MERIA

REVOLUTIONARY SALAFI ISLAMISTS IN EGYPT: AN ANALYSIS AND GUIDE

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While the ruling Muslim Brotherhood has received a great deal of attention in Egypt, the varied Salafi groups have been far less studied. At times allies and at times rivals of the Brotherhood, the Salafists are widely varied. Whether the two groups can cooperate will determine the future of Islamist rule in Egypt. The Salafists pull the Brotherhood to take stronger action more immediately and may have faith in the larger organization or consider it to have betrayed the revolution. Moreover, the Salafists operate with a wide deal of autonomy, being able to take extra-parliamentary action ranging from terrorist armed struggle to violent attacks on Christians and other opponents of the regime. The fact that there are now four competing Salafi parties shows the different streams of ideology and strategy. This article was written prior to the army action, but still shows how the Salafists are organized and their different camps.

The overthrow of the Mubarak regime in Egypt in February 2011 unleashed Islamist forces there to the point that the Muslim Brotherhood took over the presidency, parliament, and writing of the new constitution within the next 18 months. While the Brotherhood was the strongest single force in Egypt, the number-two slot was held not by liberals, moderates, or secularists but by the even more radical Islamist groups called Salafists. Who are the Salafists and what is their strategy and ideology?

The principal question in Egypt regarding the Salafists was whether they could work together effectively enough to remain a strong political voice in the country with actual influence on the national level. A second issue was how their extra-parliamentary activity--possibly including violence--would help consolidate a Shari'a state and intimidate the political enemies of both the Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood. A third question is the degree to which Islamists and the Brotherhood can work together, even if the Islamists try to outflank the Brotherhood in terms of greater militancy. If the Salafists are in effect a lobby on the Brotherhood, they can simultaneously play the role as the shock troops for the Brotherhood regime, giving it the rationale for

moving more quickly and toughly to impose Islamism on Egyptian society.

What seems to be not at all likely, however, despite the fact that this idea is at the center of U.S. and Western policy, is that the Brotherhood would repress the Salafists or pose a serious alternative in principle and not merely on the timing and tactical levels. It should be stressed at the outset that the Brotherhood is also actually a Salafi organization. Yet since the term has been used to define the disparate, even more radical Islamist groups in Egypt, it will be employed for that purpose in this article. Basically, too, the Brotherhood has the same ideology as the Salafists. The differences are in strategy and tactics.

Of course, since the goal is not merely to institute Shari'a rule but to take power in one's own hands, the Brotherhood and Salafists are competitors for control of Egypt. At times, the Salafists support the Brotherhood--which now also means supporting the government; at other times, they compete with the Brotherhood--as in elections--or criticize it for not going farther faster. The most important difference is that the Salafists are impatient. They want the Islamist program to be fulfilled much more quickly than the Brotherhood and are willing

to take far greater risks, both domestically and internationally. If the Brotherhood is "pragmatic" or "cautious," that only signifies its willingness to go more slowly in order to better achieve the same goals.

A central idea in Obama administration policy has been to support the Brotherhood being in power in order to restrain the Salafists. This is a foolish concept based on a misunderstanding of the situation. First, the two groups have the same goal. Second, the Brotherhood does not want to repress the Salafists but rather to use them for its own purposes.

This is true for such matters as the use of violence against Christians, foreign embassies, moderate oppositionists, modernist social practices, women, and Israel. If Salafists act, the Brotherhood--and hence the government--can then claim to be innocent of responsibility for, say, an attack on the U.S. embassy by a mob. This would be the case even though it did not attempt--as a movement--to discourage the anti-American frenzy (On the contrary, it encouraged that sentiment.) or--as a government--to protect the embassy properly (On the contrary, its security forces were ordered to stand by and do nothing until the last moment when a repeat of the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 became possible.).

What is taking place, then, is not "moderate Islamism" by the Brotherhood but deniability. In fact, the Salafists are incapable of taking power in Egypt, largely because their ranks are so badly divided and their strategies are so unrealistic. What is really happening, however, is that the Salafists are helping the Brotherhood make sure that Egyptian nationalists and liberals can never gain power and that the social revolution of thoroughly Islamizing the society takes place.

THE SALAFI REVOLT

The Salafi movement was born in the 1970s out of rejection of the Brotherhood's strategy of caution, especially by young militants. The Brotherhood did not act so carefully because it had moderated--its ideology and literature show this not to be

true--but because it feared the kind of total repression faced in the 1950s and 1960s at the hands of the Arab nationalist regime. Salafi leaders either quit the Brotherhood in frustration or developed their own version of Islamism in parallel, sometimes with cultish features and always with a greater willingness to confront the Mubarak government, at times with violence. This history has been discussed in great detail in the current author's book, *Islamic Fundamentalists in Egyptian Politics*.[1]

The Salafi groups were more fearless in saying and doing things that led to government crackdowns against them. This battle culminated in the assassination of President Anwar al-Sadat in 1981 and built to the near-civil war in the 1990s when the government was forced to repress a Salafi insurgency. During all of these events, the Brotherhood exercised discipline on its members and avoided involvement. Only when President Husni Mubarak seemed to be on his last legs, the regime weakened, the elite disaffected, and the United States weak, in October 2011, was the word given by the Brotherhood leadership to move into a revolutionary stage.

Nevertheless, within the Brotherhood, there had always been more militant factions, which sympathized with the revolutionaries and perhaps even imitated them. Periodically, individuals and groups had left the organization to join or establish radical groups. Moreover, by spreading Islamist ideas and taking over major institutions--including mosques and professional groupings--the Brotherhood was extending its influence throughout the society and providing a potential base of ideology and supporters for the militants' violence.[2]

Again, it should be stressed that the Brotherhood and the Salafists openly made clear that they agreed on goals. Their dispute was only over the best methods that would most likely achieve those goals. The Brotherhood believed, based on its experience, that the regime would defeat any insurgency. Nevertheless, in the 1990s, Egyptian Islamists--especially the al-Jihad and the Islamic Group, which emerged from the Jam'iyat Movement (al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya)--waged a

revolutionary war against the regime that peaked during the decade's first half and declined thereafter. They were defeated for a variety of reasons, including the government's clever, multi-layered strategy; the strength of the regime's institutions and the security agencies' loyalty; the lack of popular support for the radicals; and the divisions among the insurgent groups.

Among the Salafists' weaknesses then--like today--were their many splits. A cleric involved in al-Jihad remarked that the real reason there were "thousands" of groups and factions was that "everybody wishes to be a leader."[3] The broadest divide would be between those who came out of the Jam'iyat groups, who were Islamists involved in grassroots community organizing, and the al-Jihad forces, which originated as a group bent on armed struggle. An estimated 300 to 700 al-Jihad members had fought with the mujahidin in Afghanistan against the Soviets. This gave them military experience as well as a basis for misestimating the problems of staging an uprising at home.[4]

Jam'iyat insurgents were the first to abandon the armed struggle, when they concluded it was not working. In contrast, while some in al-Jihad were ready to give up violence by the end of the 1990s, others wished to continue the battle against Egypt's government or joined Usama bin Ladin in proclaiming that the United States should be the prime target. As the original Islamist activists from the 1970s and 1980s were killed, imprisoned, or lost interest in revolutionary action, those staging the revolt became younger and less educated.

According to an Egyptian study, only 33 percent of the 1970s militants had been under 25 years of age, while this was true of 71 percent in the 1990s. While 79 percent of the activists in the 1970s had an academic education, by the 1990s, this had fallen to 20 percent. In addition, while as few as 8 percent of the militants in the 1970s had come from rural areas, in the 1990s, this rose to 54 percent from villages and shantytowns. The revolutionaries' profile had moved closer to that of the typical Egyptian, but the quality of

leadership fell and the movement became more tied to Upper Egypt, where organization was easier but seizing state power harder.[5]

There were also particular problems with the revolutionaries' selection of violent tactics. These focused on the assassination of officials, attacks on security forces, attacks on Coptic Christians, and assaults on tourists. All these types of actions raised problems for the radicals. Murdering people who were Arabs and Muslims challenged both nationalist and traditional Islamic thinking and was unpopular. Copts were at least fellow Egyptians and striking them seemed to undermine national unity. Murdering tourists--though they were foreigners and non-Muslims--damaged the livelihood of many Egyptians. Thus, the armed struggle failed largely due to two fundamental problems: the government defeated the rebels militarily and the masses did not rally to their side.

By July 1990, 1,225 al-Jihad members were in jail, and the number of prisoners increased sharply in the next few years.[6] During March 1993, 21 people were killed and hundreds more arrested in nine raids in Cairo and Aswan.[7] In December of the same year, an attack on an island in the Nile near Asyut resulted in the arrest of scores of suspected Islamic Group members who, the government declared, were planning to assassinate officials and bomb government offices. Between the end of 1992 and the end of 1994, Egyptian military courts sentenced 58 Islamists to death (20 of them in 1994), 41 of whom were executed (13 in 1994).[8] Still, for a time, the level of insurgency grew. At least 70 people were killed during 1992 in terrorist attacks and in subsequent clashes with police, with twice as many injured.[9] Yet more than 300 people were killed in 1993, about the same number in 1994, and around 400 in 1995.[10]

Between 1992 and 1995, the war caused the death of around 1,000 people, including Islamists, police, and civilians. The pace of violence slowed in late 1995 and fell off further in 1996 to less than 200 dead (some figures put it far lower) and 78 wounded.[11] Meanwhile, the police kept up the pressure arresting 3,630 alleged extremists in 1995 and

3,933 in 1996.[12] A number of Islamic Group leaders were killed or captured. During 1996, al-Jihad was so hard-hit that it did not even claim any attacks in Egypt. Thus, the government defeated the insurgency, though it could not eliminate the radical Islamists altogether.[13] The number of deaths in 1998 from terrorist-related incidents was 47, less than one-third the previous year and the lowest since 1992.[14]

It was at this moment that the radical Islamists split, seeing the need for a new strategy. One group, mainly from al-Jihad but including some Islamic Group members, joined forces with Usama bin Ladin and redirected their target from Egypt's government to the United States.[15] Another faction, mostly from the Islamic Group, called for a ceasefire with the government, seeking to return to their earlier strategy as a more militant version of the Brotherhood.[16]

As a result, the level of violence fell even further in 1999.[17] Though it had refused to negotiate, the government released more than 2,000 Islamic Group prisoners during the year.[18] Despite the massive amount of suffering, casualties, and wasted resources they had inflicted on Egypt, then, the Salafists had come nowhere near staging a revolution.

A number of specific issues affected the Salafists' campaigns that continue to be of importance in the post-Arab nationalist, Islamist era of Egypt, which followed the February 2011 revolution. One of these was their relationship to Christians. Although the Salafists' official line was that they would protect the right of Coptic Christians, as long as they accepted subordinate status, anti-Christian violence was one of their main themes.[19] There were constant attacks on Copts, mainly in southern Egypt. In March 1990, for example, Islamists set fire to two Christian churches, a Christian hospital, and other property in the Minya province after being stirred up at a Friday prayer service by groundless rumors that a Christian boy had seduced a Muslim girl. Islamist leaflets had urged Muslims to "Wipe Out the Disgrace," calling Christians "Crusaders." About 100 were arrested.[20]

In April 1990, after a false rumor that a five-year-old Muslim girl had been raped by a Copt, Muslims again attacked a church in Fayyum province, killing a guard and wounding 12 others.[21] There were many such riots in Upper Egypt, resulting in many deaths. In virtually every case, Muslims attacked Christians, setting fire to houses, shops, and churches, killing people merely because of their religion. The same pattern happened in the Inbaba district of Cairo, an Islamist stronghold, where Copts were harassed.[22]

As noted above, by 1997, the insurgency had been defeated and some of the Salafi revolutionaries reached that conclusion. In July 1997, at the opening of a military trial of 97 militants accused of planning to put bombs in Cairo banks and tourist offices, a defendant read a statement by six Islamic Group leaders jailed for life in connection with Sadat's assassination. They called for an unconditional truce with the government. One of them, Abbud al-Zumar, had been an al-Jihad leader who had joined the Islamic Group in jail.[23] Several imprisoned al-Jihad leaders and Umar Abd al-Rahman--from his prison cell in New York where he had been jailed for involvement in the first 1993 World Trade Center attack--endorsed the proposal.[24] One of the Salafists' main theorists was Umar Abd al-Rahman. Acquitted of involvement in Sadat's assassination and again of subversion charges in 1990, he moved to New York. From there, he sent fiery messages on audio cassettes calling for "a merciless war, a no-holds-barred battle against the pharaohs and atheists of Egypt."

He told followers: "Before the flames go out in Asyut, light more in Cairo. Before they bring Qina under control, set the towns and villages of the Nile Delta aflame. Disperse them before they disperse you. Fear not their threats….They are in their death throes and will be crushed under your feet like dirty insects."[34]

If a man like Abd al-Rahman could endorse a truce in 1997, the idea certainly had appeal for the most unbending militants. Nevertheless, leaders of both groups outside Egypt, mainly in Europe and Afghanistan,

criticized the plan, claiming it as a regime plot to divide the opposition and end the insurgency. Some observers considered the November 1997 massacre of tourists at Luxor as a sign intended to show a rejection of the truce and continuation of the struggle. Abd al-Rahman also withdrew his approval for the peace initiative.[25]

The government, however, was equally opposed to the initiative, branding it propaganda to prevent the rebels impending defeat. Deals, they said, could be concluded between sovereign states, not between a government and a "criminal" organization.[26] In November, the jailed leaders renewed their call for abandoning terror and shifting to non-violent action. This time, however, they conditioned any ceasefire on an end to the government's campaign against Islamic groups and its agreement to break relations with Israel. Again, the move was angrily rejected by Egyptian Islamists abroad who termed it "defeatist and submissive" and a "betrayal of the memory of our martyrs."[27]

Nevertheless, in March 1999, the Islamic Group's leaders adopted a decision to stop violence inside and outside Egypt. The long insurgency, or at least the main battle, was over. In June 2002, the Egyptian government sponsored a convention in an isolated prison where 500 jailed members of the Islamic Group discussed ending their involvement in violence based on a rejection of killing civilians that they now found in Islamic law. More than 1,500 members of the group were released from prison by the Mubarak regime after signing anti-violence pledges.

THE AL-QA'IDA DIVERSION

The importance of al-Qai'da in the history of Islamism is actually more marginal than it might seem from the massive study and headlines it generated. Al-Qa'ida had three innovations of importance.

The first innovation was that the movement be international, fighting simultaneously on all fronts. While the Muslim Brotherhood had been an international group, it had a limited number of branches, only four of real

significance. However, this only succeeded, because the organization--especially after the U.S. destruction of the center in Afghanistan and long before Usama bin Ladin's assassination--was so loose. Basically, local groups could simply affiliate with al-Qa'ida without being its actual creation.

The second innovation was that it would make the West, and particularly the United States, the main target of attack, most notably in the September 11, 2001, assault. This point, however, became less salient once it became possible for al-Qa'ida to operate in Muslim-majority countries. As a factor in Western psychology and policy, then, al-Qa'ida's focus on the West remained huge, but as a political strategy, it was largely abandoned, except for scattered "reminder" attack attempts.

The final innovation was the movement would focus on one activity, terrorist attacks, and try to carry out a "permanent revolution." In other words, it was always the right time to wage armed struggle and that battle wouldn't stop until the movement was wiped out. Other, smaller groups had taken that road in Egypt but had not lasted very long before being destroyed by the government. Understandably, this approach was not a great revolutionary strategy, especially against more sophisticated groups that built mass bases and knew how to change gears, especially the Muslim Brotherhood and even other Salafi groups.

As a result of these factors, and despite the important Egyptian component in al-Qai'da, the group did not have much impact on Egypt. Still, it did play an important role in Egyptian Salafi history. One critic of the 1997 ceasefire was a former al-Jihad (and now al-Qa'ida) leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, whose life embodied the Egyptian movement's history and the ideological crossroads at which it had arrived in the 1990s. Zawahiri joined the first al-Jihad cell in Cairo in 1966, when he was only 16 years old. He came from a very wealthy and influential Egyptian family and studied medicine.[28]

Zawahiri was working at a Muslim Brotherhood sponsored medical clinic in 1980, when its director asked him to go to

Afghanistan to provide medical assistance for those fighting the Soviets. He returned after four months but was imprisoned for three years following Sadat's assassination. He was released in 1984 and returned to Afghanistan in 1986. There, he played a leading role in the development of Usama bin Ladin's al-Qa'ida group. In February 1998, he signed the statement of The Global Front for Fighting Jews and Crusaders. He played a leading role in the August 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Responding to these deeds, Western governments rounded up al-Jihad leaders in exile and put them in prison or extradited them to Egypt, including Zawahiri's own brother, Muhammad (for his post-2011 career--see below). At the subsequent trial, one prominent al-Jihad figure, Ahmad Salamah Mabruk-- Zawahiri's right-hand man who had earlier been sentenced to death--testified against his colleagues. As a result of this case, Ayman himself was sentenced to death in absentia in April 1999 and became a fugitive after the U.S. offensive in Afghanistan and the Taliban's fall in November 2001, although he continued his revolutionary efforts and rose in the al-Qa'ida hierarchy. Indeed, it is probable that Egyptian Islamists were the largest group of Arab al-Qa'ida members.[29]

Despite his criticisms of colleagues and other Islamist groups, Zawahiri depicts the Islamist revolution in Egypt as a succession of heroic battles by courageous warriors whom the masses will soon join. In fact, though, his account chronicles a series of total defeats and almost total failures punctuated by factional splits and quarrels. His description of the movement's greatest moment and crushed uprising--after its assassination of Sadat in 1981--is typical in this regard. About all Zawahiri could do to illustrate his claims for the movement's popularity is to cite one of the lawyers voicing support for Sadat's killing. In other words, despite his intentions, Zawahiri's book is a case study of why the armed struggle, al-Qa'ida model has always failed in Egypt.

In his book, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner: Meditations on the Jihadist Movement*, Zawahiri makes two main arguments. First, he critiques both the strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood for not being revolutionary and using violence and some of his own former colleagues for giving up armed struggle. Second, he urges that the main struggle should be waged against America and Israel, or Christians and Jews, rather than in an effort to overthrow Egypt's government directly. He argues, so to speak, that the road to Cairo runs through Washington and Jerusalem. Of course, despite his claim that the movement was now united on ideology, Zawahiri's own actions show this not to be the case and in fact brought about a split in al-Jihad.

Throughout 2001, Egyptian Islamists threatened additional terrorist attacks against American targets, often linked with a demand for Abd al-Rahman's release. The appeal of the anti-American orientation was based on the failure of alternative, anti-regime strategies. Yet whatever the impact of the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington elsewhere, it did not have any serious effect within Egypt.

Equally, once again, the Brotherhood stood aloof in the decade after 2000 and from the anti-Western terrorism strategy, as it had during the 1990s, and the anti-regime terrorism strategy. Only in October 2010 did the Brotherhood's leader give the signal for a revolt based on a mass uprising--at least in Cairo--due to his perception that the weakness of the Mubarak regime and of the United States made the time ripe for an Islamist revolution.

Thus while Egypt was going to have an Islamist revolution, it was quite different from the one envisioned by the 1990s Salafists or by the al-Qa'ida supporters. Indeed, it was a revolution that--contrary to the revolutionaries of the 1990s--was made with the backing of the army and--contrary to the al-Qa'ida revolutionaries--was in fact made with the backing of the United States.

CONTEMPORARY SALAFI GROUPS

A revolution was indeed made in 2011, but it came not from the barrels of the Salafists' guns but from the now-activated Muslim Brotherhood, their junior moderate allies, and the Egyptian army. Of course, once the regime had been overthrown and elections were going to be held, the Salafists no longer needed to engage in armed struggle. They had a realistic chance of achieving their goals by political means plus social intimidation.

Indeed, the Salafi groups avoided conflict with the military during the junta period of 2011-2012. They did not have sufficient reason to believe that the army would block them from attaining a Shari'a state and so were patient. It is very important to note that the reason Salafists have not engaged in a higher level of violence against the junta, the Brotherhood, or the Mursi regime is that they seemed to be making good progress toward their goals.

Here is an important principle in studying the politics of this contemporary era: Violence (including terrorism) is not the main measure of radicalism. Instead, the way to judge the extremism of a group is the organization's ideology, goals, and seriousness in seeking total victory. Strategic and tactical flexibility should be taken into account but does not mitigate the threat posed by the objective toward which any political force is striving. As noted above, deep divisions stemming from rivalry among leaders and often minor doctrinal disputes have greatly weakened the Salafists, who cannot compete with the Brotherhood's unity and discipline. The key underlying issue is precisely how patient or impatient, flexible or hardline to be on specific questions at specific moments.

While the Salafi party received almost 25 percent of the votes in the first parliamentary elections, the successful al-Nour Party soon split. Moreover, the Salafists were powerless to stop the disqualification of their main presidential candidate. It would be interesting to know how many Salafists stayed home as opposed to those who voted for al-Mursi in the second round of the presidential election.

There would be a huge number of Salafi groups competing for followers, influence, and attention in post-2011 Egypt. Here are only the most important of them.

Al Da'wa al-Salafiyya (Salafi Call) and the al-Nour Party

This parent group of the al-Nour Party arose from the al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, being founded in 1984 and disbanded by the state in 1994, when its leaders were arrested. It was reconstituted in 2011 and was an important factor in the creation of the al-Nour umbrella party of Salafists. The group's most active leader is Yasir Husayn Burhami, whose father was a Muslim Brother, who is also vice-president of the al-Nour Party.[30] The organization does not support armed struggle. Al-Nour's president was Imad Abd al-Ghafour, a medical doctor, who lived mostly abroad before the 2011 revolution--in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey--and returned home to organize unity among Salafists. Given the many personalities and views present among Salafists, the formation of al-Nour--joined by two smaller parties in a cooperative election campaign--was an impressive achievement. This unity, however--as will be seen--did not long outlive the elections.

Those Salafists involved in these two, widely overlapping, groups are not straitjacketed by ideology but know how to build a mass base and how to maneuver politically. For example, the party has a populist economic platform saying that monopolies should be broken up, consumers should be protected, workers' rights protected, and that the country should be made self-sufficient in food production. It also advocates increased research. While the party declared in its platform and elsewhere--taking a normal stance by Islamists--that loans cannot be taken for interest payments,[31] the leadership reversed itself after the election rather than forfeit massive international loans for Egypt.

Another interesting feature of the party was how the demand for Shari'a was reconciled with political realities. The transition, leaders said, could be gradual, and progress, prosperity, and science should be respected. Party leaders said they wanted a "modern

state" but that this did not necessarily entail such a state being secular. This did not mean that all leaders or parliamentary candidates were so restrained with some taking a triumphalist or deliberately provocative stance. Still, the point is that while the Salafists are radical, this does not mean they are politically foolish.

The party platform was also very vague on international relations and said--as did the Brotherhood--that the Egypt-Israel peace treaty should be kept or discarded based on a referendum. In other words, the Salafists did not put a high priority on confrontation with the West or the United States as a matter of principle. Clearly, the creation of a Shari'a state and the entrenchment of an Islamist regime in Egypt was the most immediate objective. Foreign ambitions could wait.[32]

While the al-Nour party wanted to maintain its independence from the Brotherhood, it also clearly recognized that the two parties were aligned against non-Islamist forces in an alliance. Moreover, the party did not in the election attack the Brotherhood as much as it might have as being too soft in pushing Shari'a law and other measures it favored. While one al-Nour leader said, "We don't rule out the possibility of the Brotherhood trying to marginalize us; we had already noticed that before. They might continue to portray us as the troublemakers." Yet the Brotherhood also did not criticize al-Nour as too extreme either. The same party leader expressed al-Nour's willingness to join in a "national unity government."[33]

Nevertheless, al-Nour backed not the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Muhammad Mursi, but the so-called moderate Islamist Abd al-Moneim Abu al-Fattouh in the first round of the presidential election. Why is this so? First, because maintaining independence from the Brotherhood was more important to it than a united front with the Brotherhood. Second, because Fattouh was less moderate in the Salafi view than he was in the eyes of the West. When faced, however, with a choice between Mursi and a non-Islamist candidate in the presidential election's second round, al-Nour backed Mursi.[34]

There are two other Islamist parties that ran jointly with al-Nour in the parliamentary election and took the same stance in the presidential election.[35] The Asala or Authenticity party was formed after the revolution by Abel Abd al-Maqsoud Afifi. He had an unusual previous career for an Islamist leader, having worked for 33 years in the Egyptian government, mostly in the Immigration and Citizenship Department.[36]

One distinctive aspect of the party's platform was its foreign policy, advocating that Egypt take leadership in the Islamic world.[37] In general, though, it has no clear reason, other than its personalist nature, for remaining a separate organization.[38] Like the other Islamist political parties, it does not openly advocate violence.[39]

The third Islamist party allied with al-Nour is the Building and Development Party, many of whose key figures were involved as al-Jama'a cadre in the 1990s violence.[40] Indeed, some of its leaders were convicted in 1982 in the assassination of President Anwar al-Sadat and were released from prison by the armed forces' junta in March 2011.[41] Like the other two, it demands both the implementation of Shari'a while promising Christians and women that their rights will be respected.[42]

THE IMF LOAN AS A CASE STUDY OF SALAFI DEBATE

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan issue is a good case study of how Salafists are divided over how much pragmatism and how much ideology should be applied to any given issue. While pragmatism--wanting to gain power, accumulate wealth, appeal to a potentially wider audience, and solve problems effectively--is an attractive concept, so is adhering to what one strongly believes to be the will of Allah, a position that can be backed up with quotations from numerous fundamental Islamic texts. The spokesman for al-Nour, Yousry Hammad, explained that the proposed IMF loan to Egypt did not involve usury--which Shari'a law forbids--but only the payment for the administrative expenses of the loan--which is permitted. He criticized those

who had spoken of rejecting the loan on Islamic grounds: "The greatest of all problems is ignorance and when non-specialists take the seats of scientists. If ignorant people had remained silent, most of the problems of Egypt would have been resolved."[43]

This is a tremendously significant statement. It implies that those who wore the mantle of greater piety were merely showing greater ignorance; that specialists (including "scientists") knew better than extremely punctilious clerics; and that solving Egypt's problems were the highest priority (higher than a strict adherence to Islamic law). Of course, Hammad would argue that his judgments did adhere to proper Islamic law, saying that many Muslim scholars had been asked their view and found the loans acceptable.

It might be noted that shopping for Islamic religious opinions by clerics is not unlike cherry-picking experts of any other kind or any other subject. For instance, Mubarak found high-ranking clerics to bless his peace treaty with Israel, a step that was anathema to all Islamists. Clerics in Iran have also been on opposing sides politically. Thus, not everyone can be expected to go along with claims like those of Hammad.

Indeed, Younis Makhyoun, a member of the Nour Party's supreme committee, stated, "Borrowing from abroad is usury. God will never bless an economy based on usury." In other words, just as Hammad said, the loans would help solve Egypt's problems; Makhyoun replied that it would doom Egypt. This kind of debate will be repeated many times and would likely be the source of constant feuds and splits in the Salafists' ranks. While there are differences in the Muslim Brotherhood, these are far more muted and that is a disciplined organization. Thus, the Brotherhood could be expected to beat the Salafists. (By the same token, the Brotherhood's non-Islamist rivals are even more divided than the Salafists, often over issues of personalities, not issues.

Yet the success enjoyed by the al-Nour Party and the broad unity of Salafists was threatened by the party's split. Just as the Salafi Call brought forward al-Nour, in February 2013, the Salafi Front created the People's Party.

The Salafi Front and the People's Party

The Salafi Front was established on January 25, 2011. Like the Salafi Call, the Front expressed a friendly position toward the junta based on the assumption, which turned out to be correct, that it would turn over power after elections that the Islamists could be expected to win.[44] In comparing the documents of the Call and the Front, there is no clear difference on issues or policies proposed.[45]

During the five main elections of 2012--upper and lower houses of parliament, two rounds of presidential elections, and referendum on the constitution--the Salafi Front took a stance similar to that of al-Nour and the Salafi Call.[46] Yet in February 2013, the Salafi Front announced it was forming the People's Party in opposition to al-Nour. This party differed from al-Nour in being even more hardline and unwilling to compromise. Nevertheless, both implied that their Shari'a state would be moderate, respectful of women and minorities, would defend workers' rights, and would be effective in making Egypt prosperous. They both extolled the military.[47]

On top of that, came the announcement that Abu Isma'il would form a party. Abu Isma'il, while claiming to be more moderate than the other Salafists, attracted a great deal of radical Salafi support. In addition, the Nour Party split, with its chairman, Imad Abd al-Ghafour, resigning to start the Watan Party.[48] Within the Nour Party, the conflict was apparently about the internal party elections in preparation for the next parliamentary balloting. The party's Supreme Committee accepted the results; the party president rejected them and wanted to postpone these primaries and filed a lawsuit against continuing. Personalities and ambitions seemed to be at the core of these disputes.[49]

Finally, there were old-style rejectionist Islamists who refused to engage in any electoral activity at all, deeming elections,

parties, and constitutions as unnecessary and heretical, since only the Koran and other Islamic religious texts were needed as a governing document. It was surprising how relatively small this sector had become. A prime example is Muhammad al-Zawahiri, a veteran leader of al-Jihad and brother of the head of al-Qa'ida who had been released from prison by the junta in March 2011 and again released after a brief imprisonment in March 2012. In an October 2012 interview, Muhammad al-Zawahiri said that he sympathized with al-Qa'ida, rejected elections as un-Islamic, and advocated immediate war with Israel. That meant he also rejected the Muslim Brotherhood government of Mursi.[50]

Again, though, it was surprising how quaint and dated this position sounded. With Mubarak no longer in power and a real possibility of an Islamist-ruled Shari'a state--if the Islamists only played their cards right--a stance of total rejectionism was not going to be embraced by many Islamists. As explained above, their real problem was a desire to participate in electoral contexts in too great a variety of partisan frameworks.

A BRIEF ELECTORAL ASSESSMENT

The Islamist performance in the key 2012 elections looks like this:[51]

65.3 percent for the People's Assembly, Lower House of Parliament,
(Muslim Brotherhood: 37.5 percent; al-Nour, 27.8 percent.)

39.4 percent in the presidential election first round,
(Muslim Brotherhood, 21.8 percent; al-Moneim Abu al-Fattouh (who had the al-Nour endorsement) 17.5 percent.)

51.8 percent presidential election second round
(Muslim Brotherhood, 51.8 percent)

The Islamist vote sharply declined between the parliamentary and presidential election, because the Salafists--having no candidate of their own--stayed home. Whether this was because they were protesting the lack of a Salafi presidential candidate or because they did not like either Mursi or Fattouh, it amounts to the same thing. Indeed, it could be seen that Islamist leaders could not control these voters because they abstained despite the leaders' recommendations.

When it was a straight decision between an Islamist (Mursi) and a non-Islamist, however, some of these voters who had either abstained or voted for Fattouh in the first round returned. The votes for Mursi increased by 150 percent, far more than if he had obtained every Fattouh voter alone, which would have given him 39.3 and not 51.8 percent of the total vote. In other words, the numbers show that the Islamist vote declined by 25 percent between the parliamentary to the first round of the presidential elections. Since there is no reason to believe non-Islamist voters boycotted the elections or changed sides, this points to the Salafi ones altering their behavior.

Fattouh received mostly Muslim Brotherhood votes, since he was a former leader of that group and represented the views of some of the membership, and Salafi ones, on the recommendation of Salafi groups. It is important to remember that al-Nour endorsed Fattouh not because they supported his positions but in order to have a non-Brotherhood candidate do better because they wanted to limit the overall power of their rival group.

In fact, it should be remembered that while Fattouh's image in the West has been that of the "moderate Islamist," he enjoyed the endorsement of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Muslim Brotherhood's most important religious guide and a hardliner. Running candidates for his own new party, however, he is likely to draw mostly from the Brotherhood voters, reducing the gap between the Brotherhood and Salafists. This potential Salafi gain from some splitting of Brotherhood supporters, however, is lost by the division of Salafi voters into multiple parties.

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE SALAFI SPLIT

Salafists supported the Muslim Brotherhood when it battled non- or anti-Islamist forces. While the Salafists would have liked a stronger, more explicit stance on making Egypt into a Shari'a state, many of them were ultimately happy with the text. The constitution won with a 77.5 percent majority, showing that Brotherhood members, Salafists, and many who didn't vote for any of the Islamist parties backed the document.

As one Egyptian expert, Ahmad Zaghloul, put it:

In general, the Salafi movement is an unmistakable Muslim Brotherhood ally when it comes to several issues that concern the Islamist project and particularly the constitution…. The Brotherhood regards them as an important voting bloc that has to be used, and that is why they deal with them as partners. Any divisions within Salafi circles could make the Brotherhood's mission to mobilize 'yes' voters to the constitution more difficult.[52]

Yet this is an important clue to the political positioning of the Islamic Call/Nour Party bloc and the Salafi Front/People's Party bloc, with the former being more pragmatic and closer to the Brotherhood and the latter being more demanding and critical toward the constitution. Al-Nour gave the Brotherhood relatively full support--in the framework of the Islamist Coalition group created for the purpose--in the constitutional referendum. In return, President Mursi named three al-Nour Party members to be among his advisors. The firing of one of them led to a brief crisis in the relationship of the two parties, but al-Nour cooperated in resolving the dispute.[53]

A key point made by the former camp is that the constitution is only the beginning of the process. Shari'a is now declared to be the source of legislation and interpreting what that means has been transferred from the Mubarak era, secular Supreme Constitutional Court to the al-Azhar University clerics. Younis Makhyoun, a Nour Party leader and Constituent Assembly member explains, "Everyone should be aware that we are still in a transitional period, and so replacing the principles of Sharia with its rulings in the new constitution would have been difficult from a political point of view."

Yet the Salafi Front side, backed by some independent clerics, wanted a more explicit statement. They did not want to allow Christians to be governed by their own religious law in matters of personal status. They are also unhappy that the Constitution says that the people rather than Allah are the source of power. The question is whether Salafi voters will favor the Salafi Call or the Salafi Front viewpoint.

A NOTE ON EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES

One of the most important issues about the politics of Salafi groups is what they do outside of formal politics and official statements. Through intimidation, legal action, organizing, mosque sermons, activism in schools, and other means, Salafi groups can promote the Islamization of Egypt, both pressing forward and aiding the Brotherhood in this project. Activities can include anything from the morality squads that are starting to patrol streets in some parts of the country; mob attacks on Christians, churches, and foreign embassies; harassment of women due to their clothing or actions; and the filing of blasphemy cases and the mobilization of crowds to put pressure on judges or mass media.[54] There are also demands and campaigns to outlaw opposition groups or certain activities.[55]

In each case, what is important is not whether the Muslim Brotherhood and the government that it controls endorse or denounce the Salafi actions, which might be extra-legal or even violent, but whether they move to stop them using the power of the government. So far, it does not seem likely that Salafists will be arrested or punished for actions that the Brotherhood likes, even if it criticizes and doesn't participate in them.

There is no hint that the Brotherhood will repress Salafists, except in situations where extremely radical groups launch violent attacks on government officials or facilities. Indeed, Brotherhood and Salafists often cooperate on such things as demonstrations against the construction or renovation of churches.[56]

A CASE OF SALAFI ARMED STRUGGLE: THE SINAI PENINSULA

Historically, the Salafists engaged in their most militant and even violent actions, especially in Upper Egypt. In the post-Mubarak era, however, the arena for the most radical activities has become the even more remote Sinai. There are several reasons for this situation. In that thinly populated and relatively backward region, government resources are thinner on the ground, in part because the peace treaty with Israel limits Egyptian troops in eastern Sinai, though this factor should not be overstated. Traditional Islamist groups are weaker in the Sinai, giving freer rein to the proliferation of radical sects.

The presence of Bedouin tribes creates networks that are highly loyal and suspicious of outsiders, which can be exploited by local Islamists. Some analysts attribute the high levels of conflict and violence to Bedouin grievances against their past treatment by the authorities. This seems to be a factor but only as a basis on which a revolutionary Islamist movement builds.

Experience in smuggling translates into some skills useful for waging guerrilla warfare. The proximity of Israel brings a temptation to launch cross-border attacks, while the proximity to the Gaza Strip intensifies the encouragement to do so by Palestinian Salafi groups, including those with ties to al-Qai'da. Among Salafi activities in the Sinai are the organization of Shari'a courts to help build a mass base;[57] attacks on the gas pipeline to Israel;[58] cross-border attacks on Israel; bank robberies to raise funds; and strikes against Egyptian police and military installations both to wage revolutionary warfare and to obtain weapons, some of which

were also smuggled in from Libya.[59] Some of the participants in these operations are Egyptians from elsewhere in the country, who have been drawn to the Sinai by the prospects of waging jihad there.[60]

The main Salafi group carrying out armed struggle in the Sinai Peninsula, against both Egypt and Israel, is Tawhid wal-Jihad.[61] It was established in 2000 by a Bedouin dentist in al-Arish, who was killed in battle against Egyptian soldiers in 2006. His replacement was killed a few months later. During the Mubarak era, it staged terrorist attacks against tourists along the Red Sea between 2004 and 2006.[62]   Members   include   Egyptians, Palestinians, and Sudanese.   After that campaign, many of its leaders were killed or captured by Egyptian security forces, but it has revived since the 2011 revolution.[63] While influenced by al-Qa'ida and praised by that group's leaders, Tawhid wal-Jihad does not seem to be organically linked to al-Qa'ida. Still, given the ideological similarity and mutual support--through Palestinian affiliates--this is not an important point. According to Egyptian sources, the Gaza Palestinian Salafists supply money and training.

An important priority of Salafi groups, as with the Brotherhood, is to wipe Israel off the map. The difference, however, is that the Brotherhood wants to avoid excessive risk, direct involvement, and action before consolidating power at home. The Salafists, or at least many of them, want to act immediately. In its new, post-2011 stage, the group targeted the gas pipeline to Israel and Jordan with great success as well as several cross-border raids into Israel. Attacks on the pipeline were popular in Egypt.

Another jihadi group involved in these attacks was the Supporters of Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula, which announced its founding in December 2011 and swore allegiance to al-Qa'ida.[64] A third, equally mysterious group, which first announced its presence in July 2012, was the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdas. Egyptian and sometimes Israeli security agencies, however, often seemed to believe these were Palestinian groups from the Gaza Strip masquerading as Egyptian ones.[65]

On July 29, 2011, a group calling itself al-Qaida in the Sinai Peninsula called for an Islamic state, revoking of the peace treaty with Israel, and the cessation of discrimination against Bedouins. It attacked a police station in al-Arish.[66] Among other attacks were the firing of two Grad rockets at Eilat and a cross-border attack that also involved the killing of 16 Egyptian soldiers, and other attacks. These were mostly carried out by Gaza Palestinians taking advantage of both the lawlessness in Sinai and help from Egyptian Islamists.[67] One Egyptian military checkpoint on the main road connecting al-Arish to the Gaza Strip was attacked 38 times by Salafists during the two years following the fall of the Mubarak regime.[68]

In 2013, Egyptian authorities continued to find large arms caches and surprisingly advanced weapons in the Sinai.[69] Moreover, weapons were now being smuggled into Egypt from the Gaza Strip, leading the regime to close down unsupervised tunnels, which had previously been used to smuggle arms, among other things, into Gaza for Hamas to use against Israel. One official said, "We would not like to see arms smuggled through these tunnels either in or out, because we are now seeing in Sinai and we have captured actually across Egypt heavy arms that could be used in a very dangerous way."[70] So serious had this situation become that it led to a rift between the Egyptian government and Hamas, because the regime blamed Hamas for being too permissive toward anti-Egypt Salafi groups or even in participating directly in terrorism against Egypt.

SUMMARY

These violent activities were, however, still marginal and largely restricted to a specific area for special, local reasons. The overwhelming majority of Salafists had accepted the idea that the era of Muslim Brotherhood government certainly provided a good opportunity to institute a Shari'a state through politics. While seeking to differentiate themselves from the Brotherhood, many felt that the ruling group was basically on the right road. Others wanted to move farther and faster.

Splits among the Salafists reduced their ability to influence events, but so did, arguably, a strategy that involved them becoming junior partners of the Brotherhood. Despite these differences, however, the model of a moderate Brotherhood repressing or influencing the Salafists into moderation simply did not accord with the facts. The Salafists would remain non-violent only as long as they believed the Brotherhood was moving forward at a reasonable pace. Many of them were in fact ready to help force that pace through extra-parliamentary means as well as indoctrinating the masses to believe that only an Islamist state could solve Egypt's problems.

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