

Chapter 14

Faith-Based Organizations and Civic Engagement in Egypt

Can FBOs Be Agents for Change?

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Introduction

Islamic faith-based organizations (FBOs) have dominated civil society in Egypt for many years, controlling most of its financial resources as well as voluntary human resources (Clarke 2008). They have been the main destination for the limited numbers of young people who chose to volunteer before the 2011 revolution (Barsoum et al. 2010). Despite this, Islamists have never been able to bring about any change of the ruling regime in the Middle East's most populated country. The revolution that broke out on the streets of Egypt in January 2011 toppling the regime of former President Hosny Mubarak was a movement driven by mostly secular and young middle class activists (Teti and Gervasio 2012). Although for many of those young people it was their first encounter with civic commitment, the magnitude of the revolution brought many to expect that those who sparked it would be able to step forward to play a major role in shaping its aftermath. Instead, however, the voting fixtures that took place in the months following the revolution showed that popular support was mostly leaning towards other forces, particularly the Islamist movement (Lynch 2012).

The causes of the electoral success of Islamists have been a matter of extensive discussion in the literature pertaining to the 2011 Egyptian revolution. In some reports, the role of voluntary Islamic FBOs was overlooked in favor of focusing on the identity question so closely related to the Islamists.¹ In other accounts, however, the role of Islamic FBOs, which are mostly powered by volunteers, was probably overestimated, with claims accusing them of buying the loyalty of the population with their social service activities. This chapter will put the role of voluntary Islamic

¹ I mean here the ongoing debate on the identity of Egypt between those who argue that Egypt is Arab, those who argue that it is Islamic and those who argue for an independent Egyptian national identity. Islamists have usually used this debate within an emotional discourse to mobilize the masses against those who are allegedly trying to “strip Egypt of its Islamic identity.”

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FBOs in shaping the political scene during the transition to postrevolutionary Egypt into perspective. The present chapter will use qualitative data from three volunteer-based FBOs in Egypt to understand how some Islamic FBOs have used their religious background not only for mobilizing volunteers and resources on behalf of their community service work but also for contributing to the ongoing political transformation in a volatile and turbulent postrevolution Egypt. This chapter will try to find what role these FBOs and the volunteers working through them have played in the rise of the Islamist movement to power in Egypt.

This chapter will start by explaining what it means by FBOs and will discuss two of the theoretical frameworks for their role in political transformation. It will then move to present the three case study organizations as they stood before the revolution together with the research background and methodology. The main part of the chapter will focus on the behavior of the three case study organizations after the revolution and will conclude with a critical analysis of the empirical findings.

FBOs and Political Transformation

The research objects in this chapter are FBOs, seen here as a distinct category of civil society organizations (CSOs). The definition of FBOs has been a controversial issue for a long time due to the, often ambiguous, link between faith and CSOs. For example, there are many organizations, such as the Edhi Foundation (the biggest humanitarian welfare organization in Pakistan), whose leaders and staff state that their main motive is their faith; but they would not consider their organizations to be FBOs (Bano and Nair 2007). Also, the use of the word “based” in the definition of FBOs is by no means a settled issue. For instance, Smith and Sosin (2001) used the term faith-related instead of faith-based because the latter excludes many organizations that have their resources and activities related somehow to elements of faith without being totally based on or affiliated to it. These disagreements about the terminology may lead to either an exclusive definition or a widely inclusive one that includes each and every organization where faith plays any role in its purpose, structure, or practice. A decent attempt to solve this problem is the detailed description of FBOs listing seven characteristics provided by Ebough et al. (2003), all of which apply to the case study organizations that will be presented below. Ebough et al. outlined detailed criteria to distinguish FBOs from other CSOs. The most important elements in these criteria identify CSOs as organizations that are: “1. Self-identified as religious organizations [...]. 2. Participants [...] tend to be religiously committed individuals, 3. Material resources [are] primarily provided by religious people or organizations, 4. Organizational goals, products, and services provided [...] are usually of a religious nature, and are performed on the basis of religious values. 5. Organizations rely on religious values, beliefs, activities, or experiences in information processing and decision making” Ebough et al. (2003, p. 413).

Religious organizations have played paradoxical roles when it comes to political transformation. They have used their advocacy and community service activities to legitimize various existing political and social conditions. On the other hand, there

were cases when they challenged these conditions and managed to change them. These contradictory functions, as Hart and Dekker (2005) point out, are a reflection of the equally contradictory functions often played by religion itself since it can be used both to “comfort” and to “challenge” its followers, as seen in Max Weber’s reference to the roles of priest and prophet in religion. De Tocqueville (in Warren 2001) and Putman (1993) have provided two of the leading theories regarding the role of civil society in democratization, which I shall refer to here as replacing democracy with political transformation.² De Tocqueville highlighted the impact of “social mores, political culture and habits of collective action” on democratization. According to him, CSOs, of which FBOs are a subcategory, provide venues for representation, for developing political culture and collective action. This role has been as important as the role of estates in establishing democracy in Europe. He theorized that associations, starting with individuals who join them at the level of narrow, primary associations (family clans or neighborhoods), develop as they acquire their civic culture into entities that can meet their interests collectively. They come to realize that they need to be dependent on others as being part of bigger groups that work for their collective interests.

Putman (1993) followed this by stating that he was concerned about the social context in which institutions operate (Howel and Pearce 2001). He specified how dependency within associations resulting from social and economic inequalities makes it hard to achieve the establishment of democratic civic culture. He noted that democratization (political transformation here) could not be founded within vertical ties. He explained that the failure of CSOs in Southern Italy to achieve political transformation was due to the chains of dependency and vertical relations that resulted from the prevailing social structures. This was in contrast to Northern Italy, where ties within CSOs tended to be horizontal rather than vertical allowing the association members greater freedom of movement and therefore greater ability to be transformed.

Bearing this in mind, we shall now move to providing the contextual background of the research by describing the state of civil society and volunteerism within it as it stood before the revolution.

Civil Society in Egypt on the Eve of the Revolution

Prior to 25 January 2011 (the date of the beginning of the protests), Egypt was a country ruled for more than 30 years by a nominally democratic military dictatorship regime headed by President Mubarak. The Egyptian Ministry of the Inte-

² I am using the term political transformation rather than democracy or democratization, which tend to dominate in the literature on the political role of civil society. Huntington (1993) believes that civil society is key to understanding the transformation to democracy. I argue that it can also be key to understand political transformation in general whether it to democracy or to other forms of political organization. The relation between civil society and democracy can be either positive or negative. It is not, therefore, necessary that civil society leads to democracy.

rior with its secret police arm called the State Security Department (SSD) and a 1.25 million man-strong paramilitary force had worked hard to crack down on any form of political activism they saw as a threat or a potential threat to the regime (Lynch 2012). The only exception to that seemed to be the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). This movement, which was established in 1928 with the aim of reviving the lost glory of the Islamic nation, had been legally banned after a turbulent history in relation to all the regimes that ruled Egypt since the mid-1940s. However, the legal ban was hardly implemented and the group was allowed to exist through its service-provision activities, especially in the fields of health care and education (Pargeter 2010). The group was also allowed to participate in some elections by fielding its members as independent candidates. Despite claims of widespread vote rigging, the MB succeeded, or perhaps was allowed, to win some seats in parliament as well as in trade unions and syndicates. This was described as an attempt by the regime to use the MB's conservative agenda as a scarecrow to gain popular approval for themselves as being the only possible alternative (Selvik and Stenslie 2011).

In this environment, civil society was left to exist as long as it mostly stayed clear of political activism. It was in effect contained by the authorities, in order to prevent it from growing strong enough to become a threat to the regime. Those who had studied civil society in Egypt before the revolution seemed to agree on describing it as a rather weak, fragmented, and contained element. It suffered various problems that included, but were not restricted to, lack of skills and capabilities, weak management, elitism, red tape and bureaucracy (UNDP 2010) as well as lack of funding and strong financial dependency on the government (Becker 1997). The relationship with the government was governed by the emergency law, which has been in effect throughout the entire era of President Mubarak's rule, from 1981 to 2011. It was also influenced by the strong presence and involvement of the SSD within the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS), which was the government's arm dealing with CSOs (Zahid 2010). Being sidelined by the State, civil society was left to offer only service provision and economic development functions without any serious involvement in policymaking. The ousted regime's persistent policy of promoting nonreligious development organizations and containing advocacy and political NGOs had severely restricted the capability of civil society to achieve any significant political change on the national level and resulted in a situation which Langohr (2005) described as "too much civil society and too little politics."

FBOs comprised the largest portion of CSOs in Egypt. It is difficult to know the exact size of its share because official registers do not record the degree to which organizations are affiliated with religion. Yet, looking at the names of organizations as they appear in the register of NGOs in Egypt (issued by MoSS) and some of the activities that are typically associated with FBOs (such as funeral services and organizing pilgrimage trips to the Holy mosques in Saudi Arabia) shows that they existed in abundance.

Most staff members of Egyptian FBOs are volunteers and most of them are older, middle class educated people (UNDP 2008). However, detailed statistics about volunteering in Egypt could only be found for youth as a detailed study on a sample of Egyptian youth was published by the Egyptian Population Council only a month be-

fore the revolution in December 2010 (Barsoum et al. 2010).³ The study described the picture of volunteering and participation in civil society among young Egyptians by highlighting a number of observations.

Firstly, young Egyptians seemed to have had little interest in volunteering in civil society. Less than 4% of the sample reported membership in a community group of any sort; and in most of the cases, these memberships were in sports clubs and youth centers. Around 1% of the sample reported belonging to any CSO or political party. Second, young Egyptians were very attached to religion. Eighty-eight percent of the sample covered by the survey reported that they were “religious.” About 83% said they prayed at least once a day (Islam requires five prayers per day) and more than 97% of the surveyed females wore the Islamic headscarf with more than 90% of them considering that not wearing it would bring them disrespect from society. The adherence of young people to religion was reflected in attitudes towards volunteering. About 66% of the minority who reported actively looking for volunteering opportunities had gone to mosques to find what they were looking for. Only 19% went to search for a volunteering opportunity at an orphanage (something that might still be managed by an FBO) and only 14% went to nonreligious organizations.⁴

The Case Study Organizations

The previous paragraphs summarized the context within which the case study organizations have been located before the revolution. The data used for this chapter was gathered during the research fieldwork conducted for the author’s PhD project. This research fieldwork included case studies of three volunteer-based FBOs operating in the field of poverty reduction in Cairo. The pilot fieldwork that included examining the records of the local Social Solidarity Department had concluded that most FBOs in the research area (which is the lower middle class urban neighborhood of *El-Wayly* in Cairo) are actually mosque-based CSOs that can be divided into three main categories:

1. Community-based mosques without affiliation to any political groups or religious orders.
2. Mosques that are part of one of the two main ultraconservative Islamic *Salafi*-mosque networks, which are *El-Gameya El-Shareya* (GS) and *Ansar El-Sunna*.
3. Mosques that are officially independent but affiliated with the MB (officially banned before the revolution).

³ Although the study was issued by a government agency, the list of its authors show a number of prominent academics whose involvement would grant the document an acceptable level of integrity and reliability.

⁴ Visiting orphanages on Fridays and religious feasts is a common practice for youth community service groups and enthusiasts in Egypt. Perhaps that is why orphanages featured in this statistic as a category on their own attracting almost one fifth of all volunteer efforts.

Based upon this examination of the records, the following criterion was established in order to select three comparable and typical CSOs, so that each would represent one of the three major categories above:

4. The FBOs must be affiliated to mosques.
5. The mosques had to be of medium size where Friday prayers are held but not located in a main street or considered to be the main mosque of the neighborhood. This condition was set to capture the community aspect of the organizations yet to limit them to a size that it is possible to study within the specified time for each case.
6. They had to be fully dependent on volunteers for providing their human resources.
7. They had to have regular year-around activities aimed at community service (poverty reduction in particular).
8. The activities had to be dependent on the mosque for their location, funding, management, and other logistics.

The first of the selected case study organizations is *Gameyet Magales El-Tayebeen* (GMT), which is affiliated to a community-based mosque that does not represent any particular ideological or political beliefs. The second FBO is affiliated to a mosque that is part of a nationwide Salafi network called *El-Gameya El-Shareya* (GS). The Salafi movement is an ultraconservative Islamist order, which believes that true Muslims are the ones who strictly imitate the lifestyle and actions of the early Muslims who lived with Prophet Mohammed and the two generations that followed them (all commonly known as the *Salaf*). They do not apply the Islamic legislation rule of *Ijtehad*, which allows Muslims to reinterpret sacred religious texts to coincide with the needs of life in each particular stage of history or social surroundings (Meijer 2009). The third case studied looked at the *Mohammed Farag Association* (MFA), which is affiliated to a mosque largely under the dominance of the MB, the biggest and most organized Islamist political group in the country, considered by many as being relatively moderate (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999).

Before the revolution, the GMT was a typical charity applying a redistributive, basic needs approach to poverty reduction. The organization worked to raise donations from the better off members of society in order to redistribute them through regular monthly cash installments to poorer members of the community. In doing that, there was no pressure applied on the beneficiaries to give their allegiance to any particular political organization or ideology. No conditions whatsoever were imposed on the beneficiaries. The organization tried to address poverty by providing poor people willing to work with capital to start their own microprojects. The plans failed several times because most of the targeted beneficiaries failed to keep their projects afloat. They were in the habit of selling their assets to finance their consumption once they faced any difficulty. The organization is run by an all-volunteer team with most of the work being done by one person, the treasurer of the organization, and with the mosque's imam providing major assistance. According to their statements in the interviews, the motives of the board members for working in the organization varied from a feeling of social responsibility towards their local community to the charitable obligation, which satisfied their religious consciousness.

The Salafi GS, which represents a more fundamentalist element of Islam, was very different. While it also applies a mostly basic-needs approach to charity without the element of empowerment or capacity-building, there was a significant difference in the form of the assistance it provided. In addition to regular cash payments, it provides beneficiary households with food assistance, free medical prescriptions, free school textbooks, exceptional payments for a daughter's marriage or death, and more. However, the biggest difference is the organization's strong commitment to maintain a link between the mosque as a religious institution and the poverty reduction activities conducted through the mosque. Beneficiaries would be required to attend religious lessons in order to receive the assistance. They would also be required to come in person to the mosque to receive their payments. The FBO team kept an eye on their attendance levels to pray in the mosque. All of this made perfect sense when I asked the General GS board member⁵ Moustafa Ismail in an interview about the main motive behind GS's poverty reduction activities. He said it was about "reforming society through maintaining strong ties between people and their mosque because the closer these ties are, the more religious people become and consequently become better members of society."

The third case (the MFA) was originally a community-based mosque similar in location and structure to that of GMT. However, the difference is that the mosque was infiltrated by the MB as represented by the mosque imam, a devoted MB member. He was appointed to this mosque by the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (MoE) in 2006. After a few years in office, he persuaded the mosque's board members to establish an NGO linked to the mosque. It is important to note that none of the board members is an MB member. In fact, at least one of them had very strong opinions against it. The imam was authorized by the board to utilize his personal knowledge and experience to go through the lengthy procedure of establishing the organization, as well as designing and implementing its poverty reduction activities. As his role became more central and dominant at the mosque and the organization, he used the connections and socialization opportunities his positions granted him to promote the agenda and ideology of the MB. With the tight grip of the SSD on CSOs before the revolution, doing that was not possible in public, through Friday sermons for example. Instead, the imam had to lobby and try to get his message to mosque regulars when he was off the microphone by establishing friendships and social ties with them, which allowed him to get his message through to them. His image as an initiator of good works done by the mosque's MFA helped him in doing that.

In a similar pattern to GMT, both the Salafi and the MB-affiliated organizations were mainly powered by volunteer board members who were mostly middle class pensioners motivated by similar motives to those of the GMT board members. In both organizations most of the work was handled by one person. MFA was the only exception to that, as the imam was a young man in his mid-30s and he used to get

⁵ There is a General GS that is like the mother to a network of smaller local and independent CSOs carrying the same name. They relate to the General GS in a way that is similar to retail franchises where the branches take the name and apply the methods of the General GS, but enjoy independent finances and decision-making in areas that do not contradict the religious principles or the main features of activities design of the GS.

Table 14.1 Case study organizations before the revolution

Case study FBO area	Community-based GMT	Salafi GS	MB-affiliated MFA
Human resources	All volunteers	All volunteers	All volunteers
Motive to volunteer	Religious/personal	Religious agenda	Political agenda
Poverty reduction activities	Simple top-down charitable	Sophisticated top-down charitable	Simple top-down charitable
Requirements for recipients	None	Attend religious lessons and attend mosque regularly	None
Political advocacy practiced	None	None	Pro-MB but not in public

FBO faith-based organization, *GMT* Gameyet Magales El-Tayebeen, *GS* El-Gameya El-Shareya, *MB* Muslim Brotherhood, *MFA* Mohammed Farag Association

some assistance from members of the MB youth groups who were all volunteers. The following matrix explains the main characteristics of the three case study organizations as they stood before the revolution. (Table 14.1).

The Research Methodology

Before returning to explore the case studies in detail, we pause to look at the data-gathering methods of this study. The gathering of data was done mainly by using the two methods of participant observation and interviews. Participant observation was used to collect data from the daily activities of case study CSOs. These activities include the daily interaction (in formal meetings or in everyday dealings) between leaders of case study organizations and their field staff on the one hand and the donors, recipients and other community actors on the other. Participant observation is a research method where the researcher is involved in social interaction with the “informants” within the “milieu” of the latter (Taylor and Bogdan 1998). The method is based on the first-hand experience that researchers could get from living themselves within the context of their research objects. This increases the reliability of the research findings because it becomes difficult to deceive the researcher in contrast to what might be done with a total outsider (Burns 2000). Participant observation does not necessarily require the researcher to participate in the activities they are observing. Instead, researchers are allowed to choose their level of participation anywhere between a “complete participant” and a “complete observer” (Burgess 1984). In this research, the choice was for the latter.

In addition to observing meetings and activities, semi-structured and informal interviews were used to gather data from the organizations’ staff, donors and recipients as well as other key informants. Interviews were used to get feedback about their understanding and interpretation of the activities that are observed in the field as well as to examine their attitudes towards studied concepts such as political trans-

Table 14.2 Number of interviews per case study

Case study category	GMT	GS	MFA
Board members	6	5	4
Donors	10	8	6
Recipients	12	16	10
Mosque imams	1	0	1
CSO staff	1	2	0
Other key informants	5	6	2
Total	35	37	23

GMT Gameyet Magales El-Tayebeen, *GS* El-Gameya El-Shar-eya, *MFA* Mohammed Farag Association, *CSO* civil society organization

formation and civic commitment. Interviews were utilized as an effective tool to gather data that might explain valuable observations recorded from the field by trying to understand the motives and justifications of these observations. Interviews that supplement a participant observation method ideally use open-ended questions and do not extend over long sessions (Stake 1995). This was convenient to the characteristic of the research area where most of the respondents were not available on a full-time basis. Table 14.2 summarizes the main categories of informant interviewed and the number of interviews conducted in all case studies:

Some of these informants were interviewed twice: before and after the revolution, when their corresponding case was revisited. In such cases, the questions were not repeated to compare changes in attitude. Instead, there were mostly new questions on what changes had happened and what new realities had emerged. The reason for revisiting the case studies after the revolution was to understand the process of transformation that they had been going through rather than to establish a comparison between what was before and what was after the revolution. Therefore, those who were interviewed twice had their second interviews transcript merged into the first one and they were both considered as one interview in Table 14.2.

It is worth noting that the third case study (the MB-affiliated mosque) was rather under-researched when compared to the other two because it was added to the author's initial PhD research only after the revolution. However, that should not cause any major methodological problem for this study because the MB, unlike other wings of the Islamic movements, has been covered extensively in the literature and there have been ample sources about the conduct of the MB before the revolution.⁶ Finally, rapid comparative assessment, which is a technique developed from Robert Chambers' (1983) Rapid Rural Appraisal, was used to validate the applicability of the gathered data to the wider communities of the areas examined. This was only applied for the Greater *Wayly* area, which has a total of 83 mosques including the

⁶ The author's PhD study does include a case study on a fourth secular organization. However, this will be ignored in this chapter due to methodological complications emerging from the fact that the revolution had erupted during the conduct of that case study and it would be difficult to include it within the limited space of this text.

three case study International Bathymetric Chart of the Southern Oceans (IBCSOs). The exercise was conducted with the help of the local MoE officer.

FBOs' Reaction to the Revolution

With the bleak picture of civil society and volunteering in Egypt before the revolution shown above, there were few expectations for the emergence of a nonviolent participatory movement demanding political and economic change in the country. However, all these assessments were dashed in the course of a few days with the outbreak of the 18-day uprising on 25 January 2011, when millions of people took to the streets to demand an end to the 30-year rule of President Mubarak (Lynch 2012). The events of the days that followed have shown an unprecedented boom in volunteering and civic commitment.⁷ The author's own personal experience as a participant in the revolution was of how people who had never volunteered before were engaged in all sorts of voluntary activities to serve the public, including people they had never known before. This included helping the wounded protesters with medication, guarding the entry points of the main protest area in Tahrir square, supplying blankets, cleaning the square and removing the garbage. Medical and paramedical professionals staged an all-volunteer clinic that later developed into a field hospital, which kept growing in size and equipment as the revolution progressed in order to provide the casualties with basic treatment. Outside of the protest areas, volunteers quickly replaced the withdrawn police forces and organized their own neighborhood patrols and checkpoints to protect lives and properties. They replaced traffic police forces and took responsibility for organizing the traffic. They even cleaned streets and painted the pavement sides. After more than a week without effective government in many parts of Cairo, volunteers kept the city up and running in a manner that was surprising when taking into account that Egypt has lived most of its history as an extremely centralized state (Marfleet 2009). After the revolution, the trend continued as manifested by the formation of Revolutionary Youth Coalitions (through which young volunteers practiced civic commitment), the establishment of 35 new political parties and the founding of many NGOs and community initiatives and activist movements.

For CSOs, there was also a significant change. On the fourth day of the revolution, Mubarak's notorious police force was defeated by the huge waves of protesters and the army was called in to maintain security. When Mubarak departed a few weeks later, the State Security Department's grip on civil society was broken. On 5 March 2011, protesters stormed the SSD headquarters in Cairo to confirm the end of an era of restraint for Egyptian civil society. In the following paragraphs, I will tell the story of the reaction of each of the three case study organizations to the revolu-

⁷ There is little distinction between the two concepts of volunteering and civic commitment in the Arabic literature, which leads to both of them usually being treated equally. Civic commitment is not always related to acting for change. Instead, it is described as active participation in civil society.

tion and how they dealt with the opportunities made available by it to use a wider pool of participants in their activities within an environment that was now cleared of most of the old SSD restraints on civil society. I will then conclude the chapter by analyzing the implications of these stories for our understanding of the role of FBOs in political transformation in volatile environments.

At the community-based GMT, things mostly remained the same. The charitable, distributive activities conducted through the mosque continued in the same pattern. There was no significant element of mobilization or any attempt to utilize the rising will to volunteer and act in the public domain. The focus of the organization on poverty reduction and its approach to issues related to development, political changes or transformation continued to be as neutral as they used to be. The imam of the mosque in which the FBO was based had certainly become more vocal in expressing his political views, but he chose not go any further without any attempts to organize local collective actions. Even his politicized sermons during Friday prayers did not call for any action in favor of any particular political agenda. Instead, they focused on aspects such as the threat of corruption to society, the importance of participation and voicing opinion and the ideal characters of the just leader. The mosque, however, extended its community service activities introducing a burial service for the dead and managing to install air conditioning in the mosque. "People are willing to act and play a positive role in their community. Not only had they volunteered to pay the costs of buying the funeral car and renovating the mosque, but some of them that we have never seen before have volunteered to recruit donors and help us with the logistics," the GMT mosque imam said.

Interviews with members of the community who received poverty assistance from GMT, held after the first postrevolution parliamentary elections in December 2011, showed higher rates of political participation by voting in elections. This was a very remarkable change as compared with the prerevolutionary scene when only 1 out of 20 interviewed recipients said that they had ever voted before. Most of the GMT mosque affiliates who declared their voting allegiances after the revolution said they had voted for the MB that won the majority of votes of the community's constituency. The reasons for their voting for the MB varied from "to give them a chance" to "see if they would be any better" or simply because "one can't find better options." While the community-based mosque organization managed to attract more participation in community-service-related fields centered around the mosque, it was neither interested in, nor able to play any role in the political success of the Islamic movement in elections despite the relative sympathy with the Islamists within the FBO. The motive for volunteering to work with the FBOs for its board members and staff remained the same; to earn the religious reward resulting from the service they provided to their community and the assistance they gave to the poor. Inflecting some sort of a political change, or contributing to that through the mosque, was hardly thought of at GMT despite the opportunities that would have made such thinking possible.

At the Salafi GS, the situation was different. However, we first need to look at the reaction of the Salafi movement at large to the revolution. The first sign of the Salafi's shift from their prerevolution, neutral position was a rally organized in the

streets of Giza shortly after Mubarak's departure to demand the implementation of Islamic Sharia Law in Egypt. That event shocked many of those who were hoping for a better time under the secular and youthful spell of the revolution. This was soon followed by a series of arson attacks in which Salafi youth groups torched and vandalized the shrines of Sufi *Awleyaa* (saints), who, according to the Salafis, are pagan idols that contradict the pure practice of Islam (Newswires 22 March 2011, 2 April 2011, and 6 April 2011). These events, carried out by what was then an ambiguous, aggressive and violent group resulted in mounting fears and brought back memories of the violence committed by radical Islamist groups in the 1980s and 1990s. The scholars of the central council of *El-Daawa el Salafeya* (the main body of religious leaders behind the organized Salafi movement) seemed to have picked up the signals and decided to satisfy the demand for participation in politics of their followers by forming the El-Nour Party in June 2011 to integrate the unleashed Salafi elements into a legitimate process. Initially, opinion polls were not very favorable to the newly formed party (Al-Ahram 26/9/2011). This was soon proven wrong when the party managed to secure about 22.5% of the seats in the general elections of 2011 and finished runners-up to the MB's political arm, the "Freedom and Justice Party" (FJP) that topped the polls. The result came as a shock since a party that was mainly composed of inexperienced and mostly unknown politicians managed to control about 35% of the Islamist representation in parliament (Topol 2012).

Back at the GS, the FBO's activities had seen a significant rise. According to board members, "donations have significantly increased following the revolution." In addition, the General GS began to implement new activities that were not permitted during the times of Mubarak through its branches of mosques present all over the country. For instance, the GS began a project to help poor families in rural areas by providing them with livestock and farming equipment. In addition, the organization expanded on infrastructure projects; the most important of them was a project to install water pumps in villages that lacked access to fresh water. More than 600 of these were installed over a few-weeks span according to statistics obtained from the GS. However, from the detailed description of activities, it was possible to understand that this expansion mainly took place in rural areas. GS branches in urban areas, such as the GS case study organization in this research, continued working at their prerevolution capacities. This included the breadth and depth of volunteering with the organization.

Moreover, research has not detected any direct link between the studied GS branch and the El-Nour Party during the elections. The mosque advocacy activities such as Friday sermons and religious lessons did not involve any political content and continued to focus on the ultraconservative teachings of Salafi Islam as was the case before the revolution. Interviews with the GS beneficiaries showed that many of them have not understood the meaning of the term Salafi nor do they know much about the principles of Salafi doctrine or have ever declared belonging to it. Yet, they showed considerable levels of trust in the mosque and valued its central role in the community. For many of them, the mosque was the place to approach whenever they require help or faced hardships.

The El-Nour Party capitalized on these high levels of confidence in the Salafi's religious image. The party designed its campaign to revolve around religious rather than political discourse (unlike that of the MB). The Salafi campaign was centered on the party's plans to apply the "rule of God" without a clear outline of what that actually means. It depended on the endorsements of popular Salafi TV-preachers, such as Mohammed Hassan, Yaser Borhamy, and Abu Ias'haq El-Huwainy. The use of the images of bearded fathers taking their daughters to schools and refraining from putting the images of women candidates in their publicity posters all reflected the uncompromisingly conservative agenda of the campaign, which, unlike the MB's, did not try to appeal to the nonreligious crowd at all. Apparently, the Salafi's focus on their religious message was enough to achieve what they needed from politics.

The MB, with a richer political experience, did not follow suit. Instead of using the space becoming available after the revolution to establish a line of religious advocacy activities that could compete with the Salafis, the Brotherhood depended on infiltrating mosques and mosque-affiliated FBOs for later use as networking and mobilization bases, in the same ways that they successfully used with other organizations before the revolution, such as labor unions, syndicates, and student organizations (Tadros 2008). The MFA was one of those FBOs infiltrated by the MB before the revolution as explained above. After a few years of working in the mosque and its CSO, the imam gained the trust of the board members that allowed him to run the daily affairs of the mosque and the organization by himself. A dependency relationship with board members was created. They needed him to run the organization and manage its complicated paperwork. In return, he obtained a mandate to use the mosque as a platform to preach the political discourse of the MB. During three Friday sermons held over the period of the two rounds of general elections (18 November 2012, 25 November 2012, and 2 December 2012), the imam rather aggressively attacked the political opponents of the FJP, deconstructing their arguments and warning against voting for them.

In the last sermon, delivered just before the election, he began his speech by explaining that the mosque should not be used to campaign for any particular political group. Instead, he said it was the mosque's duty to enlighten people on "how to choose" the most useful candidate for themselves and their community. He then offered to perform that task himself and began eliminating one group after the other. He first denounced anybody with obvious ties to the former regime, dismissing them as "corrupt and proven incompetent." After that, he said that each person should be voting for those who represent their own "principles and ideals." He then gave a carefully chosen question: "Do you think that we should be a secular state and throw our marvellous religion away and get it out of our lives?" He answered promptly: "If the answer is yes, then vote for those who advocate that, but if you think that we are good Muslims and we should stick to this religion and to its rule, then you ought to vote for those who represent what you believe in." However, that was not all. There was still one group that needed to be eliminated, namely the Salafis. He accomplished this by saying that voters must also be careful when they choose who represented their religion by not voting for those "who are taking Islam

too far” in a clear reference to the more conservative Salafi. Finally, he emphasized to the prayers that the best candidate would always be the “Muslim who is capable of serving Islam and is knowledgeable as well as experienced in doing that. Those are the ones who have stood firm in opposition for many years unlike the young and inexperienced ones who might have good intentions but are not up to various serious challenges we are facing in such a critical time.”

Later on, after the prayer, the imam offered to take the data (names, ID numbers, and phone numbers) of the would-be voters. The ostensible purpose of the exercise was to text them the addresses of their assigned polling stations where they were supposed to vote. This process of data collection, that continued in the mosque for 3 days and was advertised after every prayer, was carried out by a number of young assistants who all belonged to the MB youth groups. According to some local informants, some of them had never been seen before in the mosque, which showed that they had been dispatched by the MB from somewhere else to help the imam. The practice of moving Brotherhood members to assist others in campaigning elsewhere seemed to be a common practice because the imam of MFA mosque himself was later asked to move to help at another mosque in the poor northern Cairo suburb of Bahtim where elections took place on a different day. The elections took place in three stages because there were not enough judges to cover the whole country on 1 day after new rules enforced a system of one judge per polling station. In this case study, the FBO’s role was simply to act as a platform where many people could be gathered and where they were forced to sit still to listen to the sermon for 1 h and could not walk away or grab the remote control to change the channel. Needless to add that this same scene was repeated in many similar institutions in other places. According to a local MoE officer interviewed in October 2011, the MB managed to control the boards of at least three big mosques and their affiliated organizations during the 8 months that immediately followed the revolution and they were “on course to add more.”

On the side of the recipients, there was no evidence to show that they were particularly targeted by MB campaigning. Patterns observed at GMT and the GS continued with the MFA recipients interviewed who had shown a diverse set of political opinions. Some voted for the Salafis and others for the Brotherhood with only one voting for one of the former members of the NDP (The National Democratic Party, Mubarak’s former ruling party). Reasons for their voting decisions varied, but most of them (all were women) mentioned receiving advice from their sons or brothers. They all denied having been contacted by the association or any of its members, or even by any of the individual MB campaigners at their homes, in order to vote for the Brotherhood.

Throughout the election campaign, general observations outside the MFA mosque reflected similar conclusions. Organized, politically oriented mobilization and not social service provision was evident in the field throughout the election campaign. During the polling days, I encountered the phenomena of buses provided by the MB used to transfer the members of certain syndicates or neighborhoods to polling stations in several places in Cairo. MB youth also worked on providing help for voters who were looking to find their registration information or to know their

polling station data by installing stalls equipped with laptops that carried electronic copies of the electoral registers. This information provision service was particularly useful in elections where most people were voting for the first time ever and did not know much, neither about the voting process nor about the candidates. In the media, and unlike the Salafis who focused their message on those who would sympathize with their religious message, the Brotherhood extended its appeal to voters of all types, including non-Muslims, and tried, through putting forward many of its moderate members such as Mohammed El-Beltagy and Rafiq Habib, to reflect a moderate image. The MB simply dominated the political scene in ways that were not matched by any other group giving the feeling that they were almost the only major contender competing in them.

In the above three stories, we have seen three models of FBOs reacting to the events that suddenly allowed civil society activity to become more open than ever to participation and volunteering. In the first example, a community-based FBO had used its social capital and credibility within the local community, which was based on its religious nature as well as on the reputation of its respected leaders, to enhance participation for providing better community service. In the second example, the Salafi movement invested its association with very conservative religious values meant to appeal to a wide audience in mobilizing support for its political agenda. The community service and poverty reduction efforts effected by the Salafi FBO have expanded horizontally to enhance the centrality of the Salafi mosques and consequently the Salafi religious values to many followers. Finally, the experienced political group MB managed to use its affiliated FBOs as a recruitment base for volunteers who later used the FBOs as advocacy centers for the discourse of the MB. The following paragraphs will take these findings forward by analytically linking them to the conceptual debates on the role of FBOs in political transformation in Egypt.

FBOs: Converting Religious Capital to Political Transformation?

The behavior of the three case study organizations after the revolution showed four interesting, comparable fields that need to be analyzed in more detail. Firstly, the practice of using religion to strengthen their position within their communities; secondly, the means they had at their disposal to exploit that position to affect the process of political transformation in Egypt; thirdly, the role played by poverty reduction and community service activities in all of this; and finally, the way in which the growing will of the people to volunteer, especially the youth, was used to horizontally and vertically expand the activities of FBOs.

First, the dual functions of religion, highlighted by Weber's analogy between priest and prophet, was apparent. At all case study organizations, there was a prophet who promised a divine reward to those who volunteered to participate in their activities. This acted as a motive that was lacking in nonreligious organizations

within the same community. This might explain that while there were 83 mosques in the district where the research took place, almost all of which were volunteer-powered active providers of social service, there were only a handful of struggling secular organizations that could be recognized within the same community. Those who worked in the three case study organizations did so for God; not for pity for the poor or for the public benefit of their communities. The Salafis were more focused on the religious motive with work conducted to enhance the relation between the community and the mosque. The MB had been trying to push forward the State of God through their ascent to political power; and the community-based mosque associates were simply after a personal divine reward or blessing. Despite the different ways in which it occurred, all organizations were motivated by religion. In addition to motive, religion provided these organizations with legitimacy. It made answering their appeals for help, funding and support better heard and responded to by their communities. The most significant and intensive use of religion was, not surprisingly, the one practiced at the Salafi case study organization when the recipients were forced to attend religious lessons at the mosque they received poverty assistance from. The Salafi goal was to promote a Salafi conservative way of life and religious conduct to their followers. This prepared their minds to accept the Salafi political propaganda as soon as it began to appear. The MB applied religion specifically as a packaging or “image” that did not necessarily relate to any particular way of life or personal conduct. However, it only made MB look good or decent or moral because of its religious cover or connections. It was obvious that the MB would gain the most because they managed to use religion to carry their message beyond the borders not only of the religious community but even of the communities that directly benefited from their activities.

The second area of comparison is the role these FBOs played in political transformation. Here we find that there were two fields of influence that these organizations had. The first was their influence on the direct recipients of the organizations and the second was with the general public outside the circle of the organizations. All three case study FBOs failed to exploit their recipient’s potential to be agents for political transformation despite the freedoms they gained after the revolution. This failure can be explained by Putman’s theory on the role of civil society in political transformation, which was outlined earlier in this text. If Putman was to analyze the data gathered from this research, he would have attributed the failure of case study FBOs to effect political transformation on the type of political culture delivered to the recipients, which resulted from the patronizing, top-down approaches used for the organizations’ poverty reduction activities. This failed in breaking the strong ties that continued to connect the recipients to the primary institutions they belonged to. Case study organizations did make recipients dependent on the associations for survival, but they were not integrated into these institutions as parts of “groups” or “associations” that might have been joined by the common goal of bringing about change for the collective interest. Case study organizations did not provide a model of practice that could have shown their local communities the paths to either political or social transformation.

At the level of the general public, the Salafi and the MB-affiliated FBO succeeded in becoming instrumental for political transformation, albeit in different ways. In the case of MFA, the organization provided the arena for campaigning for change, which is a function similar to what De Tocqueville had suggested for civil society. The Salafis did something similar by providing a model for a caring and compassionate institution that could care not only for the wellbeing of the poor but also for the maintenance of the values and principles of religion as seen from a Salafi point of view. The Salafis thus enjoyed political success in elections, but it was still inferior to that of the MB because the Salafi's message was focused on a selected audience. On the other hand, the lack of a political agenda had not resulted, at least for now, in any significant influence for GMT in the political transformation arena, unless the politicized sermons provided by the mosque's imam will end up enhancing certain values among his audience. That would still need time before it can be measured as voting patterns on elections days alone would not be enough to indicate any such change in values.

The third area of comparison is the role played by the poverty reduction activities of these organizations. The key finding here is that none of the case study organizations used the assistance provided to the poor to affect their political loyalties. Interviews with recipients across the three organizations have shown how their voting patterns and their level of participation in the political activities after the revolution remained independent from the agendas of case study mosques. For example, many recipients at MFA have voted for the Salafi party in the parliamentary elections and a number of recipients of the Salafi organization have voted for secular parties. Contrary to the beliefs widely expressed in the literature on Islamic movements in Egypt, the social service activities provided by Islamic FBOs are not among the reasons for the political success of the Islamists in Egyptian politics. Instead, it seems that Islamists managed to appeal to those who voted for them by providing a discourse, an ideology, a political program and maybe just a strong and well-organized alternative that attracted enough popularity to win elections at that time.

The final area of comparison between the three case study organizations is related to their use of volunteers. Despite an apparent increase in the will to volunteer and take part in civic activity, case study FBOs mostly failed to directly utilize this in expanding their activities except in the case of MFA. At GMT and the Salafi GS, the focus was on people's will to contribute more to their economy. This included not only younger generations that took part in the revolution itself and its related activities. It also included other people, who might have not been with the youth on the streets, but were motivated to contribute by the patriotic euphoria that swept through the country as a result of the revolution. This was mainly manifested by the increase in donations and in-kind contributions to both GMT and the GS. However, the two organizations still could not convince any of those who did not volunteer with them in the past to personally take part in their activities after the revolution. On the other hand, the MB clearly had more success in recruiting more volunteers. The new faces that showed up in the MFA mosque to help the imam during the election campaign were recruited based on the motive to contribute to the politi-

cal agenda and ideology of the MB. The role of politics here is crucial. During the revolution, young people increased their levels of volunteering and civic commitment. The context of this was political as the goal of the revolution was to bring about political change. When the main wave of the revolution ended, the will to continue to volunteer or take part in civic commitment continued to be political. The MB, as the only well-organized political party, managed through its sophisticated organization to find those who believed in its ideology and were willing to act for its sake and provided them with the space and guidance (the role played by the mosque imam leading the young volunteers) to volunteer. That does not mean that others who volunteered during, and right after, the revolution would not have been willing to continue volunteering through civil society organizations or other FBOs. However, so far, civil society, which has not been as well organized politically, has failed to capture this potential and to utilize it. Table 14.3 summarizes the findings across the case studies.

Summary and Conclusions

The Egyptian revolution in January 2011 resulted in the end of an era of restraint for Egyptian civil society. This report discussed the role played by some of the Egyptian FBOs in the political transformation during the postrevolution era. The data was collected via research fieldwork conducted to include case studies of three mosque-based FBOs operating in the field of poverty reduction in Cairo.

One organization was a community-based mosque without affiliation to any political groups or religious orders. The organization, which adopted a charitable top-down approach to poverty reduction and lacking any political dimensions before the revolution, exhibited no major changes in its pattern of activities after January 2011. The second organization was attached to a mosque that belongs to a large, ultraconservative Salafī network. The FBO had been using its poverty reduction activities to enhance the ties between the mosque on the one hand and the recipients and community on the other. Post revolution, the activities have seen a rise in quantity with the implementation of new development activities. The parent Salafī movement has formed a political party (El-Nour Party) that achieved remarkable success in elections. There was no direct link between the studied GS branch and El-Nour Party during the elections. However, it is believed that the poverty reduction work practiced by the FBO has helped the party in the election by earning people's confidence in the values and the effectiveness of the Salafī mosque as an institution and, consequently, in the movement it represented.

The third organization was affiliated to the relatively moderate MB organization. In the postrevolution period, the organization was utilized to recruit volunteers and support for the MB. The mosque's imam, aided by material and manpower support from the MB, participated actively in the election campaign to preach the political discourse of the MB. Apart from this, the mosque's poverty reduction ac-

Table 14.3 Case-study organizations after the revolution

Case study FBO area	Community-based GMT	Salafi GS	MB-affiliated MFA
Human resources	All volunteers	All volunteers	All volunteers
Change in participation or volunteering	More donations and participation in the mosque activities	Quantitative expansion of activities at the branch and qualitative expansion in rural areas through other GS branches	More freedom to deploy assistance from other MB members when needed
Attracting new volunteers and more participation after revolution	Revolution sympathizers encouraged to make more donations and in-kind contributions	–	Politically motivated youth believing in MB ideology volunteering to serve political ideology
Motive to volunteer	No change	–	–
The role of religion in the organization	Motivation and legitimacy	Motivation, legitimacy and agenda	Motivation, legitimacy and image
Poverty reduction activities	No change	–	–
Requirements for recipients	No change	–0	–
Political targeting of recipients	None	None	None
Political influence on the public	Advocacy for certain values such as participation and accountability	Enhance the positive image of a religious and effective institution	Direct mobilization and advocacy through Friday sermon and other political activities practiced within the mosque
Impact on political transformation	No directly recognized impact so far	Indirect help to the Salafi political campaign	Direct help to the MB campaign

FBO faith-based organization, *GMT* Gameyet Magales El-Tayebeen, *GS* El-Gameya El-Shareya, *MB* Muslim Brotherhood, *MFA* Mohammed Farag Association

tivities were quite similar in their description to that of non-MB community-based mosques.

Religion provided these organizations with motivation and legitimacy. The Salafis' goal was to promote their conservative way of life and religious conduct to their followers. The MB applied religion specifically as an "image" that does not necessarily relate to any particular way of life or personal conduct, but one that is capable of acquiring wide public approval and acceptance.

The three FBOs potentially or actually contributed to political transformation in various levels and different ways. The GS facilitated the public's sympathy for the Salafi religious agenda. MFA provided a venue for political activity for the MB and

the GMT could have influenced the values of the community by emphasizing concepts such as justice, accountability and participation. The belief that Islamists win political support as a result of the poorer classes supporting them in return for social protection and poverty assistance has not been evident in this research.

Apart from the MB-affiliated CSO, case study organizations did not benefit from the rise in volunteering and civic commitment that was witnessed after the revolution. This rise was mainly related to the achievement of a political goal. Only the MB had the organizational capacity to divert that energy into active participation. Other organizations had to opt for an increase in donations and in-kind contributions by people sympathetic to the revolution.

There remains much to be learnt about the impact of voluntary FBOs on political transformation in Egypt. The situation in Egypt remains volatile and turbulent. The latest wave of major street protests in the country prompted the Egyptian military to overthrow the MB government amid significantly declining popularity for the Islamist causes. As this chapter is finalized, the country remains in turbulence and the future remains anything but clear. However, this research has proven that religion will remain a key element in the understanding of Egyptian civil society. It motivates participants, legitimizes organizations and sets the agendas for those who are willing to pursue them. And that will probably continue to be the case for a very long time to come.

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