Article

The Ideology Factor and Individual Disengagements from the Muslim Brotherhood

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Abstract: Since 2011, there has been a growing wave of individuals leaving Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, and many of them have opted for documented publicity by writing autobiographies narrating their whole journey. This article explores the ideological components of the disengagement process on the basis of a frame analysis of these writings. It seeks to understand how individuals acted against some of the meanings central to the Brotherhood's ideological character and influence. They construct sets of meanings negating or renegotiating those long fixated, sanctified and ineluctable parts of the group's ideology. The process of meaning making is situated within the Arab Spring where the Brotherhood's dominant ideology also suffered from ruptures, incongruence or dissonance. For example, many exiters realized that the group's ideology is not 'evolutionary' enough to align with a 'revolutionary' moment in Egypt's history, and it thus failed to provide them with a sense of meaning regarding the dramatically changing world around them. The disillusionment goes beyond a battle of textually-situated meanings between the Brotherhood and its disgruntled members during the process of their departure from it. It appertains to a context of new resources and opportunities made available to exiters to resist, challenge, and even falsify the dominant ideology without incurring heavy losses or harsh penalties often meted out by the group against its 'dissidents'. The agency of exiters, i.e., their capacity to act against the group's ideology or manifest their rebellion against its elements, is also enabled by the state's relative tolerance towards the exiters, a degree of social assimilation inside Egypt, internal ideological and organizational divisions inside the Brotherhood and geographical re-spatialization.

Keywords: Egypt; Islamism; Muslim Brotherhood; disengagement; the Arab Spring; social movements

1. Introduction

On January 2011, Egypt witnessed a massive uprising producing changes for the state and for the Muslim Brotherhood, the country's main opposition force. The head of the state, Hosni Mubarak, had to resign on February 11 of the same year against waves of public protests spreading across the country. The historic moment brought opportunities for the Brotherhood which has long suffered from the regime's brutality for decades[1]. Emerging as the country's most powerful civilian actor, the Brotherhood made it to the top echelons of the state with the election of its commander Mohamed Morsi as president on 30 June 2012. The group also secured a majority at Parliament, a reality unthinkable in the pre-2011 era. Nevertheless, the group's political gains were short lived. On 3 July 2013, the military suspended the constitution, removing Morsi from the presidency and putting him under arrest, on the heels of massive popular protests against Morsi calling for early presidential elections. In the following months, the security forces violently suppressed demonstrations against Morsi's removal. Many of the group's members were killed, injured, detained or forced into exile under the crackdown of the regime. Abdel-Fatah El-Sisi, the Minister

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[1] For a historical trajectory of the relationship between the state and the Brotherhood, see Ardovini (2016). The politicization of sectarianism in Egypt: 'creating an enemy' the state vs. the Ikhwan. *Global Discourse* 6: 579–600.

of Defense and who led the ouster of Morsi, left the military to run for president and was elected in 2014. As El-Sisi consolidated his grip on power, his regime escalated its repression, leaving the Brotherhood at the receiving end of 'one of the 'harshest crackdowns in its history[2]'.

Within these dramatic events under which the Brotherhood gained and then lost power within less than two years, the group has witnessed its own trajectories of change. Many individuals announced their departure from the Brotherhood, citing different reasons such as their disillusionment with its 'evolutionary' ideology failing to respond to the 'revolutionary' moment of the Arab Spring or even failing to give them a sense of meaning on what is happening around them. This article thus focuses on understanding the phenomenon of individuals who disengaged from the Brotherhood from 2011 to 2020 and how far ideology played a part in such a disassociation, thus aligning with a limited emerging literature analyzing the Brotherhood from an individual rather than organizational perspective[3]. The phenomenon is situated within broader socio-political changes providing resources for opportunities pushing an individual towards the departure. Ideological disengagement is also an identity-making process in which individuals have been seeking to construct their own personal identities through negotiating their relationship with the group's dominant identity and its ideological underpinnings. This article adopts a post-structuralist framework, where personal identity is not a unique, isolated or compartmentalized being but a relational entity evolving within different layers of interactions within and outside of the Brotherhood[4]. Still, this article does not have a pre-existing theory shaping the research in an explicit way. I found any theoretical framing as my concern is exploring the meaning making of exiters as far as possible on their own terms, in what is closer to an interpretive phenomenological analysis[5]. Nevertheless, I use the 'Identity Process Theory' (IPT) to 'inform' rather than 'drive' my research in order to maintain flexibility in tracing the exiters' meaning making[6]. Concerned with the 'holistic analysis of the total identity of the person[7]', the IPT encompasses elements related to the everyday experiences of individuals inside the group as well her or his social or political activities outside of it. It highlights the context not as a mere background but a constituent of the phenomenon being researched[8]. Equally significant in the IPT, itself an approach benefitting from synthesizing different theories such as symbolic interactionism and discourse analysis, is that the dynamic process of interaction also includes interpretation. In other words, each individual explains her or his experiences as a member of the Brotherhood as well as an ex-member. The analysis shows how individuals evaluate their experiences once they were part of the movement and how they use these evaluations to empower their disassociation from it through steps such as assimilating into different networks of interactions and interpretations.

Within this understanding, i.e., disengagement as a process, and discourse, this article can re-conceptualize disengagement not as a matter of linear 'stages' premised on well-

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[2]   Biagini (2017, p. 35). The Egyptian Muslim sisterhood between violence, activism and leadership. *Mediterranean Politics* 22: 35–53.

[3]   See Ardovini (2020). Stagnation Vs adaptation: tracking the Muslim Brotherhood's trajectories after the 2013 coup. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 1–17; Menshawy (2020). *Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood: Self, Society and the State.* Cham: Palgrave.

[4]   For a post-structuralist conceptualization of identity and relationality, see Joseph (1993). Gender and relationality among Arab families in Lebanon. *Feminist Studies* 19: 465–86. The idea of relationality can also be premised on the Foucauldian understanding that the very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she or he becomes a 'self-conscious agent'. Therefore, the complex relations of power inside the movement and its dominant ideology or identity offer with them an array of 'resistance points' under which individuals can take up new identities or negotiate the ones assigned to them by the group; see Foucault (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977.* Edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books. For similar arguments, i.e., empowerment via subordination in Islamism, see Mahmood (2011). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject.* Princeton: Princeton University Press; Hafez (2003). *The Terms of Empowerment: Islamic Women Activists in Egypt.* Cairo: American University in Cairo.

[5]   See Timotijevic and Breakwell (2000). Migration and threat to identity. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 10: 355–72.

[6]   Coyle and Murtagh (2014, p. 46). Qualitative approaches to research using Identity Process Theory. In *Identity Process Theory: Identity, Social Action and Social Change.* Edited by Rusi Jaspal and Glynis Marie Breakwell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 41–64.

[7]   Jaspal and Breakwell (2014). *Identity Process Theory: Identity, Social Action and Social Change.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 250.

[8]   Coyle and Murtagh (2014). Qualitative approaches to research, p. 42.

defined 'turning points', as the predominant view within the social movement literature,[9] but as a matter of multi-layered interpretations and interactions between individuals, groups and even states, between different identities, and between times. The present time stands as a *moment of emergence* when individuals announce their departure from the group, but the past interacts with presentism by indicating *moments of evolution* when those individuals were attempting to negotiate and renegotiate their ties with the group and its ideology and when disengagement was a 'potentiality' rather than an actuality' in Giorgio Agamben's words[10]. Disengagement is also a matter of context, providing the resources upon which individuals construct and establish their meanings and related identity-making components based on evaluation and assimilation.

Disengagement from the Brotherhood, founded in 1928, for ideological reasons is not new[11]. There were incidents such as the prominent struggle of power and ideology between the group's founder Hassan El-Banna and his deputy, Ahmed El-Sukkary, leading to the latter's exit in 1947[12]. However, the recent wave is different in volume and level. Since 2011, several members have come out to announce their disassociation from the group, which is different from the far-and-few cases of the past 80 years of the group's history. The list of exiters also cut across the different levels of membership including those of high-profile caliber such as Kamal El-Helbawy and 'Abdel-Mon'im Aboul-Futouh, senior leaders of the Brotherhood[13]. The list also goes beyond generational lines, the dominant fault line shaping the scholarship on disagreements and interactions inside the Brotherhood[14]. In the post-2011 wave, exiters include older members as well as members of the younger generation (e.g., the list prominently includes El-Helbawy, 80 years old, Aboul-Futouh, 70 years old, and Huzaifa Hamza, 28 years old). Furthermore, the disengagement takes a more publicized form as many of them narrated their experiences in dozens of autobiographies, hundreds of media interviews and many more posts on social media. This article thus seeks to unearth this unique 'spectacle of disclosure' that can even us better understand the Brotherhood's dominant ideology itself, especially as many ex-members reveal various secrets publicly on this underground movement.

The next section elucidates the sampling and methodology based on analysis of autobiographies and interviews. The section that follows focuses on parts of the Brotherhood's dominant ideology before following them by how individuals negotiate and renegotiate their meanings as part of their journey outside of the movement. The frames identified in the texts of exiters are situated within the surrounding environment as part of the contextualized understanding of disengagement as well as part of investigating the conditions and resources which have facilitated or hindered disengagement. The environment includes shifts in state behavior, changes within the Brotherhood and geographic re-spatialization

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9   Ebaugh (1988). Becoming an ex: The process of role exit. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press Books; Fillieule (2015). Disengagement from radical organizations: A process and multilevel model of analysis. In *Movements in Times of Democratic Transition*. Edited by P. G. Klandermans and C. van Stralen. Pennsylvania: Temple University Press.

10 Despite this brief mention, Agamben's approach on concepts and their instrumentality align withs my argument in this article. He situated concepts such as disengagement as a continuous process, beginning with desires or a possibility of objection or disgruntlement over the group's ideology; Agamben (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* Translated by D. Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 46.

11 For details on previous shapes and forms of dissent and disassociation, see Zollner (2009). *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology*. New York: Routledge; Wickham (2004). The path to moderation: Strategy and learning in the formation of Egypt's wasat party. *Comparative Politics* 36: 205–28. doi:10.2307/4150143.

12 Lia (2006). *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1928–1942*. Reading: Ithaca Press. Also see El-Baquri (1988). *Baqayya Zekrayat (Residues of Memories)*. Cairo: Al-Ahram Centre for Translation and Publishing.

13 See Aboul-Futouh (2010). 'Abdel-Mon'im Aboul-Futouh: Shahid 'ala al-Haraka al-Islamiyya. ('Abdel-Mon'im Aboul-Futouh: A Witness to the Islamist Movement). Cairo: Alshorouk.

14 See Al-Anani (2009). The Young Brotherhood in Search of a New Path. Hudson Institute. Available online: https://www.hudson.org/research/9900 -the-young-brotherhood-in-search-of-a-new-path (accessed on 2 February 2020); Lynch (2007). Young brothers in cyberspace. *Middle East Report* 37; Brown and Dunne (2015). Unprecedented Pressures, Uncharted Course for Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June. Available online: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP248-EgyptMB_BrownDunne_final.pdf (accessed on 10 February 2021). Since 2011, there has been a growing tendency in literature to focus on cross-generational shifts inside the Brotherhood, albeit with maintaining different binaries of delineation such as male/female activism; see Biagini (2020). Islamist women's feminist subjectivities in (r)evolution: the Egyptian Muslim Sisterhood in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22: 382–402.

especially after the 2013 coup where many members of the group fled to different countries, prominently including Turkey.

2. Sampling and Methodology

This article analyses 11 autobiographies which exiting members either wrote or published in 2011 and afterwards. The criteria for including those written works is their availability in hard-copy or online formats. I triangulate my sources of data with 33 semi-structured deep interviews with other exiters who also left the movement within the same timeframe (2011–2020). The interviews were mostly conducted in two countries (15 in Egypt and 14 in Turkey against 3 in the UK and 1 in Qatar). The imbalance is justified as Egypt is the foundational basis of the Brotherhood and where most of its members live while Turkey reportedly hosts many members of the group (a Turkish opposition figure put the unverified number at 20,000.[15]). The sampling is based on snowballing, especially as many interviewees are difficult to reach given their preference for a quiet disassociation from the movement. Still, the interviews were important in order to fill in gaps or complement the autobiographies. The list includes a female interviewee for her testimony to counterbalance and perhaps corroborate that of the single female ex-member among autobiography authors. The representation of exiting members interviewed during this project somehow correlates with the representation of existing members or the original population makeup on which more data are already available [16]. For example, members of the Brotherhood dominantly belong to the 'middle class', and it thus 'prevails in the educated circles' and takes 'university students' as an important category in its recruitment[17]. Approximately 40 percent of the interviewees are writers or journalists and 16 percent are students. As the Brotherhood's recruitment also 'targets children' especially 'kids of its members,' the sampling also reflects this policy. Fifteen people of the 33 interviewees joined the Brotherhood when they were less than 16 years old, and 17 others when they were between 17 and 24 years old. As the Brotherhood is a hierarchical movement, where promotion is partly related to duration of stay in the Brotherhood, this article adopts a more equitable distribution. Nine interviewees stayed in the group up to 10 years, 10 of them up to 20 years and 11 others up to 30 years. The age groups are also fairly distributed (3 interviewees are in their 50s or above, 2 are in their 40s, 4 in their 30s and 3 in their 20s).

Exiters publishing their autobiographies could belong to the 'apostate' category, that is, those individuals who could have voices 'loud' enough to narrate their experiences and to challenge the group's ideology publicly[18]. The interviewees are mostly of the 'ordinary leavers' who drifted away quietly from the movement without speaking to the media or announcing their disassociation with fanfare similar to those of the 'apostate' category. The combination thus adds to the methodological rigidity as frames identified in texts and autobiographies are corroborated against each other (or perhaps can cancel each other out as part of the framing process drawn on what is common in their narratives). This can also add truthfulness to the findings by cancelling each other out. Having said that, the research admittedly depends on biased subjective individual accounts that could include stronger sentiments and revengeful desires among the exiters. Given the current situation in Egypt, including the regime's crackdown on Islamists, I withheld the full names of some interviewees given the current changing circumstances or because of their original desire to keep a low profile (even if they gave me the consent to publish their names). The names of the autobiography writers are mentioned in full as many of them take their very act of

15   Abdel-Hamid (2019). Mustashar Erdogan li-Ikhwan Masr: Antum laguun lada al-hezb al-hakem (Erdogan's Advisor to Egypt's Brotherhood: You Are Refugees of the ruling party). *Al-Arabiya*, February 22. Available online: https://bit.ly/3b95l2s (accessed on 2 January 2021).

16   On the Brotherhood's official website, it explains its structure as follows: 'The MB group does exist in all the classes, from the upper one to the lower, but it's mostly dominant in the middle one, which is the main source for recruitment,' No author. Muslim Brotherhood: Structure & Spread (2007). Available online: http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=817 (accessed on 7 February 2021).

17   No author. Muslim Brotherhood: Structure & Spread (2007). Available online: http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=817 (accessed on 7 February 2021).

18   Introvigne (1999). Defectors, ordinary leave-takers, and apostates: A quantitative study of former members of New Acropolis in France. *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 3: 83–99.

such an exposure and high visibility as part of their 'purposive self-presentation[19]' framing their experience as ex-members in a specific way for particular ends (e.g., they repeatedly appear on TV or actively narrate their experiences on social media).

I identify ideological disengagement in frames. Each frame contains specific thematic meanings manifesting in keywords, phrases or sentences. Depending on the conceptualization of Robert Entman, a pioneer in the theorization and application of the frame analysis, the framing process includes how these linguistic formulations are 'organized' to convey a specific meaning/s in a 'salient' or 'selective' way in order to focus on a specific 'aspect of the perceived reality'[20]. Salience and selectiveness are based on features such as repetition and frequency of some of their meanings or their association with specific familiar meanings related to the movement's dominant ideology. With the possibility of several related frames, I collect them under broader categories named in this article as 'master frame[21], which is also procedural step to organize the meaning making within the texts of exiters in a qualitative manner. For example, the 'battle for mind' master frame is based on the selective repetition of words such as 'mind', phrases such as 'the Brotherhood has no mind' or sentences 'the Brotherhood is a body without mind' in the texts of exiters. The selective formulations gain salience as they are highlighted into headlines or sub-headlines, as they are prioritized to be part of the titles of the books as well as first in answers of interviewees when I ask them questions such as 'what are the most important element leading you out of the Brotherhood?'. As adopted in other projects on the Middle East[22], part of the framing is contextual as it relates to the 'background understandings of the way things are[23]' or have been under the movement. In other words, individuals construct their meanings against the 'field of meanings' embedded within the Brotherhood's dominant ideology and all related 'cognitive strategies' of interpretation processes[24]. In other words, individuals not only create their own new frames but they also resist or challenge the existing frames long fixated and imposed by the Brotherhood. On the basis of several readings of these texts of autobiographies and interview transcripts, I predefine the two master frames, 'the battle for God' and the 'battle for mind'. The master frames are broad in order to include many experiences and events into the 'ideological' disengagement. Still, the analysis does not preclude the existence of other master frames, and thus I cannot claim any universality or generalizability on the causes of disengagement from the Brotherhood or any other movement. This article modestly searches for patterns of meanings in the texts and for contextualized understanding where the Arab Spring or events before it could have provided resources, opportunities for articulating or operationalizing disengagement.

Within this framing process, ideology is understood as sets of 'thematized meanings[25]' describing and explaining disengagement of individuals in their own words. Still, the thematization brings 'ideology' to its classical definitions based on associations with power relations. The 'distortion' in the way members understand the social world and their role in it is partly the result of the Brotherhood's dominant position and ideas which keep them from developing a true or adequate understanding of themselves or the surrounding circumstances.[26] Some exiters therefore describe their departure as an ideological 'emancipation' out of these 'distorted' meanings and 'dominant' relationships. In this vein, the very act of meaning making is part of an ideology of resistance where individuals are emboldened to convey their meanings after they have long been hidden, downsized or suppressed by the leaders of the movement. Exiters, now managers of their own meanings,

19 Coyle and Murtagh (2014). Qualitative approaches to research, p. 48.
20 Entman (1993). Framing: Towards clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication* 43: 51–58.
21 See Benford and Snow (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 611–39.
22 (Menshawy 2017). Menshawy, Mustafa. 2017. *State, Memory and Egypt's 1973 War: Ruling by Discourse.* Cham: Palgrave.
23 Woodly (2015, p. 97). *The Politics of Common Sense: How Social Movements Use Public Discourse to Change Politics and win Acceptance.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
24 Van Dijk (1988, p. 171). Semantics of a Press Panic: The Tamil "Invasion". *European Journal of Communication* 3: 167–87.
25 Van Dijk (1998). *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach.* London: Sage.
26 Menshawy (2020). *Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood*, p. 79.

thus always refer to details and elements of the dominant ideology as to 'think about' the group's dominant meanings in the engagement process as well as to 'think from' as they construct their own meanings by resisting, negotiating or even falsifying this dominance.[27] Again, this reaffirms the relationality in the identity-making process since each individual is 'living in a world of others' words' and the limits of the self are crafted by the individual in 'interdependent, communicative relationship with others'[28]. Disengagement is a process that begin in the minds of exiting individuals and is a product of their own thinking (or was experienced as such). But the process is still based on meanings outside their minds including those of the movement and its ideology as well as the surrounding macro social or political considerations including the Arab Spring. The framing is thus both individual and social, exactly as identity making is. Identity is located not just within 'individual pysches' but is negotiated, accorded or taken up within social relationships and joint meaning-making processes.[29]

3. The Battle for God: The *Rabaniyya* Master Frame

One can easily identify a key thematic construction in the writings and interviews with exiters: their battle to re-arrange their relationships with God, which I can refer to as *Rabaniyya*. However, this section begins with how the Brotherhood consolidate the commitment of members through the concept before moving onto show how those members reconstruct its meanings on the journey out of the group.

Literally, *Rabaniyya* is a word deriving from *Rab* (God) and it thus relates to how to obtain the satisfaction of God and an 'acquaintance' with Him[30]. The Brotherhood's dominant ideology set *Rabbaniya* as its own master frame. In the words of a leading figure in the Brotherhood, Youssef El-Qaradawy, 'the goal and the way of man in life as well as his final end of his hopes is realizing this 'satisfaction of God"[31]. The group's leaders have linked the concept itself with the goals of the Brotherhood as if they are one and the same. In other words, satisfying God equates to satisfying the movement. As the group's founder, Hassan El-Banna, aptly phrased the group's often-repeated slogan: 'God is our goal.'[32] The Brotherhood also endows itself with the mission solely; it presents itself as the 'the only Islamic movement he should join' as it is the one which 'follows the path of the prophet Muhammad and seeks to establish the Islamic state.'[33] The Brotherhood used the concept to guarantee a sense of collectivization. The shared goal of satisfying God requires 'stripping the self . . . of its whims.[34]' The concept of *Rabaniyya* is central to the identity-making process imposed by the Brotherhood to prioritize the we-ness against weakening the I-ness of individuals. The concept underpins the two principles of the Brotherhood's socialization doctrine: communion and renunciation[35]. The latter dictates that the member withdraws from all of her or his social ties outside the group and the former pushes the member into the 'we' based on unanimity and exclusivity as a group of 'true' Muslims[36]. Those individuals are further de-subjectified as their roles include a share of this collectivized mission such as recruiting new members as part of 'Da'wa towards

[27] Ricoeur (1981). Hermeneutics and the human sciences: Essays on language, action and interpretation. Edited and Translated by J. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 227; Porter (2006). *Ideology: Contemporary Social, Political and Cultural Theory*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, p. 6.

[28] Coyle and Murtagh (2014). Qualitative approaches to research, p. 44.

[29] Coyle and Murtagh (2014). Qualitative approaches to research, p. 45

[30] El-Banna (1990). *Majmu't Rasael al-imam al-shahid Hassan El-Banna (A Collection of Epistles of the Martyr Imam Hassan El-Banna)*. Alexandria: Da'wa, p. 125.

[31] For more, see El-Qaradawy (2016). Al-Rabaniyya: Ola khasa'es al-Islam (Rabaniyya: The first trait of Islam). Available online: https://www.al-qaradawi.net/node/2243 (accessed on 10 December 2020).

[32] El-Banna (1990). *Majmu't rasayyel al-imam*, p. 125.

[33] Al-Anani (2016). *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood*, p. 77.

[34] El-Banna (1990). *Majmu't rasayyel al-imam*, p. 61.

[35] See Menshawy (2020). *Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood*. p. 46.

[36] Bittner (1963). Radicalism and the organization of radical movements. *American Sociological Review* 28: 928–40; Coser (1974). *Greedy institutions: Patterns of undivided commitment*. New York: Free Press; Filliele, *Disengagement from Radical Organizations*, p. 47.

Rabaniyya' [Emphasis added].[37] All these meanings were always given full salience by repetition and frequency in their statements and speeches. El-Banna always mentioned that it is the 'pure Jihad for the sake of God' that requires 'stripping the self', 'suppressing the self's own feelings and its whims' and 'forgetting the self[38].

The idea of *Rabaniyya* enhances engagement and also acts as a bulwark against disengagement both socially and ideologically. Leaving the movement means 'leaving God', which it claims itself the sole representative of. 'The slogan of the Brotherhood, 'Islam is the solution' makes the others believe that 'Islam *beta'na* (ours),' according to Osama Dorra who exited the movement in 2011 after more than 10 years of membership[39]. The conflation means that disengaging from the Brotherhood connotes a disengagement from Islam itself. Indeed, one common feature of the Brotherhood's reaction to disengagement attempts is accusations of 'apostasy' or replacing 'God' with the 'Satan'. The evocation of the 'Satan' is significant accusation facing the potential or current exiters. It set the organizational boundaries between the *inside* and *outside* of the Brotherhood along religious boundaries of being or outside of Islam itself. Under this new level of conflating meanings, engagement thus means 'satisfying God' and disengagement means 'satisfying the Satan'. Members who left the group concurrently narrated several incidents in which the leaders of the Brotherhood referred to 'Abdel-Mon'im Aboul-Futouh, a senior leader in the group until 2011, as 'the Satan' after he exited the group[40].

Organizationally, the Satan-related comparison can also help guarantee the sense of the leaders' 'religious supremacy[41]' and related powers of imposing full obedience among the leaders. The Satan is perceived in the Islamic scriptures including Quraan as the figure who opposed the order of God to prostrate in front of Prophet Adam.[42] As the temptation by the Satan is a very 'effective' tool of punishment[43], many disgruntled members had been unable to leave the Brotherhood as they cannot 'afford provoking God's wrath'[44]. The ready-made accusation has its own emotional and social consequences. Tarek Aboul-Sa'd (joined in 1985 and left in 2011) said the 'most painful moment' of his experience is the confrontation with his wife 'accusing me that I became less of a Muslim.'[45] Others referred to similar 'psychological and social pressures', especially as the group also launches a 'smear campaign' accusing the members of related 'Satanic actions such as abandoning Islamic duties such as prayers, involvement in activities of moral decadence such as womanizing [having temporary sexual relationships with women].'[46] In full realization of its effectiveness, the leaders have long centralized the demonization as a key tool of discipline and punishment.[47]

Exiting members countered these conflated meanings between the group on one hand and God or Islam on the others in a number of ways. First, they reconstruct the meanings of *Rabaniyya* itself beyond the idealistic or utopian ones of the Brotherhood's dominant narrative. It is re-described as an instrumentally adopted tactic to guarantee a full blind obedience of the 'earthly' orders of the movement's leaders. Islam Lutfy (who departed the group in 2011 after a 27 year membership) evoked one specific occasion under which he had challenged the ideas of his Brotherhood leader on the injustices of the US-led invasion of Iraq. 'I told him that the US invasion for getting hold of the spoils of Iraq including its oil is a normative geo-political action adopted by Caliph Omar when he

37　El-Banna (1990). *Majmu't rasayyel al-imam*, p. 125.

38　El-Banna (1990). *Majmu't rasayyel al-imam*, p. 61.

39　Dorra (2014). *Min Dakhil al-Ikhwan Atakalam (From Inside the Brotherhood I Speak)*, 2nd ed. Cairo: Dar al-Masry.

40　Hamza (2021). Phone Interview.

41　Hamza (2021). Phone Interview.

42　Ali and Leaman (2007). *Islam: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge.

43　Lasswell (1938). *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. New York: Peter Smith, p. 77.

44　El-Qassas (2017). Phone Interview.

45　Aboul-Sa'd (2017). In-Person Interview. Cairo.

46　Hamza (2021). Phone Interview; Nazily (2017). In-Person Interview. Doha; Personal Interview; (Lutfy 2017) London.

47　Yakan (2005). *Al-Mutasaqitoun Min al-da'wa: Kaifa . . . wa Lemaza (The Dropouts from the Daawa: How and Why?')*. Beirut: Al-Rasala leil Teba' wal Nashr, p. 82; Kandil (2015). *Inside the Brotherhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

decided the conquest of Egypt,' said the 40-year-old lawyer[48]. The leader effectuated the first purpose of *Rabaniyya*[49], warning Lutfy that he was on the verge of "apostasy" and that he should read more Quraan and perform further pray to God in order to dismiss "Satanic ideas in your mind".[50] The concept of *Rabaniyya* thus helps the group block debate via a form of 'unreflective instrumentalism,' that where beliefs and behavior emphasize that that knowledge is worthless unless it immediately and directly leads to gains such as consolidating cohesion inside the group or becoming closer to God[51].

Exiters challenge the concept of *Rabaniyya* by de-coupling Islam from Islamism in order to prove that disengagement is not an act of deviance towards the Satan or moving away from God's satisfaction. Many pages in the autobiographies were dedicated in what seems as a battle to re-interpret the concept of *Rabaniyya,* thus benefiting from the 'expansiveness of Islam in terms of the textual and rhetorical canon' which Islamist movements have long instrumentalized in order to select their own meanings[52]. They found at their disposal 'a rich heritage with historical depth that can be drawn on various junctures with different contexts[53].' Exiters now have the capacity to re-interpret Islam and Quraan from the same reservoir from which the Muslim Brotherhood selected its own hegemonic ideas acting as if part of *Rabaniyya*. For example, the first page of Ahmed El-'Agouz's book, *The state of Murshid . . . Manufacturing The Muslim Brotherhood Mind*, began with this Quraanic verse that states:

He is the One who has revealed to you the Book (the Quraan). Out of it there are verses that are Muhkamat (of established meaning), which are the principal verses of the Book, and some others are Mutashabihat (whose definite meanings are unknown)'. Now those who have perversity in their hearts go after such part of it as is mutashabih, seeking (to create) discord, and searching for its interpretation (that meets their desires), while no one knows its interpretation except Allah[54].

El-Agouz reinterpreted the text to prove that the Brotherhood leaders are those who belong to the second category in the verse, i.e., 'searching for its interpretation (that meets their desires)'. He cited the leaders' contradictory decisions to take part in or boycott elections under Mubarak on the basis of their manipulation of other Quraanic verses of the 'Mutashabihat', especially when they cite different Quraanic verses for different occasions.[55] Within this actuality of re-interpretation, El-Agouz made 20 citations from the Quraan in the first chapter only and the four chapters adopted the same practice. 'Eid in his aptly titled book, *Atheists in Paradise*, made citations of eight Quraanic verses in the first 9-page chapter to convince readers that the Brotherhood distorted Islam as the latter 'endows tolerance and respects freedom of expression and freedom of thinking'.[56] If the movement imposed 'one Islam', exiters sought to present 'multiple *Islams* under which they can accommodate meanings favorable to their act of disengagement.[57] They also found the mission of re-interpretation necessary to challenge all of the Brotherhood's claims that 'they represent all the Muslims and their ideas are *the* Islam[58]' [emphasis added]. Therefore,

48 Lutfy (2017). In-Person Interview. London.

49 The leaders have extensive powers especially on means of 'punishments' as the rules of the Brotherhood does not 'specify' them; Landau-Tasseron (2010). Leadership and Allegiance in the Society of the Muslim Brothers. *Hudson Institute*. Series 2, paper 5, p. 4.

50 Lutfy (2017). In-Person Interview. London.

51 Claussen (2004). *Anti-intellectualism in American media*. New York: Peter Lang; Peters (2019) Anti-intellectualism is a virus. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 51: 357–63.

52 Elshaer (2013, p. 116). Islam In the Narrative of Fatah and Hamas. In *Narrating Conflict in The Middle East: Discourse, Image and Communications Practices in Lebanon and Palestine*. Edited by D. Matar and Z. Harb. pp. 111–32.

53 Elshaer (2013, p. 116). Islam In the Narrative of Fatah and Hamas. In *Narrating Conflict in The Middle East: Discourse, Image and Communications Practices in Lebanon and Palestine*. Edited by D. Matar and Z. Harb. pp. 111–32.

54 Ramzy (2013). *Dawlat al-Murshid*, p. 11. The verse is translated via this website Quran.com. Available online: https://quran.com/3/7?translations= 27,18,17,95,101,84,21,22,85,20,19 (accessed on 2 February 2021).

55 Ramzy (2013). *Dawlat al-Murshid*, p. 19.

56 'Eid (2015). *Mulhedoun fil Gana (Atheists in Paradise)*. Cairo: Mahrousa. pp. 15–20.

57 Sayyid (2003). *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*. London: Zed Books Ltd, p. viii.

58 El-Shafei' (2017). In-Person Interview. Egypt.

the exiters emphasized the need to open interpretation of Quraan to people without any 'custodianship' or 'exploitation' by Islamist movements.[59]

Some exiters went far in de-coupling of Islam and Islamism by turning the Brotherhood's same equation in the opposite direction; the Muslim Brotherhood is not part of Islam as it does not adopt its 'true' tenets. Individuals found the group's ideology closer to that of 'communist Marxism'[60] or 'fascism.'[61]. For others, it is more like the Freemasons because of their isolationist attitude, 'which is anti-Islamic since our religion calls for full inclusiveness of everyone without considering her or his race, colour or the way she or he is dressed.'[62] The frames are reconstructions of older frames evoked by opponents of the Brotherhood who accuse it of belonging to the mentioned ideologies.[63]

4. The Battle for 'Mind': The Anti-Intellectualism Frame

Ex-members place an emphasis in their narrative on disillusionment with 'cognitive' aspects of the Brotherhood's ideology; that is how some of the ideas promoted by the movement do not make sense in their minds. The features of this criticism can be grouped and pooled as the master frame of 'anti-intellectualism'. The term can have different meanings including those related to a complex continuum of traits[64] associated with obtaining 'knowledge' *intuitionally*, through instincts, character, moral sensibilities and emotions against obtaining it *rationally* through 'intellectual pursuits.'[65] Other scholars define anti-intellectualism by judging it on the basis of activities that can 'close' the mind[66] such as those that block 'reasoned discussions', interactive exchange of views or mere 'conversations.'[67] It is within this understanding that anti-intellectualism is pejoratively associated with 'religious fundamentalism'.[68] In this vein, the Brotherhood is an 'anti-intellectual' movement' as it adopts 'cognitive inflexibility', 'authoritarianism' and 'dogmatism'.[69] These features all evolve on attempts to block or limit the activities of the 'mind', a word repeatedly and frequently mentioned in the texts of exiting members. As adopted in the previous master frame, I will begin with demonstrating how the Brotherhood's dominant ideology deals with the 'mind' before moving onto how exiting members counter or negotiate meanings related to it.

The Brotherhood always proclaimed itself as a 'group with a mind'[70]. For example, it made 'comprehension' as the first of so-called *Arakan al-Bay'a* (Pillars of the Oath of Allegiance) which members have to commit to before they are being admitted as full members. The rhetoric of El-Banna highlights the group as 'liberating the mind'.[71] However, he always conditioned this liberation on the other pillar of the oath and which calls for full and blind obedience to the Brotherhood leaders and which is widely referred to as the *Al-Sam' wal T'a* (hearing and obedience). For example, the group has always warned its

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59　'Eid (2015). *Mulhedoun fil Gana*, pp. 15–23.

60　'Abdel-Mon'im (2011). *Hekayatii ma' Al-Ikhwan (My Story with the Muslim Brotherhood)*. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, p. 209.

61　'Abdel-Mon'im (2011). *Hekayatii ma' Al-Ikhwan (My Story with the Muslim Brotherhood)*. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, p. 15.

62　'Abdel-Mon'im (2011). *Hekayatii ma' Al-Ikhwan (My Story with the Muslim Brotherhood)*, pp. 37–38. Other exiters repeated the same accusations; El-Khirbawy (2012). *Ser al-m'abad: Al-asrar al-Khafiya li gama't al-ikhwan al-muslemeen (The Temple's Secret: The Hidden Secrets of the Muslim Brotherhood)*. Cairo: Nahdet Masr. Of course, these associations—Lenin, Machiavelli, Freemasons—are wild and do not evince a sharp intellect but ready-to-hand prejudices and clichés. In any case, the language of exiting members in this context is wild, free, and not well founded, certainly in a precise sense.

63　This is a repletion of the discourse of critics and opponents who have along associated the Brotherhood with fascism, Nazism and Communism; see Kamal (1989). *Al-nuqat Faqqa al-Hurouf: al-Ikhwan al-Muslimon wa al-Nizam al-khas (Dots on Letters: the Muslim Brotherhood and the Special Apparatus)*. Cairo: Al-zahraa Leil I'lam al-'Arabi, p. 93; Sadat (2015). *Qissat al-Thawra kamlea (the Whole Story of the Revolution)*. Cairo: Dar al-Hilal.

64　Hofstadter (1962). *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. London: Jonathan Cape, p. 7.

65　Shogan (2007). Anti-intellectualism in the modern presidency: A republican populism. *Perspectives on Politics* 3: 817–31.

66　Bloom (1987). *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

67　See Elder (2015). Is Anti-Intellectualism Killing the National Conversation? The Age. Available online: https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/is-antiintellectualism-killing-the-national-conversation-20150801-gipidj.html (accessed on 2 February 2021).

68　Kakutani (2008). Why Knowledge and Logic Are Political Dirty Words. New York Times. Available online: https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/11/books/11kaku.html (accessed on 2 February 2021).

69　Shogan (2007). Anti-intellectualism in the modern presidency: A republican populism. *Perspectives on Politics* 3: 817–31.

70　In one of his writings, El-Banna repeatedly highlighted that 'Islam liberates mind', El-Banna (1990). *Majmu't Rasayyel al-Imam*, pp. 393, 416.

71　El-Banna (1990). *Majmu't Rasayyel al-Imam*, p. 391.

members against 'debating' meanings of the Quraan or discussing controversial topics such as the discord between the caliphs who succeeded Prophet Muhammad.[72] The warning coheres with the first master frame of *Rabaniyya*. Muslims need to 'act in solidarity', 'come together around one single interpretation of Islam' and 'avoid arguments' as part of the journey towards obtaining God's satisfaction.[73] The mind use or its manifestations of comprehension are also qualified by the group's other pillar of the oath is 'trust'. Under the pillar, each member has to take the orders of her or his leaders as 'absolute' without a chance of 'criticizing or modifying or showing hesitance towards them'[74].

The exiting members reacted to this qualified and instrumental use of the mind within the Brotherhood's ideology by directly and literally calling it a 'group with no mind'. 'It fosters a herd mentality and makes its members obey orders without thinking of them as if they have no minds,' said Ahmed Ramzy in his memoirs.[75] Ahmed El-'Agouz's book is full of references to how the leaders 'always paralyzed our minds'.[76] Sameh 'Eid amplified the same meaning by lamenting how the group failed to 'encourage debates or open our minds'[77] The element is prioritized as one of the most salient reasons cited for writing down the experience of their disengagement as 'an attempt to challenge 'attempts to freeze my mind'[78], 'a search for my critical mind'[79], and an attempt to 'save half of my mind as the other half is already destroyed during my membership at the movement.'[80] In interviews, the same meanings were reiterated as separate exiters attributed their way out to such elements as 'an effort to restore my mind'[81], 'throw out all dogma implanted into my mind'[82], 'stop the Brotherhood from blocking my mind'[83], a 'show of respect to my mind'[84] and 'a rebellion against those who have long turned off my mind.'[85]

Almost all exiters cited stops including events and experiences of challenging or seeking to challenge *Al-Sam' wal T'a*, the principle under which the Brotherhood has qualified the use or respect of the mind-drawn activities, simply including internal discussions. The 42-year-old Ahmed Nazily (who exited the movement in 2011 after almost 40 years of membership) remembers his disillusionment with the repeated expression of 'asking my prefect (official) in the Brotherhood to understand the order he gave me before I would execute it'[86] 'They even freeze your mind from taking simple decisions. For example, the direct leader of my Brotherhood group [the *usra* or 'family' as the smallest organizational unit of membership inside the Brotherhood] was absent on one meeting. We waited and waited before I suggested that one of us would deputize him for the meeting to proceed'. The suggestion opened fire gates as Nazily was reprimanded and penalized.[87] Others narrated similar incidents, demonstrating how the group was less flexible when it comes to considering options. 'I felt like an automaton. The group wanted me to act like a machine, accepting every order without thinking or even feeling about them[88],' said 'Alaa El-Shafei,

[72] El-Banna (1990). *Majmu't Rasayyel al-Imam*, p. 391.
[73] Cited by Kandil (2015). *Inside the Brotherhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 30.
[74] El-Banna (1990). *Majmu't Rasayyel al-Imam el-Shahid*, p. 400.
[75] Ramzy (2013). *Dawlat al-Murshid wa Sanam Al-Ikhwan (The state of the guide and the statue of Muslim Brotherhood)*. Cairo: Rodiy, p. 42.
[76] El-'Agouz (2012). *Ikhwani out of the Box (A Muslim Brother out of the Box)*. Cairo: Dawen Publishers, pp. 21, 24.
[77] 'Eid (2014). *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimoon: Al-Hader wal Mustaqbal, Awraq fil Naqd Al-Zati (The Muslim Brotherhood: the Present and the Future: Papers from Self-Criticism)*. Cairo: Al-Mahroussa, p. 27.
[78] El-'Agouz (2012). *Ikhwani out of the Box*, p. 8.
[79] 'Abdel-Mon'im (2011). *Hekayatii ma' Al-Ikhwan*, p. 210.
[80] Ban (2013). *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimoon wa Mehnat al-Watan wal Deen (The Muslim Brotherhood and the Predicament of Nation and Religion)*. Cairo: Al-Neel Centre for Strategic Studies, p. 7.
[81] M.E. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.
[82] M.S.M. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.
[83] Nazily (2017). In-Person Interview. Doha.
[84] S.E. (2017). In-Person Interview. Egypt. Please note that the place of some interviews is delberatly referred to as 'Egypt' to add another level of anonymity.
[85] S.M. (2017). In-Person Interview. Egypt.
[86] Nazily (2017). In-Person Interview. Doha.
[87] Nazily (2017). In-Person Interview. Doha.
[88] El-Shafei' (2017). In-Person Interview. Cairo.

55 years old, who exited the movement in 2011 after 38 years of membership. All these stories build its ideology as anti-intellectualistic in the sense of being haunted by 'cognitive inflexbility', defined as the lack of 'awareness of options and alternatives in a situation, or the willingness and adaptability to be flexible.'[89] The examples show anti-intellectualism as the group adopts 'religious antirationalism', where emotions such as those based on the sense of belonging or the we-ness of group solidarity are 'warm' and 'good', while reason or mind based on debate is 'cold' and 'bad'[90], an outlook often complemented by the absolute systems of belief drawn on *Rabaniyya* and its references to Quraan.

One way of challenging the Brotherhood's anti-intellectualism is engagement in intellectualizing acts which show use and respect of the mind such as reading. Almost all exiters mentioned it as one stage of the process of their disassociation. They challenged the Brotherhood's control and censorship of what they read or even the practice of reading collectively in supervised weekly meeting. Mohamed Aboul-Gheit, who exited the group in 2011, said he secretly began reading out of the curriculum including the works of other Islamist leaders banned from the movement's literature such as Mohamed El-Ghazaly. 'I found those thinkers open-minded, and began asking myself: How my leaders do not allow them'.[91] The list expanded to include other banned works such as those of Egyptian Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz, and 'again I felt disillusioned since the man did not appear to me as anti-Islam as my leaders used to tell us.'[92] The intellectual journey gained a social aspect that challenged the dichotomies driven by the first master frame dividing people as those who are inside the Brotherhood and Islam it represents and those who are outside them. It is a diffusion of the inside/outside boundaries strictly set by the Brotherhood's policies of 'communion and 'renunciation (Menshawy 2020). Therefore, Aboul-Gheit was introduced to a different 'multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, for them, and to act accordingly.'[93] Aboul-Gheit joined virtual forums, further becoming disillusioned with other aspects of the Brotherhood's anti-intellectualism tending to adopt dividing the world into more 'simplified' and 'manageable' forms.[94] He remembered that he was shocked to 'discover that there is an *other* which I can deal with and trust other than the Brotherhood's members and leaders'. Aboul-Gheit, who studied medicine, moving onto journalism after his disassociation, described his journey as an 'mind-opening practice'.[95] The activities of Aboul-Gheit challenges the anti-intellectualism of the Brotherhood and its 'unreflective instrumentalism'. Under the latter feature, knowledge via independent or individualized reading is not worthy as it does not lead to pragmatic benefits such as increasing the group's cohesion or solidarity as well as to direct use values such as bringing individuals closer to God's satisfaction. Therefore, one typical reaction of the Brotherhood's leaders to such rebellious acts of intellectualization is the often-repeated request for members to 'read more Quraan' or 'perform more prayers'.[96]

The 28-year-old Huzaifa Hamza, who exited the movement in 2014, said his journey outside the group began at the library where 'I was reading Noam Chomsky, Thomas Friedman, Henry Kissinger and even more simply the *Newsweek*.' While these writings 'opened the world to me, they also increased my tension with the Brotherhood's ideology out of realisation how exclusionary and backwarded it sounded to me,'[97] he said, attributing his membership to birth as his parents are both Brotherhood members. The practice also included re-reading the literature of the Brotherhood in the works of the founder El-Banna.

[89] Martin and Rubin (1995). A new measure of cognitive flexibility. *Psychological Reports* 76: 623–26.

[90] Claussen (2004). *Anti-Intellectualism in American Media*. New York: Peter Lang; Peters (2019). Anti-Intellectualism Is a Virus. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 51: 357–63.

[91] Aboul-Gheit (2017). In-Person Interview. London.

[92] Aboul-Gheit (2017). In-Person Interview. London.

[93] Van Dijk (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage, p. 8.

[94] Neuberg and Newsom (1993, p. 113). Personal need for structure: Individual differences in the desire for simpler structure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65: 113–31.

[95] Aboul-Gheit (2017). In-Person Interview. London.

[96] Hamza (2021). Phone Interview; Aboul-Sa'd (2017). In-Person Interview. Cairo.

[97] Hamza (2021). Phone Interview.

'I realized that our leaders have been teaching us mere dogma through their imposed rigid interpretations of Islam.[98]' Again, these references build on the 'anti-intellectualism master frame since dogma can be defined as the tendency to promote a 'relatively unchangeable, unjustified certainty.'[99]

5. Social-Political Context

The two master frames appear consistent and coherent as identified above; exiters repeat almost the same descriptions and their testimonies full of experiences and events hold together to form a reasonable whole. However, such a framing process is driven not only by similarity of unity of meanings in verbal or written texts under analysis, it also needs resonance; that is how these frames align with the external world, shaping or being shaped by them. Meaning is not only drawn from salience or selectiveness only by those directly writing the texts or taking part in the interviews, there are other agents helping in the production and dissemination of these meanings to 'influence people's political understandings and social imaginations more forcefully than other kinds of information and evidence[100]'. Those agents also allow the master frames to 'inhabit a special discursive space', thus achieving 'harmony' through alignment with 'background notions, common logics, and new ideas.'[101] In this section, I posit the two master frames within the opportunities and resources made available by other agents and circumstances which contextualize them in harmony as an indicator of 'resonance'. These opportunities or resources are *structural*, i.e., related to changes regarding the movement or the state[102]; *temporal*, related to the timing of processing or announcing the disengagement during or after 2011; or *spatial*, related to the whereabouts of the developments internally (e.g., the Tahrir Square) or externally in terms of the exiters themselves including the relocation of some of them to other countries, prominently including Turkey.

Temporally, the disillusionment with the Brotherhood's ideology gained its key moment of resonance in the protests which erupted on 25 January 2011. Many of exiters narrated how they had been dismayed over the activities of the group at the time. They perceived these activities as more oriented towards serving the self-interests, political ambitions or 'authoritarian' desires for control and domination among the group's leaders rather than serving concepts such as *Rabaniyya*. 'The group's leaders wanted to replace the regime of Mubarak rather than topple it down to create our imagined utopia which had always told us about.[103]' This was similarly repeated in and across the texts of other exiters. 'The leaders were seeking to achieve their own personal interests not the interests of Islam or the Muslim community they claim representation of,' said A.S.R.[104] Exiters found more specific events to validate their claims such as secret talks between some of the group's leaders and Omar Suleiman, Mubarak's vice president and the head of the General Intelligence Directorate in the early days of the protests[105]. As the news spread about what happened during the talks, i.e., the Brotherhood offering their support for ending the wave of protests in return for a 'larger share of the political pie'[106], many members announced

98   Ban (2017). *Ikhwan wa Salafiyyon wa Dawa'ish (Brothers, Salafists and ISIS Loyalists)*. Cairo: Al-Mahrousa, p. 330.

99   Altemeyer (2002). Dogmatic behavior among students: Testing a new measure of dogmatism. *The Journal of Social Psychology* 142: 713–21. doi:10.1080/00224540209603931.

100   Woodly (2015). *The Politics of Common Sense*, p. 97.

101   Woodly (2015). *The Politics of Common Sense*, p. 98.

102   Erika Biagini concluded that the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood following the 2013 coup 'favored the emergence of women's leadership, firstly within women-only movements and subsequently, as the very survival of the Brotherhood became increasingly compromised, in the movement as a whole', Biagini (2020). Islamist women's feminist subjectivities in (r)evolution: the Egyptian Muslim Sisterhood in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22: 382–402.

103   Nazily (2017). In-Person Interview. Doha.

104   A.S.R (2017). In-Person Interview. Cairo.

105   Weakileaks (2013). Re: Intelligence guidance foredit. Available via The Global. Intelligence Files. Available online: https://wikileaks.org/gifles/docs/12/1263665_re-intelligence-guidance-foredit-html (accessed on 5 December 2020).

106   Kandil (2015). *Inside the Brotherhood*, p. 137.

their departure from the movement in protest[107]. They called it as 'an act of treason[108]', and others called it 'counter-revolutionary'.[109] Ahmed Ban, the 50-year-old writer, ended his 20 year membership in a resignation letter that read: 'Shame on the movement which meets Suleiman in a unilateral action while claiming it also vociferously and wholeheartedly support the protesters.'[110]

This is a moment of misalignment of frames. As mentioned above, the leaders have long constructed themselves as 'holy' individuals, a subject position drawn on their sponsorship and application of the *Rabbaniya* mission. 'They has always inculcated in us values of honesty, honor and self-respect for the sake of realizing the Utopian dream or project of an Islamic state or society,' said Huzaifa Hamza[111]. Himself the son of a leading figure inside the Brotherhood, Hamza added 'how can I reconcile the dream with the horrible behavior of our leaders.[112]' The activities of the leaders also resonate with the master frame 'anti-intellectualism' as the leaders of the group did not 'open discussion' or reveal the details of the meeting with Suleiman even to the members of its *Shura Council* [literally means consultation], acting as the Brotherhood's legislative body[113].

The angry sentiments inside the Brotherhood found more ground after Mubarak resigned on February 2011. Exiters cited events under which the Brotherhood further sacrificed key components of its ideology for the sake of what they identified as part of the post-Mubarak political spoils. For example, they referred to different occasions when the group 'colluded with the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) in using brutal force' against protestors.[114] As the Brotherhood became closer to the SCAF, they distanced themselves from revolutionary or secular forces who organized and led the protests, again consolidating accusations of 'departure from national demands and committing more acts of treason for the sake of narrow interests or short-term political gains'[115].

The group took power as Mohamed Morsi, then a leader in the group's Guidance Bureau, won presidential elections in May 2012. This inflamed further disillusionment as 'Morsi sounded less as an Islamist leader than a copy of Mubarak himself[116].' Indeed, 'Morsi and Mubarak are the same' sounds like a frame on its own given its repetition and frequency in the texts of exiters citing 'authoritarian desires to grip on power', 'excluding the opposition', 'not embracing pluralism', and 'corruption.'[117] It was also a moment of incongruence in framing as the Brotherhood has long framed itself to its members as 'the ideal Islamic organization, pure of the filth that infected the rest of society.[118]' The angry reactions of exiters resonated with the mood outside the movement. The general feeling among Egyptians at the time is that neither the president nor the group moved towards the 'triumph of ideology' and that their control of power was 'a product of normal and calculable power politics, including coalition building, political maneuvering, and placating different interests and power centers within society[119].' Sayyed Milad, a 33-year-old shop trader, left the movement in 2014 after 9 years of membership said: 'I was not satisfied at the time because the Brotherhood allowed its power politics to trump its own

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[107]   Abou-Khalil (2017). Phone Interview.
[108]   Hamza (2021). Phone Interview.
[109]   The descripted in repeated in interviews with Lutfy (2017), Nazily (2017), Abdel-Gawad among others.
[110]   Ban (2017). *Ikhwan wa salafyyon wa dawaish (Brothers, Salafists and Members of ISIS)*. Cairo: Al-Mahrousa, p. 256.
[111]   Hamza (2021). Phone Interview.
[112]   Hamza (2021). Phone Interview.
[113]   Beshara (2016). *Thawret Masr: Men jumhuryet yulyu ella thawret yanayir*, p. 505.
[114]   See Wikileaks (2011). H: Intel. Secret offer to El. baradei/Muslim Brotherhood-army alliance. Hillary Clinton email archive. Available online: https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/emailid/12845 (accessed on 30 October 2018).
[115]   El-Qassas (2017). Phone Interview.
[116]   Aboul-Sa'd (2017). In-Person Interview. Cairo.
[117]   Ramzy (2013). *Dawlat al-Murshid wa Sanam Al-Ikhwan (The State of the Guide and the Statue of Muslim Brotherhood)*. Cairo: Rodiy, p. 134.
[118]   El-Sherif (2014). *The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Failures*. New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
[119]   El-Sherif (2014) *The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Failures*. New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

ideology. I joined the movement for the *Da'awa* in the first place.[120]' Others felt that the group's political ambitions led it to comprise on its ideological base including the mostly touted project of founding an Islamic state or society.[121] More exiters felt vindicated. This view of Aboul-Sa'd, who exited the movement in 2011, made him feel self-empowered as well as proved him right in front of his wife who had accused him of 'being less of a Muslim' upon his departure a few months ahead of Morsi's presidency. 'She felt I was right. She realized that disengaged from a self-interested group, not from Islam. Thanks to Morsi, she can see such evidence loud and clear.'[122]

Spatially, the revolution allowed members of the Brotherhood resources and opportunities for ideological enrichment and fertilization. For example, during the protests at the Tahrir Square, protestors agreed not to raise any identity markers of political or social groupings for the sake of highlighting the consensual demand of the resignation of Mubarak. Members of the Brotherhood joined forces with members of secular forces, chanting slogans such as 'Muslims and Christians are all for Egypt' or 'long live the crescent and the cross'. These slogans were always 'avoided' or even 'abhorred' by the Brotherhood, always giving priority to slogans such as 'Islam is the solution.'[123] The square thus provided the space for exposure to such linguistic deviance and a unique repertoire of performances away from the control of the Brotherhood's leaders usually entitled to approve or disapprove the group's own slogans on similar occasions. A heterogeneous 'spatio-political fabric'[124], the Tahrir Square replaced the traditional *spaces* of the Brotherhood usually marked with exclusivity and in-group similarity such as the mosque. Huzaifa Hamza, a member for 20 years, even attributed his disengagement to these 'discussions with members of other forces at the cafes around the Tahrir Square[125]'. These new circles of debate and socialization were eye-opener for Hamza and other members who found in them a chance of free riding leading to their disengagement from the movement. In 2014, he wrote an article for a news website asking the Brotherhood's leaders to 'dissolve the movement', and the article consequently led to his own dismissal from the movement. He attributed the idea of the article to his chats at the Tahrir-overlooking cafes, a hub of gatherings of mostly secular forces. Within these places, the Brotherhood lost its ability to impose 'unanimity' and spatial exclusion as one key step towards consolidating its control of members via the abovementioned policies of communion and denunciation.[126] The Tahrir Square also obfuscated the boundaries between the inside and outside once enforced by the Brotherhood as part of its *Rabaniyya*-related beliefs.[127]

As Morsi lost power in the June 2013 coup and members of the Brotherhood began a sit in in *Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya* Square, the frames of the exiters found another level of resonance. The resonance was more of a dissonance of the Brotherhood's dominant ideology. For example, the leaders instrumentally adopted the concept of *Rabaniyya* at full volume and speed during the *Rabi'a* sit in to keep the protestors united and mobilized. Their speeches were full references of Quraanic stories that the Brotherhood would win and Morsi would be back to power. They depended on prophecies and expected miracles, and the rhetoric was evidenced by further claims that 'Prophet Mohammed is with us now'[128]

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[120]   M.S. (2017). In-Person Interview. Egypt.

[121]   A.Z. (2017). In-Person Interview. Egypt.

[122]   A.Z. (2017). In-Person Interview. Egypt.

[123]   Tammam (2011). *Al-Islamiyoon wal Thawra al-Misriyya: Hidoor wa Taradod wa Musharakah* (Islamists and the Egyptian revolution: Absence, hesitation and participation). Available online: https://bit.ly/2Pw2ILn (accessed on 23 October 2018).

[124]   Bayat (2017). *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, p. 540.

[125]   Hamza (2021). Phone Interview.

[126]   Bittner (1963). Radicalism and the organization of radical movements. *American Sociological Review* 28: 928–40; Coser (1974). *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment*. New York: Free Press.

[127]   Menshawy, *Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood*, p. 46.

[128]   YouTube (2013a). Ezhak ma al-rua'a al-elaheyah fi Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya (Laugh with God-inspired dreams in Rabi'a al-'adweya) Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NAyi00COSQ (accessed on 4 November 2018).

or that Archangel Gabriel leads the members in their prayers during the sit in.[129] As they represent 'true Muslims', God will support the protestors with miracles similar to those of Moses when he faced down the Pharaoh, or so run claims made during the sit in.[130] In other words, the leaders went back to instrumentalize the monopoly on the 'satisfaction with God' and all associated utopian ideas building the 'imaginary' at the core of the group's Islamism.[131] Nevertheless, the group's ideology failed to serve purposes as the security forces stormed into the sit in, killing hundreds including women and children[132]. Many members attributed their disengagement to this failure of the group's *Rabaniyya* master frame to move from *irrealis*, what is imagined, to the *realis,* what is happening on the ground. 'The main problem of the Brotherhood's leaders became very clear to me: Their ideological line and their practical line are in disconnect or dis-alignment,' said the 36-year-old Emad Ali who exited in 2017 after 15 years of membership. Some ex-members even told me that the disconnection was so strong that they abandoned Islam completely given their disillusionment with the whole idea of the 'divine' claimed by the Brotherhood's leaders and enmeshed into their ideological principle drawn on *Rabaniyya*.[133]

All these levels of disillusionment with the Brotherhood's performance during the Arab Spring emboldened members in their ideological battle against the Brotherhood's leaders. For example, they rejected the usual equation based on employing the frames of 'victimization' by the leaders after events such as *Rabi'a.* As many leaders and members were imprisoned by the regime of El-Sisi, the Brotherhood sought to gain further legitimacy and consolidate mobilization against the regime's oppressive practices. It is the same equation of the past under which the Brotherhood gained popularity and flourished by weathering the regime's bans and jailing for most of its existence. 'I perceived this victimization as an act of opportunism, weakness, cowardice or even incompetence,' said Hamza. He and others took the victimization frame as an excuse by leaders to 'deny that they were defeated by re-constructing others such as the oppressive state as a lightning rod for all the Brotherhood's problems or its failures.[134]' Many exiters insisted that the leaders of the Brotherhood, including those in prison, 'be held accountable,'[135] as they have 'blood on their hands' by not protecting the lives of protestors at *Rabi'a.*'[136]

Furthermore, exiters engaged in a battle of framing to rename those killed in Rabi'a not as 'martyrs' (the preferred description of the Brotherhood and its leaders) but as 'casualties'. It was more of a 'passive martyrdom,[137]' thus allowing the exiters to victimize those who were killed rather than take them as subjects or agents of the killing as 'acts of resistance'. This shift in meaning makes the leaders as well as the regime stand as perpetrators. 'I will never forget or forgive those leaders as ignorant as full of themselves during the Rabi'a sit in," said A.Y., 33 years old and who left the group after 12 years of membership. He elaborated: 'Those leaders assured us at the sit in that security forces cannot dare storming of the camp. They claimed that they know more than we do. These were all misinformation and lies.'[138]

[129] YouTube (2013b). Manasat Rabea'a: Gabriel (alayhe alsalam) dahar fi masjed Rabea'a (Rabea'a stage: Gabriel) (peace be upon him) appeared in Rabea'a mosque). Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oOaAbsqVcg (accessed on 4 November 2018).

[130] Kandil (2015). *Inside the Brotherhood*, p. 2.

[131] The evocation of these tales in the Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya sit-in can be taken as part of a general understanding inside the Brotherhood that Quraan, from which some of these tales are drawn, can provide solutions concerning this crisis and 'every aspect of daily life'; see Al-Hudaybi (1878), *Dusturuna* (Our Constitution), Cairo: Dar al-Ansar, pp. 9–10.

[132] Human Rights Watch (2014). According to Plan: The Rab'a Massacre and Mass Killings of Protesters in Egypt. Human Rights Watch. 12 August 2014. Available online: https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/08/12/all-according-plan/raba-massacre-and-mass-killings-protesters-egypt (accessed on 10 January 2021).

[133] See Youtube (2019). No Author. Aljazeera's Fi Sab' Sinein (In Seven Years). 2019. Documentary. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tTdlSzIANo (accessed on 20 December 2020). At least two of the 33 interviewees told me that they are no longer believe to Islam.

[134] Hamza (2021). Phone Interview.

[135] K.F. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.

[136] G.'A. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.

[137] See Matar and Harb (2013). (Eds.) *Narrating Conflict*.

[138] Y.A. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.

The acts of the Egyptian regime after the removal of Morsi have provided opportunities and resources at different levels. For example, unlike Mubarak's regime, El-Sisi's regime does not limit its crackdown and detention campaigns to the leaders. Many rank-and-file members share the burden of the repressive measures. They thus felt that they deserve having a say in what is happening inside the Brotherhood. It sounds like a new 'social contract', where members who pay the same price as their leaders deserve equal 'privileges' including redistribution and more sharing of power. The prison also came with an opportunity for members to mingle with their leaders, once described and distanced as 'those who are above' as part of their aura of sanctity[139]. This interaction left many members doubting the effectiveness of the hierarchical structures over which the organization is based. 'Those leaders whom we always obeyed their orders blindly were exposed to me as ideologically hollow, unsophisticated, backward, mind-deficient and ignorant'[140], said the 23-year-old M.E. after a six-month imprisonment in 2015.[141] He cited examples of their 'shallowness' such as 'they do not read newspapers or got preoccupied with interpreting his dreams.'[142] M.E. also showed no empathy for those leaders who were in prison as 'whole idea of facing down the regime via imprisonment sounds really silly and stupid.[143]' Again, these new meanings and accusations of ideological hollowness or opportunism support the countering of the *Rabaniyya* master frame as leaders simply appear more as humans with no aura of sanctification that long immunized them from criticism or made their orders unquestioned. Exiters have the capacity to resist and criticize the ideas and characters of those leaders without fearing ready-made accusations of apostasy or choosing Satan.

The state has added grist to the mill, providing more material resources for disengagement. It supported the production and dissemination of ideas and meanings constructed by the exiters. The state's printing houses took over the publication of some autobiographies and allowed others to be published by other printing houses amidst the highly censored atmosphere under El-Sisi. The state media outlets opened space for exiters to narrate their journey or comment on the actions of the Brotherhood in general. In a radical change of seats, the exiters are thus endowed with the 'power of expert'[144] controlling the general public's access of information and interpretations on the meanings of their experiences as well as the meanings of the Brotherhood's ideology especially as existing Brotherhood members are not allowed the same opportunity or resources. Many of the exiters also benefited from further state opportunities such as jobs, business trips to Europe or assimilation into alternative ideological circles such as membership into cultural institutions. The state's clampdown on members of the Brotherhood, including banning the whole movement from operating and ordering its assets seized as one Egyptian court ruled in September 2013, was counterbalanced by a lenient position towards Exiters. Within this state support, the two master frames gained further consolidation by amplification and elaboration. For example, 'Eid narrated his experiences in two autobiographies and also gave his views on the ideology of the Brotherhood in three more printed books[145]. He is a regular host in TV channels and writers for newspapers, news websites. It is difficult to disconnect this popularity with the support of the state which mostly owns or censors media outlets and uses them in its propagandistic campaign against the Brotherhood. Nevertheless, the state's rewards came at the price of limited access to politics. El-Qasass, a deputy leader of the *Misr Al-Qawiyya* (Strong Egypt) Party and whom I interviewed in 2016, was arrested two years later, in February 2018. Despite his vociferous attack on the Brotherhood, he was

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[139]　See Chapter 5 of Menshawy (2020). *Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood*.

[140]　M.E. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.

[141]　M.E. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.

[142]　M.E. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.

[143]　M.E. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.

[144]　Lippmann (1997). *Public Opinion*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks, p. 384.

[145]　'Eid (2013). *Tajribati fi saradeeb al-ikhwan (My Experience in the basements of Muslim Brotherhood)*. Cairo: Jazeerat al-Ward; 'Eid (2014). *Qissati ma' al-ikhwan (My story with the Muslim Brotherhood)*. Cairo: Mahrousa; 'Eid (2014). *Al-ikhwan al-muslimoon al-hader wal mustaqbal: Awraq fil naqd al-zati (The Muslim Brotherhood: The Present and the Future: Papers from Self-Criticism)*. Cairo: Al-Mahroussa.

accused of 'belonging to a banned movement'[146]. Aboul-Futouh, who founded the party and magnetically attracted many exiting members of the Brotherhood, was also arrested at the same time after publicly criticizing El-Sisi in a TV interview. The opportunity which the party offered to exiters, especially given its inclusion of reference to Islam in its platform that made it a more convincing alternative for Brotherhood members not seeking a full 'discursive rupture' with their past, was lost. Furthermore, the state's coupling of members and ex-members in its campaign against the Brotherhood could sound like throwing the baby out with the bath water. Many of exiters narrated how the disengagement of Aboul-Futouh (still in prison at the time of writing this article), a 'charismatic influential character taken as a mentor' especially among young Islamists, was a key factor facilitating their own disassociation[147]. Even more, many exiters took part in his presidential campaign in 2012 in which he ran against the Brotherhood's candidate, Morsi, and also joined his party, *Misr Al-Qawiyya* (Strong Egypt), whose platform calls for 'respect for individuals freedoms', 'the right of self-expression' and 'participatory democracy'.[148] His detention therefore sends mixed messages affecting the pace of disengagement from the Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood attempted to win over many exiting members by bringing them to the movement through steps such as adaptation and promising 'internal discussions on what went wrong', 'diversifying' the group's skillset to treat its lack of political expertise, and adopting more 'revolutionary' strategies for resisting El-Sisi's regime[149]. Nevertheless, these steps of adaptation mostly remain 'lip service' given the continued control of the traditional 'historical leadership'[150]. Representing the 'stagnation camp', the 'historical leadership' are in charge, controlling the Brotherhood's financial resources (and thus discursive resources bolstering loyalty to thee frames of dominant ideology) and are still internationally recognized[151]. The organization as a whole 'remains largely immobile[152]' and many of the reasons that pushed exiters to leave still exist. This is the case as the Brotherhood were ideologically divided after the 2013 coup. Leaders were involved in disputes and public disagreements on issues, throwing accusations of corruption and embezzlement[153]. This disagreement thus offered an opportunity for members to vindicate their frames, countering the Brotherhood's ideological basis of *Rabaniyya*. The divisions also undermined the need for unity and much-needed consensus among Muslims for the sake of realizing the joint mission of 'satisfying God'. Paradoxically, the divisions opened windows for ideological emancipation based on an unprecedented individualization. Many rank-and-file members now enjoy an 'unprecedented amount of independence from the organization's hierarchy' enough that they have begun to pursue 'individual strategies to reform the movement' in response to the failures of the 2013[154]. As these strategies are hampered by the Brotherhood's tilt towards 'stagnation' and its leadership towards 'dormancy[155]', many individuals were encouraged to express and effectuate dissidence, previously suppressed and undermined in the name of organizational unity. In other

146 No author, Tajdid habs al-Qassas naeb hezb 'Misr al-Qawiyya (Renewing the Arrest of El-Qassas, the Deputy Leader of the Strong Egypt Party), *Aljazeera*, 22 January 2020. Available online: shorturl.at/ktTV6 (accessed 2 January 2020).

147 Hamza (2021). Phone Interview.

148 See the party's facebook page. Available online: https://www.facebook.com/MisrAlQawia (accessed on 12 December 2020).

149 Ardovini (2020). Stagnation Vs adaptation, p. 15.

150 I am grateful to Mahmoud Sha'ban, an Istanbul-based journalist and researcher on the Muslim Brotherhood, for the insight. Sha'ban's argument is that the 'historical leadership' returned the group to 'organizational rigidity and ideological strictness to the pre-2011 levels 'given the expansive economic and media projects in which many members of the group are now employed.' This economic prowess, partly gained through alliance with the Turkish government, 'bought off loyalty and muffled dissent inside the movement especially given the difficult job market and limited options available to potentially exiting members if they think of building their own career independent of the group after their disassociation,' said Sha'ban. Interview. Sha'ban (2021). On phone. 20 January.

151 Ardovini (2020). Stagnation Vs adaptation, p. 4.

152 Ardovini (2020). Stagnation Vs adaptation, p. 4.

153 Aziz (2017). Divisions Widen between Muslim Brotherhood Factions after Policy Reassessment Initiative. Available online: https://bit.ly/2Uo27PI (accessed on 19 September 2019).

154 Ardovini (2020). Stagnation Vs adaptation, p. 2.

155 Ardovini (2020). Stagnation Vs adaptation, p. 2.

words, individualism, long abhorred and derided inside the Brotherhood as I detailed above, is now part of the reality of the dynamics inside the Brotherhood.

One final resource for ideological disengagement is the broader geographic re-spatialization to new territories such as Turkey. Since thousands of the Brotherhood's members escaped to avoid El-Sisi's wrath, some members felt that the re-spatialization allowed them to announce their disengagement. Hamza said:

At university, I study Marx; at work I meet as a journalist more pragmatic and flexible Islamists such as members of the ruling Justice and Development Party which stood out from the Brotherhood because; and you see a complex life full of ideological colours beyond the Brotherhood's white/black classification.[156]

Some members left the movement's lack of sophistication as 'I realized the rhetoric of my traditional leaders inside the Brotherhood really does not fit a socially liberal and open society as the Turkish one[157]'. M.E. said living in Istanbul allowed him to live in more 'secular' areas of the city and away from the 'Muslim Brotherhood arenas where most members and leaders live.[158] This geographic distancing is not available to many exiters in Egypt, with many of them suffering from smear campaigns practiced by existing members or leaders.[159] They also feel pressure of social isolation especially as part of the Brotherhood's recruitment tactics depend on spatial proximity, where many members end up working or living within the same space.[160] Furthermore, the state of El-Sisi is also changing tactics, raising fears that exiters could also be part of the widespread clampdowns that left tens of thousands in prison. The regime's move is so far not sweeping, targeting Islamists who are involved in politics or challenging its durability. Nevertheless, judging by the desire for ideological freedom of association and for more intellectualism which exiters mentioned as part of their reasons for disengagement, the picture looks bleak. The anti-Brotherhood regime and its ideology appear as exclusivist and restrictive as the Brotherhood was. The state rhetoric on the need to 'eradicate' the Brotherhood's ideology leaves members with no space to stop and think of alternatives away from the dichotomous binaries of the past (e.g., Muslim/non-Muslim, God/Satan, inside/outside). This perhaps explains the slowdown in the wave of exiters in recent years (if we judge by public announcements of departure).

6. Conclusions

The Muslim Brotherhood has long posited itself as the sole representative of Islam and its membership as the path towards obtaining God's satisfaction. The conception of 'the Muslim Brotherhood is Islam' has significant consequences including limited freedom of speech and difficulty when trying to leave the movement. Members were asked to blindly 'hear and obey' the orders of their leaders, gaining sanctification out of this 'contract' of leading the way towards God. A disgruntled member faces 'godly' disciplinary actions and leader's accusations of 'apostasy' and Satanic dispositions. A member seeking to 'stop and think' about the ideas of the movement has also to think of broader punitive measures related to their social relations and severance of relations when belonging to the 'society of Muslims'—a punishment which is costly, especially given the group's dynamics of recruitment and mobilization, which means members of the same real kinship family, i.e., brothers and sisters, and husbands and wives, and imagined kinship family, i.e., friends, are all connected by their membership in the group. In other words, losing the membership of the Brotherhood means losing these valuable social ties. This article therefore presents disengagement not only as discourse discerned via the frames of exiters in their texts but also a process of negotiating these social or ideological interactions. This made it necessary for exiters to engage in re-interpreting the tenets of Islam and verses of Quraan which the

156   Hamza (2021). Phone Interview.
157   M.E. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.
158   M.E. (2017). In-Person Interview. Istanbul.
159   See Chapter 2 of Menshawy (2020) Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood
160   Fayez (2011). *Janat Al-Ikhwan*, p. 15.

Brotherhood took as its core values and the system of belief in order to prove the that they can be Muslims not Islamists. They also negotiated dominant meanings long stabilized inside the Brotherhood's ideology.

The discursive layered disengagement is contextualized. The Arab Spring provided opportunity to evidence and validate such de-coupling and also sped up disengagement as well. The Brotherhood's leaders in power were found to be mere political agents seeking to take over the existing political order rather than Islamist leaders moving towards replacing it with their envisaged 'Islamic state' or 'Islamic society'. Exiters felt disillusioned that the imagined 'Islamic project', long cultivated into their minds as an unrealized dream, gave way to pure power politics when Morsi came to power. Leaders were perceived as power-hungry brokers searching for political gains out of compromises with the older regime. More significantly, many members felt that the leaders are 'humans' who err and commit mistakes. Losing the aura of 'sanctification' _ or the 'those who are above' as they are best known inside the movement led to demands for those leaders to 'be held accountable,' a revolutionary shift of thinking in a hierarchically shaped group that always asks members to obey leaders the same way 'a dead body poses in front of the one washing it after death'.

This article demonstrates that disengagement is a complex process, which makes the mission of understanding disengagement based on more layers of interaction including that between the past and present. Announcing that a member is out of the movement is just a *point of emergence* as the decision or steps leading towards it are all acts of the past, full of *points of evolution*. This makes sense as the process of ideological disengagement is partly cognitive. It began in the minds of exiters years or perhaps decades before it was articulated in texts announcing the disassociation. Many exiters cited earlier activities such as independent or even solitary reading practices as part of the journey of freeing them-selves of the movement's highly censored curricula and collectivized cultural cultivation. Disengagement is an act of cumulation rather than an act of specific 'turning points' or 'stages' that some literature pay attention to. Additionally, language cannot be ignored as it not only describes or represents events of experiences of disengagement, but also creates them as the texts of exiters are full of patterns of actions to construct and reconstruct meanings which I aggregated and organized as frames and master frames. The process has a social or political side along with the cognitive side. All the frames operate within the changes after 2011, the year marking the beginning of the unprecedented exit wave. Take the Tahrir Square as epitomizing the kind of radical new society which members of the Brotherhood have long envisaged under the name of 'the Islamic project'. The square offered a more presentist and prefigured foundation for a different future. For many Brotherhood members, the utopian world is realized not imagined. As far as disengage-ment is concerned, this environment provided opportunities and alternatives including new ideological relations of belonging and a space shared with members of secular forces which organized and led the protests in the Square and even with other exiting members whom the Brotherhood always sought to isolate, demonize or even deny their presence. Exiters felt agency at the group's level as well, emboldened to question its unquestioned ideology due to actions of the Brotherhood itself including organizational division, the fragmentation of its identities and ideological bases. As this fragmentation continues, the Brotherhood's relationship with Islam and religion in general changes. It can no longer proclaim itself as the sole representation of Islam simply for two main considerations. The Brotherhood is no longer a single monolithic or united group to make such a claim. Secondly, there is no one single dominant version or interpretation of Islam which every member of the group has to abide under claims of unanimity or solidarity by consensus. There are many different interpretations of Islam (including those of the exiters as well as those of different factions seeking to justify their positions). Furthermore, a part of the change is the shift in accessibility. The Brotherhood can no longer disseminate its dominant ideology across the ranks of what is meant to be a well-organized hierarchically-shaped movement. Almost 50 percent of its members are 'inactive', according to some estimates

inside the movement, according to which many 'dormant' members stopped engaging in its activities as they feel 'alienated or traumatized'[161]. This could mean that the research on the Brotherhood has to give away its old assumptions of monolothism. Scholars can no longer deal with a single movement, a single ideology or a single identity.

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