 revolution

The January 2011 revolution took the leadership of the Brotherhood by surprise. With a well-honed sense of self-preservation, the Brotherhood's leadership cautiously weighed the consequences of throwing the full weight of the organization behind the protests. Early on, Brotherhood youth were permitted to participate only in their individual capacities.[35] Once President Mubarak was overthrown, the leadership—sensing a historic opportunity—moved swiftly into the vacuum, forming the Freedom and Justice Party, or FJP, and mobilizing for the parliamentary elections of 2011 and 2012. The Brotherhood won nearly half of the seats in the elected People's Assembly.[36] The results whetted the organization's appetite for political power and paved the way for Mohamed Morsi to win the second round of the 2012 presidential election.

But electoral victories masked lingering divisions inside the Brotherhood. In 2011, a group of Brotherhood youth challenged the organization's political direction and called for a nationwide youth conference.[37] The leadership responded swiftly, punishing members who deviated from its orders.[38] In response, some members broke

FIGURE 1
The hierarchy of the Muslim Brotherhood

The Guidance bureau and the secretary general oversee the Brotherhood's affairs across Egypt's 27 governorates. At the governorate, district, and branch levels there are both administrative offices and consultative councils responsible for local decisions and affairs.
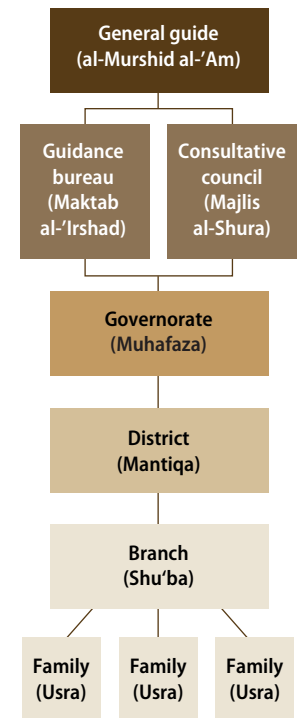
Sources: Tarek Masoud, *Counting Islam: Religion, Class, and Elections in Egypt* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2014), p. 160; John L. Esposito and Emad El-Din Shahin, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 487. Dina Shehata, "Mapping Islamic Actors in Egypt" (Cairo, Egypt: Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo and Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 2012), available at http://media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/mapping-islamic-actors---version-2.2.pdf.

off to found the Egyptian Current Party, and others supported the presidential bid of former Brotherhood leader Abdel Moneim Abul Futuh and his Strong Egypt Party. A small number of high-level resignations and defections shed light on the gathering frustrations and internal challenges the organization was facing. Rather than motivate the Brotherhood to solve its internal issues, Morsi's election to the presidency pushed many of them aside.

Morsi's tenure as president proved disastrous for the Muslim Brotherhood. His administration was unable to improve economic conditions and manage a political transition that was inclusive and demonstrated respect for the full diversity of Egyptian society. Rather, he pushed through a constitutional declaration that gave him near-dictatorial powers in November 2012. In the months that followed, the country grew divided, and Morsi's regime grew more isolated and uncompromising.[39] He made controversial appointments across state institutions and to some governorships. These moves fed popular belief that the Brotherhood was more interested in controlling the country than governing it. In early 2013, dozens of people were killed in political clashes and violent incidents across the country,[40] and Morsi began to lose control of key state institutions. Calls for early elections reached a fever pitch, and millions of Egyptians protested on June 30, 2013.

The Muslim Brotherhood under attack

> "It will take another 10 to 15 years before the Brotherhood is able to recover from June 30. Egyptians have set in motion the undoing of the Muslim Brotherhood."[41] – Former National Democratic Party leader

On July 3, 2013, Morsi's minister of defense, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, replaced Morsi with the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, Adly Mansour, in what amounted to a military coup backed by widespread popular support. What followed was an unprecedented crackdown against the Muslim Brotherhood and its Islamist allies. On August 14, 2013, the police and military violently dispersed anti-overthrow protest camps at Rabaa, killing more than 900 Egyptians.[42] On December 25, 2013, the new government classified the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization[43] and froze the assets of nearly 1,000 Islamic nongovernmental organizations in a bid to dismantle the Brotherhood's social support base. The regime continues to go after any group perceived to be affiliated with or supportive of the Brotherhood, policies that eclipse attempts by previous Egyptian governments to control or repress the organization.[44]

The interim authorities have also leveraged state religious institutions, such as al-Azhar and the government's Ministry of Religious Endowments, to push the Brotherhood out of the mosques and challenge its moral and religious authority in a "campaign to promote Egyptian Islam."[45] In a sweeping decision, the Ministry of Religious Endowments dismissed thousands of imams who lacked proper licenses and banned Friday prayers in small and often unregistered mosques called Zawyas[46] sometimes controlled by the Brotherhood.[47] More boldly, the ministry recently issued an edict requiring preachers to stick to a standard "theme" during their Friday sermons.[48] This ambitious plan to control Egypt's mosques and "nationalize religious practice" signals a departure from the traditional relationship between the state and religious institutions.[49]

The scale of the bloodshed and severity of the current crackdown raise the specter of further radicalization within the Brotherhood's ranks. With its senior management imprisoned, second- and third-tier leaders are struggling to cope. In interviews with more than a dozen current and former members of the Muslim Brotherhood, we found that many remain committed to the organization and seek to preserve and restore what existed before July 2013. For these Brothers, the struggle should be nonviolent. However, a younger generation is growing ambivalent in its commitment to nonviolence and is less wedded to the traditional hierarchy. Some are resentful of the leadership. These youth serve as the foot soldiers in the protests and are joined in the streets by a number of former Brotherhood youth and Salafis galvanized by the overthrow and Rabaa crackdown. Finally, there are current and former Brothers who justify violence in response to state repression and some who have begun to advocate its use to bring down the state itself.

Brothers as usual

"The vacuum in leadership people talk about is overstated. The pyramid structure of the Muslim Brotherhood ensures there is always a second and third line."[50] – Senior Muslim Brotherhood leader

Most Brothers remain concerned first and foremost with the preservation of the organization and its hierarchy. For them, structure and discipline provide the strongest guarantees of their collective survival in the face of repression. Even if the interim authorities succeed in uprooting the organization, these members would seek to rebuild in line with the historical model. The backbone of this group consists largely of older members who have either attained senior posi-

tions in the organization—or its affiliate FJP—or those who were in secondary positions of leadership and are now in line to ascend internally. These individuals profess a commitment to get back to basics in rebuilding the organization. As one Brotherhood leader remarked, the movement will have to return to preaching and charity and spread into society, "even if it is through homeowners' associations."[51] He added, "I want to spread the thought, I want to interact with as many people as possible. We were raised to be useful."[52]

These Brothers remain steadfast in the face of state repression. Their commitment to continued street mobilization is firm, and they help organize and fund the protests to bring pressure on the interim government. While they express concern over the growing tendency by some youth in their ranks to engage in violence, they are increasingly unlikely to condemn the use of violence by protestors considered to be acting in self-defense. But the impact of the crackdown is palpable. In speaking with members up the chain of command and across Cairo and Alexandria, differing opinions emerged on key issues and core challenges before the Brotherhood. While they are shoulder to shoulder in skirmishing with the security forces, their views diverge as they look back over Morsi's tenure and forward to matters of politics and reconciliation. At times, this dissonance borders on incoherence and draws into question their ability to maintain unity of purpose.

Looking back

> *"At the end of the day, we are not angels, and we make mistakes."*[53]
> – Freedom and Justice Party official

This dissonance is evident when revisiting the Brotherhood's brief time in power. Senior members of the group and the party directly involved in the decision-making process under Morsi are unapologetic. They decry forces committed to their failure from the outset and pin the blame for their downfall on a "deep state" of conspiring intelligence services and state institutions joined by their international allies, which worked deliberately to undermine Morsi. They apportion a significant share of the blame to the media, which they accuse of fomenting public anger without basis. Their defense of Morsi's tenure is uncompromising and, until recently, dominated the public face of the organization. As one senior non-Islamist politician who stood with the Brotherhood during Morsi's tenure noted, "The Brotherhood has chosen not to re-examine the lessons of the past year. They are still captured by their time in power."[54]

In private, others display introspection and self-critique over tactics and policies, while remaining steadfast in their commitment to the ideology. A youthful Brother in Alexandria conceded that the movement "had a problem with [our] social, political, and economic programs."[55] The revolution took the Brotherhood by surprise, and there was no opportunity to properly examine its platform or polices. "Our ideas were theoretical; we didn't have a chance to present practical ideas. In 2015, there might be a new party and certainly a different platform,"[56] said a young Muslim Brotherhood leader. Others bemoan the failure to compromise or engage the opposition: "My advice to Dr. Morsi was to accommodate the opposition. I always advised Dr. Morsi to integrate the opposition and that this would lessen conflict and create a state of satisfaction for internal and external actors."[57] As another Brotherhood leader in Alexandria summed up, "We should not have bitten more than what we can chew."[58]

Going forward: No clear strategy

Many observers questioned the ability of the Brotherhood to chart a coherent path for the future: "The ability of the Ikhwan to strategize has been severely limited."[59] As one former member opined, "The Brotherhood doesn't know what it wants. The leaders are in jail [and] prefer to think about their legacy of martyrdom rather than managing losses."[60] Those leaders not in jail have done little to offer a compelling narrative for the future or a clear political strategy. Some questioned the efficacy of maintaining the FJP party under current conditions. An FJP official in Cairo acknowledged that serious consideration was being given to dissolving the party to protest the legitimacy of the current political order. Meanwhile, an FJP official in Alexandria spoke of the need to renew the party's outreach efforts, including to some who opposed Morsi, and for a media strategy involving coordination of FJP appearances on the Qatari-based Al Jazeera television channel. A senior leader went further, speaking confidently of a new approach for the party in the next elections to have a blocking minority: "We shouldn't go for majority … like we used to say, participation, not domination."[61]

Discussions surrounding the possibilities for reconciliation uncovered divisions among the rank and file regarding room for negotiation with the state. A younger FJP official who was in the company of a Muslim Brotherhood youth activity coordinator explained:

[There is] nothing anyone can do to calm the street if President Morsi is not released because democracy cannot come any other way. If [the senior leaders] come out and announce a plan different than this, we will see who follows them. Even if the Murshid [General guide] himself comes out and says this, no one will listen to him.[62]

A more senior FJP member echoed the condition of releasing Morsi but was open to working with elements in the current regime after the condition of Morsi's release is met and discussed the need for "out-of-the-box"[63] solutions to the current problems. In his view, after a de-escalation in the crackdown, there could be negotiations wherein the Brotherhood could practice politics in exchange for putting controversial issues, such as the Brotherhood's social agenda and Islamic law, on hold for a number of years and guaranteeing the military's interests so long as it stays out of direct politics. One FJP official in Alexandria responsible for political outreach said, "There is even talk that Morsi may not come back [as president], but at least we would be back to the track we used to be in [of democracy], and that would be fine."[64]

Further complicating the group's cohesiveness is the growing number of Brotherhood leaders and members outside Egypt that try to influence the actions and strategy of the group. Many of these leaders have sought shelter in Qatar and Turkey,[65] while others have set up shop in London.[66] The largely uncoordinated and seemingly haphazard efforts have ranged from dead-on-arrival calls to form a government in exile[67] to more ambitious designs to take the group's fight to the International Criminal Court[68] whose governing Rome Statute was blocked from ratification by the group when it was in power.[69] A Brotherhood activist involved in street protests remarked that the calls for an exile government amounted to "political suicide"[70] and expressed skepticism of outside efforts, suggesting that foreign powers such as Turkey cannot be trusted.

Efforts by Brotherhood activists calling for a restoration of democracy are undermined by the efforts of other members and supporters in exile who espouse violence and engage in inflammatory rhetoric. At least two Brotherhood-funded satellite channels were launched in recent months—Ahrar 25 and Rabaa—both of which have adopted a combative and provocative media posture. Ahrar 25 has aired segments of inflammatory sectarian rhetoric, while Rabaa—which is based in Turkey[71]—hosts a show by controversial Islamic Group cleric Assem Abdel Magid called "Egypt is Islamic."[72]

Youth: The generational divide

In the past, tensions have emerged between Muslim Brotherhood youth and their leaders, but they had little to no impact on the organization itself. A generational divide is once again apparent, and the conditions of the current pressure lend it new significance. With much of the leadership in jail, Brotherhood youth enjoy growing influence inside the organization as they provide both muscle and tactical leadership in the street. They also tend to be the least compromising in their rhetoric. Even those serving in senior positions inside the FJP are open about their readiness to disobey what remains of the senior leadership if the latter were to compromise prematurely.

The younger generation is questioning whether it is possible to the return to the pre-2011 modus operandi when the Brotherhood "coexisted with repression."[73] Before 2011, the organization avoided confronting the state when it arrested its members "because it was too costly."[74] But now, these younger Brothers assert a greater appetite for confrontation and struggle in the street. A senior Brotherhood leader neatly summed up the current dynamic during an interview in Alexandria:

> *I find that some youth are unhappy at the end of a protest because they feel that they should do more. Some of the youth want to get in clashes with the police, but the next day they still come out with us. Thus far, protest organizers ... are successful in containing violence, and there is no organized violence. But their persistence will continue.*[75]

These younger cadres often find themselves demonstrating side by side with many of their former colleagues who have left the organization in recent years. The latter appear to exercise a degree of influence disproportional to their numbers. They reject the rigid hierarchy of the organization and blame the leadership for the crisis that has befallen it. They distinguish between the need to defend the Brotherhood and the imperative to struggle for a wider set of ideals. One such ex-Brotherhood member, a self-described "strategist," asserted that the struggle was not between the state and the Brotherhood but between Egyptians and an oppressive government. "What motivates me is not the return of Morsi or the Brotherhood but rather fighting for the poor people and to make Egypt prosperous and strong," said this ex-Brother.[76]

These former Brotherhood youth are exercising a gravitational pull over their one-time colleagues as the circle of opposition against Morsi's ouster expands and events in the street take on their own life and momentum. There are indications that the bonds between current and former Brotherhood youth forged in the crucible of daily protest are undercutting the traditional chain of command. One source interviewed indicated that some younger Brothers are starting to ignore orders from their superiors, deferring instead to former members and other Islamist activists whom they see as more in touch with reality on the ground. Some former Brotherhood youth revealed that the organization's leadership reached out to them in recent months seeking their assistance in crafting a response to the events of July 2013 and during the sit-in at Rabaa.

The degree to which these youths will influence in the future of the Brotherhood remains an open question. Some youth speak of plans to reinvent the organization in line with the reformist ideas emanating from former Brotherhood leaders, such as former presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Abul Futuh, who have gone on to found their own movements. Others point to signs that organizations such as Futuh's Strong Egypt Party and the Al-Wasat Party may absorb the more reform minded of these current and former youth cadres. But the specter of further radicalization hovers increasingly on the horizon.

Potential for continued radicalization

> *"We don't believe in the idea of nonviolence; this was always a tactical choice. Nothing prohibits us from the use of violence. The social contract has dissolved."* [77]
> – Former Muslim Brotherhood youth

The prospects for continued radicalization and more violence have been perhaps the most feared outcomes of the state's ongoing crackdown on the group. Although some Muslim Brotherhood members continue to reject violence, a growing number of Brothers, specifically youth, have been taking matters into their own hands. But it is important to distinguish at the outset between the low-level violence carried out by current or former Brothers and that of Sinai-based terrorist organizations that specifically target security personnel and tourists. For the time being, much of the violence employed by the Brotherhood and anti-government Salafis is restricted to burning police vehicles. This violence is tactical and reactive in nature and appears distinct from violent jihad associated with groups

such as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, or ABM. At the same time, these groups share an ideological and historical lineage, and this presents the opportunity for further radicalization and cross-pollination.

There are some Brotherhood members, including many former Brotherhood youth, who have come to reject the state itself, as well as the idea of democracy. For them, the use of violence is justified by the dissolution of the social contract and the need to defend oneself. They criticize the previous calculation by Islamists who thought change could be brought about from inside the state. These activists view democracy as a "form of deception"[78] that was used as a political tool to stall real change in the region. As one activist explained, the overthrow not only exposed the "lie of democracy"[79] but also underscored that the Islamist project was never meant to be implemented from within the state. To him:

> The [Islamist] project failed, failed by the bullets of Rabaa. There is no Islamist that does not have at least five friends that were killed in Rabaa. And so the theory [of working inside the state] crumbled for us in our minds.[80]

These activists resent the senior Brotherhood leadership, whom they believe abandoned core Islamist principles, and are actively seeking to convince the rank and file of the necessity to resort to violence. Unlike in the past, when it discouraged such behavior, Brotherhood leaders are now pushing their rank and file to protest. While violence may not have been their intent, the months of demonstrations on campuses and in the streets are drawing activists into a vindictive cycle of violence. But if the leadership now tries to distance itself from this activity or, worse, negotiates with the regime, they may find themselves on the receiving end of this anger and frustration.

These youth have come to reject the Egyptian state and believe that the country can progress only if the traditional centers of power—the military, the intelligence, the police, bureaucracy, and business networks—are taken apart rather than co-opted. "The direction we are heading is perhaps organized chaos, and if it leads to anarchy, so be it,"[81] said a former Brotherhood member involved in violent street activity. What makes these young activists noteworthy is their rejection of the old ways of Islamists, including those of Al Qaeda. Activists dismissed the label "Al Qaeda." Some even criticized the exclusionary operations of the Islamic States in Syria and Iraq as antithetical to the model of violence they advocate, which depends on popular support for armed insurgency.

The stunning successes of ABM in January 2014 in targeting positions deep inside Cairo and shooting down a military helicopter in the Sinai Peninsula[82] have likely emboldened some of the more radical elements of Egypt's Islamists. Most of the youth interviewed who support the use of violence indicated they were considering how to operationalize this commitment. Still-unconfirmed reports suggested the birth of small, violent groups acting independently of ABM but inspired by its success. One group called Ajnad Misr has claimed responsibility for some smaller attacks around Cairo. Another calling itself the Hawks of Qutb has rejected the Brotherhood's call for Morsi's return and instead is focusing simply on fighting for Islam. These violent groups share a conviction to drop the fight for Morsi's return in favor of wider struggle for Islam and the defeat of the Egyptian state. Others call themselves names such as the Molotov Movement; the Execution Movement; Wala', or "set fire"; and the Resistance Brigades.[83] The latter are more aptly described as anarchists and focus their message on retribution for those killed by security services. Their tactics mainly focus on targeting security vehicles and, at times, personnel with petrol bombs and improvised explosives. Wala' claimed responsibility for a small detonation that targeted a police checkpoint and resulted in four injuries in February 2014.[84]

Egypt's other Islamists

The Muslim Brotherhood does not hold a monopoly over the Islamist landscape in Egypt. Other, more orthodox Islamists known as Salafis have founded networks of schools and charities over the past century to spread their message, and many made their foray into politics following the January 2011 revolution. The term Salafism is a reference to al-salaf al-saleh, or the rightful predecessors who accompanied the prophet Muhammad and his earliest successors. Modern-day Salafis believe that these people, and the time in which they lived, provide the best examples of a true and pure Muslim society that should be replicated today. Although most Egyptian Salafis do not disagree with the totality of the message of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna (see Text Box on page 10), they part with the Brotherhood on matters of implementation and its approach to modernity.

The Salafi landscape in Egypt today is diverse, fragmented, and unorganized. Anyone can arguably become Salafi or identify as such, as the term is used to encompass many conservative interpretations of Islam. There is no single unifying figure or interpretation of Islam that binds Salafis together. As a result, their political loyalties are unpredictable—some backed the military overthrow of former President Morsi, while others supported the Brotherhood. This makes the Salafi label quite fluid and thus important to distinguish from that of the Brotherhood, whose members have been traditionally tightly regimented.

The Salafi Da'wa

There are numerous Salafi groups and parties in Egypt (see Appendix), but the most organized and influential is the Salafi Da'wa (Salafi Call) and its political wing, the Nour Party. Established in the 1970s in Alexandria, the Da'wa began as a group of students operating under the Islamic Group umbrella. They organized lectures on Salafism and refused to join the larger Muslim Brotherhood, eventually leading to clashes between the two groups.[85] Despite government attempts to contain the group, the Salafi Da'wa spread outside Alexandria. Its institute to pre-

pare new preachers grew into 25 branches across Egypt with about 6,000 students after the January 2011 revolution. Although the Daʿwa believes that the state does not implement Islam as it should, it has traditionally avoided the path of confrontation. The Daʿwa is the only organized Salafi body involved in politics today that was able to build a nationwide network with an executive committee.[86] The Daʿwa's Nour Party surprised many Egyptians by capturing nearly one-quarter of the seats in the first elected parliament after the January 2011 revolution.

The future of the Nour Party and the Daʿwa

The Nour Party played a major role in polarizing the country from 2011 to 2012, when it demanded ultraconservative legislation and advocated for the inclusion of some of the most conservative articles in the history of Egyptian constitutions. The party's statements were often contentious, including a statement by the spokesperson of the Salafi Daʿwa that Islam forbids democracy.[87] To this day, the party objects to the principle that government derives its authority from the people. In reality, there is little that is pluralistic, democratic, or progressive in the party's message. Yet this religiously uncompromising force has proved itself to be one of Egypt's most politically agile players. The Daʿwa engineered one of the most controversial articles in Morsi's 2012 constitution, which by their own admission was designed to ensure limitations on freedoms that may contradict Sharia.[88]

The Nour Party attracted much attention in early 2013 when the party's president, Emad Abdel Ghafour, split from the group, taking at least 150 members with him to form the Watan, or Homeland, Party. Abdel Ghafour and the others rejected the domination of the Daʿwa clerics over the Nour Party, specifically that of the ambitious senior cleric Yasser Borhami. The founding of the Watan failed to significantly weaken the Nour Party.[89] After the split, Nour grew more critical of Morsi and sided with the military overthrow of him. Its decisions have made it the target of attack by the Muslim Brotherhood and its Salafi allies who accuse Nour of treason. "The Nour Party's principle is betting on the winning horse. It is pragmatic and does not follow Islamic principles,"[90] said a former member of the Nour Party. These events have led many to write obituaries for Nour, but it remains today the last Islamist party standing in Egypt.

Senior Daʿwa clerics explain that the decision to side with the military in July was a calculated step in accordance with Islamic law. According to them, Islam does not allow Muslims to confront "steel walls,"[91] or the military and security branches who are against the Brotherhood, solely for the purpose of sacrifice. A former member of the Nour Party elaborated that clerics are deeply reluctant to risk Daʿwa youth, the so-called "cream of the crop,"[92] in a doomed confrontation with the state. Daʿwa clerics argue that pragmatism is a principle found in Islamic law to which the Muslim Brotherhood fails to adhere. Daʿwa support for the overthrow was also rooted in its mistrust of the Brotherhood and its perceived efforts to monopolize the Islamist landscape.

Daʿwa clerics dismiss accusations of political opportunism by stating that a proselytizing organization can only grow "like a seed that grows into a tree."[93] They are comfortable with the fact that the pace of reform may be slow. They believe that Egyptian society is still not ready for change, and though people may want Sharia law, they are still not equipped to implement it properly in the current environment. They see the current crisis as a zero-sum game being played by the Brotherhood and the military. They do not believe that the Brotherhood was on a path toward implementing Sharia, and there was no need for the Daʿwa to throw itself "into the hole that was dug for the Brotherhood."[94] The Daʿwa and the Nour Party have adjusted their rhetoric accordingly, shifting from a call to implement Sharia in 2011 to the need to preserve Egypt's Islamic identity and even the country's military.

It remains unclear whether these pragmatic shifts at the top will trickle down to the core of Daʿwa followers. The Daʿwa clergy have perfected the art of justifying unpopular measures by convincing followers to accept the lesser of two evils. However, an FJP official in Alexandria explained that the Brotherhood is actively trying to push Salafi youth away from the Daʿwa by painting the current conflict as one about Islam and not just Morsi. Some dissident Daʿwa youth have drifted away from their sheikhs and are calling for reforms. These youth remain small in number, and their discourse is still intellectual and inaccessible. But their warning that the leadership of the Daʿwa, largely unchanged since the 1970s, risks losing its Islamic authority is growing in resonance.

If the sheikhs fail to keep the Daʿwa together in the face of dissent, the implications will not be limited to the Salafi community. Former Daʿwa youth interviewed explained that some young men have grown disillusioned with the concept of the modern state, which they only grudgingly accepted could be

reformed in the first place. Furthermore, they find it difficult to understand how an Islamic state can come to Egypt with the status quo in place. As a result, more youth are likely to break away from the Da'wa and become closer to other Salafi movements that oppose the government.

The other Salafis

The Salafis who are now protesting against the state and have sided with Morsi belong to schools of thought that differ from the method and organizational structure of the Salafi Da'wa. The majority of anti-government Salafis are unorganized or affiliated with smaller Salafi political parties. Although they do not belong to the Brotherhood, they constitute a significant segment of those protesting alongside the Brotherhood. They are mainly sympathetic with the Brotherhood but elect to be part of the fight playing out on the streets because they believe the state and the military are in fact fighting Islam.

Some of the Salafis, including the Islamic Group's Building and Development Party and the Asala Party, grew closer to Morsi and the Brotherhood during his short tenure. Their conservative bona fides were attractive to the Brotherhood as the Salafi Da'wa turned against them. Their zeal was also instrumental in keeping alive the 47-day-long pro-Morsi protest held at Rabaa before it was violently dispersed. Some of them, such as the Islamic Group, had a history of violent terrorism and often threatened the non-Islamist opposition and Christians with violence. Some leaders of these Salafis and Salafi parties have joined the Brotherhood in an anti-government political coalition called the National Alliance to Support Legitimacy.

Some members of the Islamic Group seem closer to the violent interpretations of Islam, which they claimed to abandon in the late 1990s after their bloody low-level insurgency failed against Mubarak. A member of the Shura Council—the consultative and decision-making body—of the Islamic Group insisted that the leadership still believes in nonviolence but qualified his statement by pointing out that not all of the movement's youth are under its authority. He noted that, in light of the rising anger among his constituents in Upper Egypt and what "youth discuss on the Internet," it would "not be far-fetched" for some to carry weapons.[95] The Islamic Group has been largely quiet since August, after one of its top leaders, Assem Abdel Maguid, fled to Qatar.

The other strand in the Salafi opposition is that of so-called "revolutionary Salafis."[96] These tend to be younger Salafis who may have recently adopted Salafism. They are influenced by Salafi sheikhs from Cairo, Giza, and Mansoura who have traditionally been at odds with the Alexandria-based Salafi Da'wa. The Salafi Front is a group that seeks to unite these disparate Salafis and has been in confrontation with the state since 2011. These Salafis are not Takfiris—Muslims who label other Muslims as apostates—and are far from jihadists. But their zeal and fatalist Islamist views that easily justify violence on revolutionary grounds raise concerns. A senior member of the Salafi Front insisted that no compromise or reconciliation, even by the Brotherhood leaders themselves, would make his group end its protests against the state. "The government is weak. It will fall. We will only resolve this conflict in the street."[97]

The Da'wa breakaway Watan Party stands out as perhaps the most politically experienced of the Salafi groups opposed to Morsi's ouster. Its roots in the Salafi Da'wa nonviolent teachings insulate the party to some degree from the street violence to which members of the Islamic Group or the Salafi Front may be disposed. But this does not mean that the Watan Party or its followers will remain passive as the level of repression rises. A senior official in the Watan insisted that its rank and file would continue protesting for Morsi's return. But he warned that in facing Islamists' unwavering commitment to continue protesting, he imagines a scenario wherein the state bombs its own cities in an attempt to force the anti-government protesters into submission.[98]

Although some of these Salafi groups are not armed or have rejected violence in the past, they will remain a potential source of violence. The introduction of Salafi groups condoning revolutionary violence adds new volatility to the landscape. What often distinguished jihadi and Takfiri Salafis from their nonviolent brethren are questions over the method of implementing a shared Islamic vision. These distinctions will at best be blurred if the situation in Egypt continues to deteriorate.

Analysis: The current phase of Egypt's political transition and its impact on political Islamists

The landscape of political Islam in Egypt is fragmenting

The landscape of political Islam in Egypt has begun to fragment under the weight of the current crisis. Even organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood, with a strong internal hierarchy and deep historical roots in Egyptian society, have begun to splinter in the face of significant government repression. This comes through in conversation with Brotherhood members. The diversity of views expressed on critical issues such as the use of violence, reconciliation with the state, and the future of the FJP reflects a growing level of organizational incoherence.

Relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi Da'wa had begun to sour early in former President Morsi's tenure, and his ouster set the two at loggerheads. The Brotherhood considers the Da'wa traitorous for supporting the overthrow, while the Da'wa sees the Brotherhood as incompetent and delusional. Divisions inside the Salafi community have grown acute. The Salafi Front and the Islamic Group's Building and Development Party dismiss what they call the moral bankruptcy of the Nour Party. None of these divisions will be overcome easily and will likely lead to confrontation between the various Islamist camps.

The Muslim Brotherhood lacks a strategic vision and faces a historic challenge

To the extent that it has a strategy, the Brotherhood and its supporters seek to kill the state through a thousand cuts. They gamble that the more brutal the state becomes, the faster the court of public opinion will turn against it. Over time, they expect the state to run out of money and its institutions to begin to break down. This will set the stage for their return or at least bring the military to the negotiating table. But the Brothers have little clarity on how the struggle would

resolve in their favor. While some look back on the events of the 2011 revolution for inspiration, others admit their plan to be little more than a hope. As one senior Brotherhood member explained, "Nobody has an idea of what the downfall of the military regime will look like, nor how we can lessen the military's grip on power or can bring back democracy. Having a vision right now is very difficult."[99]

The Brotherhood has survived periods of state repression in the past, but this latest calamity could prove to be a watershed moment for the organization. For most of its history, the group has found ways to work with or around the state. But the Brotherhood's rapid rise to and fall from power has called this agenda into question. Rabaa Square turned the current confrontation with the state into a vendetta. The Brotherhood has come to rely on its youth to maintain a ground game in the streets. Former members of the group and other Islamists detached from its hierarchy influence the direction of the protests. Under pressure, the Brotherhood draws upon these constituencies to sustain the body of the organization. But these youth and former members are not content to respect the hierarchy of the organization. To the extent the Brotherhood relies on them, the viability of its traditional structure and organization is drawn into question.

The Salafi Da'wa has aligned itself with the current ruling powers and remains a key political actor

The Salafi Da'wa may be increasingly isolated from other Islamists, but it has displayed a strong tactical ability to maneuver in a highly dynamic environment. Ambition, not ideology, drove it to side against the Brotherhood. Its political wing—the Nour Party—is the only Islamist party that remains above ground. Its rejection of violence and pragmatic approach to politics set it apart from other Salafi groups. In response to the Brotherhood's shifting fortunes, the Salafi Da'wa chose the path of expediency rather than face certain repression. Its decision to continue to support the interim government, despite the violence of Rabaa Square, only heightened intra-Islamist rivalry and competition. The battle in Egypt today is not simply secular versus Islamist. For Egypt's political Islamists, it has become a family affair. If the Salafi Da'wa and its Nour Party are unable to keep disillusioned supporters from leaving, the consequences could spill beyond the borders of these organizations. Their youth possess a strict interpretation of Islam. While this interpretation rejects the jihadi current, the intellectual leap between the two is not great.

The threat of further violent radicalization is real

The Muslim Brotherhood is increasingly structurally incoherent in many parts of the country. Some elements encourage confrontation in the streets and refrain from condemning acts of violence committed by their followers. While it has yet to permeate the institution, violent radicalization is taking place at the individual level and among circles of Muslim Brotherhood youth that often work with other Islamists. This trend is clearest among the youth who are steadily escalating their response to state repression. While most political observers still see it as a form of self-defense, some of the younger Brothers who have emerged to fill the leadership vacuum seek to convince others of the need to use violence proactively. Some have begun to organize independently of the Brotherhood and call for targeting security services.

For the Salafis who stand with the Brotherhood, the battle is not just about justice for the hundreds killed at Rabaa but also a struggle for Islam. These Salafis are susceptible to influence from terrorist groups such as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis. More broadly, Egypt appears poised to experience the resurgence of a more militant understanding of how Islam should be implemented as the challenge of founding an Islamic state or one that adheres to strict Islamic principles becomes more complicated and bloody. The specter of terrorist violence experienced in the 1980s and 1990s under Sadat and Mubarak has already returned.

A strong overt political role for the military risks its independence and standing with the Egyptian people

At every stage of Egypt's transition since Mubarak's ouster, the political forces that were in the dominant position have overplayed their hands. This overreach created the tremendous polarization that prevents Egypt from making difficult decisions that would reinforce long-term stability and prosperity. The military-backed interim government shows little sign of deviating from this trend. In closing political space and consolidating power, it is making some of the same mistakes that Morsi made during his presidency.

This course presents a risk for the military itself. In a polarized Egypt, the military has been one of the few institutions that has remained popular at a broad national level. The interim authorities it backs now own the socioeconomic problems that first led to Mubarak's fall and then contributed to Morsi's ouster. But the new

interim leaders appear no better equipped to confront these challenges than their predecessors. Interviews with senior officials close to interim authorities yield few prescriptions for solving the country's economic woes beyond an international donor conference and tinkering with Egypt's cumbersome subsidy program. For now, the largesse of the Gulf states is keeping the Egyptian public sector afloat. It remains to be seen whether this assistance can keep popular discontent at bay.

The regional forces at play

The political struggle for Egypt will have implications for the ongoing regional struggle for power and influence in the Middle East. The debate in Egypt is first and foremost a debate among Egyptians about the future and identity of their country. But that dispute has been swept up in a broader regional debate about who should lead the region in the future. In previous decades, Egypt was viewed as a regional leader in its own right, and its shifts in policy had wider resonance under Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak. More recently, internal divisions and polarization have made Egypt more open to influence from other regional powers. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait are backing the Egyptian governing authorities' efforts to combat the Muslim Brotherhood, whose brand of political Islam they oppose. Cairo's relations with Turkey and Qatar currently suffer because those two countries have supported the Muslim Brotherhood. Until Egypt becomes more cohesive and unified, these outside forces will continue to seek leverage and influence among those actors inside Egypt with whom they are most aligned, at the potential expense of Egypt's national stability.

Recommendations for U.S. policy

In this complicated phase of Egypt's transition, the United States needs to calibrate its policy carefully and learn lessons from its engagement in Egypt since 2011. Tentative and reactive U.S. policy on Egypt during the past three years has had a negative impact with a wide range of actors in Egypt, and the United States suffers from a lack of credibility there across the political spectrum. But the U.S. role still matters, and U.S. leadership on joint international efforts to support stability and prosperity is essential.

What happens in Egypt will be as important as the threats and challenges posed by Iran, the emergence of Turkey as a regional power, and the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict. Advancing U.S. interests and values requires the United States to balance and integrate efforts to advance two core objectives—maintaining a close partnership with Egypt in advancing regional security and supporting Egypt's political and economic transitions toward more effective democratic governance and expanded economic opportunities for its citizens.[100] Specifically, the United States should take the steps outlined below.

Advocate for political inclusion as a means to support stability and effective governance

The United States must be firm in its insistence that the Egyptian government open political space in advance of the presidential and parliamentary elections. The Obama administration should support the certification of Egypt's democratic progress to enable assistance to flow only if the ruling authorities take serious steps toward greater respect for basic rights and freedoms.

Secretary of State John Kerry was correct to voice concern over the lack of "freedom of peaceful assembly and expression"[101] in the run up to January's constitutional referendum. If there is a lesson to be learned from the past three difficult years in Egypt, it is the negative impact of closed, repressive politics on the capa-

bilities of individuals to articulate political agendas that respond to the concerns of most Egyptian citizens. While some of this expertise exists within Egypt—for example, in universities and civil society—the crackdown makes the realization of its potential impossible. The recent detention of journalists and political activists of varying ideological stripes are examples of the type of draconian measures that are shrinking Egypt's political space.[102]

In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, these measures drive the organization underground and toward many of the more radical ideological principles of the movement, erode its chain of command, and undercut its control over members who have taken to the street. The crackdown discredits an Islamist agenda that seeks to work through the state and thereby feeds radicalization.

Egypt suffers from a winner-takes-all approach to politics.

Promote political dialogue

At no point since January 25, 2011, have all of Egypt's political actors sat down to discuss the arrangements by which the country should be governed. The result has been a winner-takes-all approach to politics. The interim authorities are in no mood for compromise, but the frequency of protests suggests that they are not fully in control. Many in the rank and file of the Muslim Brotherhood are committed to a strategy of confrontation, including some support for violent actions, but some in the leadership would settle for a dignified way back to the table. There are few precedents to suggest that the interim government's attempt to close and control Egypt's political space will lead to long-term stability. The United States should encourage an open and broad-based dialogue among all of Egypt's political actors, including the interim government and the Brotherhood, before conditions in Egyptian society deteriorate further. The authority and room for maneuver of those Brothers open to dialogue are on the wane. Once they are gone, Egypt risks a deeper slide into social trauma and conflict as the parties are left to fully test the limits of their strength in the streets.

Engage the Gulf region on the Egyptian economy

Together with the European Union, the United States should redouble its coordination efforts with Gulf Cooperation Council states to support the Egyptian economy. A perennial source of instability, Egypt's economy has become a battleground upon which the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters are waging

their campaign to exhaust the military-backed interim authorities. To shore up the Egyptian government, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates have sent billions of dollars. While this aid more than offsets any pain induced by the partial suspension of U.S. assistance, it remains inadequate to rectify Egypt's economic problems.

A serious fix to the structural challenges facing the Egyptian economy will require tough tradeoffs brokered through open and inclusive politics. The sooner Egypt moves off the path of domestic political confrontation, the sooner the Gulf region can pivot to an investment with real return and the sooner the United States and the European Union can provide assistance and open trade. But this will only be possible once Washington, Brussels, and our allies in the Gulf agree on a coordinated assistance strategy. Until then, Egyptian economic policy will remain focused on short- term fixes from funders in the region.

Reform U.S. security assistance to help the country meet today's pressing security challenges

The current U.S. security assistance program is not well positioned to help Egypt meet its security threats. Decades of a security assistance program focused on sophisticated military hardware have not helped Egypt address the growing threat of militancy. Some of the most dangerous regional and global security threats posed by elements such as Al Qaeda emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, and many of these elements have roots in Egypt. The security bargain between the United States and Egypt after the Camp David Accords may have helped keep a cold peace in place between Israel and Egypt. But it did little to address internal security threats bred by demographic, social, and economic problems left unaddressed by decades of ineffective governance and economic mismanagement.

The United States and Egypt need to work to develop a common security agenda that addresses the new security threats that have emerged, particularly in places such as the Sinai Peninsula. This new approach should seek to address the core roots of militancy with stronger tools for rooting out violent elements of the nascent insurgency, as well as place more emphasis on strengthening police forces that operate with greater respect for the rule of law and basic civil liberties.

Conclusion

More than three years into the Arab uprisings, it is unclear whether the United States, or any other outside force, can effectively influence the struggles for power and legitimacy underway in the Middle East. Extremist Islamist ideologies remain a key part of the landscape, and repressive forces are trying to close off opportunities for dissent.

Egypt is the most important test case of this broader regional struggle. Syria or Yemen may currently represent a more urgent homeland security threat, and the standoff over Iran's nuclear program and its support for extremist groups in the region remains an overarching challenge, but the trends in Egypt have had and will continue to have broader regional and global implications.

The first three years of Egypt's political, economic, and security transition present the United States with many lessons learned. Egypt's polarized and dysfunctional political landscape remains a major challenge. But the United States cannot afford to see Egypt flirt with continued political and economic collapse and an ongoing deterioration of its security. A continued weakening of bilateral ties would harm both Egypt and the United States.

To address this complicated situation, the United States needs to help Egypt grapple with the tough political, economic, and security challenges it faces. It needs to encourage political pluralism and inclusivity—a tall order given the strong polarization inside the country. But without functional politics, Egypt will not be able to produce the economic and security policy solutions to its problems. The United States needs to work with other regional and global powers to help Egypt produce a viable economic plan; such a plan entails dealing with fundamental structural inefficiencies that have hampered Egypt's growth and potential for decades. Finally, the United States needs to update and reform its security cooperation with Egypt, as the threats that are re-emerging rival the waves of terrorist attacks that the country faced in the 1980s and 1990s, waves that helped contribute to the growth of a global Al Qaeda movement. The United States cannot afford to lose Egypt, and Egypt cannot afford to lose the United States.

Appendix: Overview of key Salafi parties in Egypt

The Nour Party

Founded: June 2011

The Nour Party was founded by Emad Abdel Ghafour as the political arm of the Salafi Daʻwa and competed in the 2011 and 2012 parliamentary elections, winning nearly one-quarter of the seats. It follows a strict interpretation of Islam and pledges to defend Egypt's Islamic identity. Its parliamentary win turned it into a powerful and ambitious political player. It was critical of Morsi's presidency and did not share in the spoils of his win as other Islamists did. In July 2013, it sided with the military overthrow of Morsi.

The Watan Party

Founded: January 2013

The Watan Party split off from the Nour Party and was founded by Nour's President Emad Abdel Ghafour. It cited growing discontent with Nour's internal politics and the dominance of the Salafi Daʻwa sheikhs over party decisions. The party was close to the Morsi presidency, largely due to the fact that its president was one of Morsi's most trusted advisors. Although its members have escaped a wave of arrests—President Abdel Ghafour remains out of jail, for instance—they were weakened after the overthrow due to siding with Morsi. They are members of the pro-Muslim Brotherhood National Alliance to Support Legitimacy.

The Asala Party

Founded: July 2011

The Asala party follows an orthodox interpretation of Islam and wishes to implement Sharia law in Egypt. It was founded by a former police general turned Salafi, Adel Abdel-Maqsoud Afifi. It was part of Nour's electoral alliance in the 2011 and 2012 parliamentary elections but won only three seats. The party's true spiritual leader is Sheikh Mahmoud Abdel-Maqsoud. He was very close to the Morsi presidency and famous for calling anti-Morsi protesters enemies of Islam during a rally organized by the presidency. He frequently gave speeches in Rabaa. Asala has largely been driven underground due to its siding with the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Building and Development Party

Founded: June 2011

The Building and Development party is the offspring of the formerly terrorist Islamic Group and seeks to implement Sharia law in Egypt. It won 13 seats in the 2011 and 2012 parliamentary elections and was then, along with the Asala, in the Nour Party electoral alliance. Its leaders were very close to the Morsi presidency and appeared frequently in the Rabaa sit-in. Its base of support lies historically in Asyut and other parts of Upper Egypt. It has largely been driven underground due to its siding with the Muslim Brotherhood.

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Acknowledgments

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