American Foreign Policy Council

EGYPT

QUICK FACTS

Population: 86,895,099

Area: 1,001,450 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Egyptian 99.6%, other 0.4%

Religions: Muslim (mostly Sunni) 90%, Coptic 9%, other Christian 1%

Government Type: Republic

GDP (official exchange rate): $262 billion

Mediterranean Sea
Alexandria
Damietta
Port Said
Marsá Maţrūḩ
Ţanţā
Shubrā al Khaymah
Al Jīzah
CAIRO
Suez
Suez Canal
SINAI
Qattara Depression
Siwah
Al Fayyūm
Mount Catherine
Al Minyā
LIBYA
Al Ghardaqah
Sharm ash Shaykh
Asyūţ
Nile
Būr Safājah
Al Khārijah
Luxor
Red Sea
Aswān
Lake Nasser
Hala'ib Triangle
SUDAN
W. Bank
Gaz. Str.
IS.
Dead Sea
JOR.
SYR.
SAU. AR.
0 100 200 km
0 100 200 mi
25
30
35

Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated June 2014)

Egypt has played a central role in the history and the development of Islamism. In 1928, an Egyptian teacher named Hassan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood, the world's first modern Islamist movement, and the most prominent Islamist force in Egypt. The Brotherhood soon conceived an ideological framework that would go on to inspire most contemporary Islamists, and became the main political opposition force against successive governments in Egypt. From the time of Nasser through the Mubarak era, the Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed but tolerated to varying extents.

Following the 1952 Free Officers Coup in Egypt, the Brotherhood and the military-led government enjoyed a short period of cooperation. This ended with an attempt on President Gamal Abdel Nasser's life in 1954, when the organization was outlawed and a number of prominent Brotherhood members were imprisoned, including Hassan al-Banna's ideological descendant Sayyid Qutb. In the late 1970s the Muslim Brothers

officially renounced violence at the insistence of President Anwar Sadat, temporarily easing their relationship with Egyptian authorities. The movement was granted enough space to expand its influence on civil society through social services and other outreach activities. A militant offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Jihad (Al-Jihad) assassinated President Sadat in 1981, bringing Hosni Mubarak to power. Mubarak cracked down on more radical Islamist currents such as the Islamic Jihad, and rhetorically justified the slow pace of democratic reforms by pointing to the security threat posed by extremists. The Muslim Brotherhood remained tolerated by the Mubarak regime (though still illegal), as he viewed the organization as a useful counter to the spread of those more radical ideologies.

Another extremist trend that broke away from the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970s is the Islamic Group (Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya), which would also eventually renounce violence after pushing a jihadist agenda for many years.[1] This deradicalization took place after a long confrontation with Egypt's security forces throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Al-Gama'a officially renounced violence in 2002 after starting on a path toward deradicalization in 1997. Al-Jihad has had varying degrees of success with deradicalization, with some elements of the movement endorsing the path of Al-Gama'a, while still others advocate for continued violent opposition. The discrepancy appears to split along generational lines. A young generation of radical Salafists (the overarching term for more conservative and radical Islamist trends) has continued criticizing moderate Islamists especially after the failure of those moderates to effect significant change through their political participation.[2]

Mubarak's ouster in 2011 marked a turning point for Islamists, when political Islam became an undeniable force in post-uprising politics. In the parliamentary elections between November 2011 and January 2012, Islamists obtained the largest share of seats in the new Egyptian parliament. A Muslim Brotherhood leader, Mohammed Morsi, was elected Egypt's president on June 30, 2012, in the country's first truly democratic presidential election. However, in the wake of mass protests against Morsi's increasingly authoritarian government in late June and early July of 2013, the Egyptian military ousted Morsi and replaced him with an interim government tasked with drafting a new constitution, which was approved in a popular referendum in January 2014. The July 3 coup has sparked a surge of Islamist violence against the military in retaliation, beginning with operations in the Sinai Peninsula and later spreading throughout the country, reaching the heart of Cairo.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Egyptian Islamism has always spanned a diverse ideological and operational spectrum, the entirety of which is reflected in the post-Mubarak era.

The most prominent Egyptian Islamist movement is the Muslim Brotherhood (*Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*), founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna. Its ideology states that a true "Islamic society" is one in which state institutions and the government follow the principles of the Qur'an, and in which laws follow *sharia*, or "Islamic law."[3] Al-Banna, a teacher from a modest background, was heavily influenced by Syrian-Egyptian thinker Mohammed Rashid Rida, who believed that a return to the Islam of the 7th and 8th Century was the only way for Muslim societies to regain strength and to escape Western colonialism and cultural hegemony.[4] Initially, al-Banna's ambitions were moderate and focused on moral and social reform within society. But his followers radicalized in the late 1940s as a result of the country's deepening political turmoil.

Al-Banna's legacy spread and was developed by another key figure, Sayyid Qutb, who became the Brotherhood's chief ideologue in the 1950s and authored the famous Islamist manifesto *Milestones Along The Way* (*Ma'alim fi-l-Tariq*, 1964). In *Milestones* Qutb claims that all non-Muslim societies and indeed those societies that are only Muslim in name but not in practice, are in a state of "ignorance" (*jahiliyya*). *Jahili* societies are those that do not strictly follow revelation, and thus includes democratic societies that place man-made law above the law of God. Interestingly, this label also applies to the Egypt in which Qutb lived, which he viewed as "Islamic" in name only. Qutb called on Muslims to fight *jahiliyya* through offensive *jihad* until they established a united Islamic community worldwide.[5]

In the initial decades following its creation, the Muslim Brotherhood successfully spread its reach across the Islamic world. In the process, it inspired other Islamists to establish Islamic states in their own countries and to condone violent struggle as a means to achieve that goal. The Brotherhood was officially outlawed in Egypt in 1954, although it remained tolerated by authorities. The primary strength of the group has been its ability to adapt to circumstances under different leaders and to find support among everyday Egyptians; specifically, its leaders and members have succeeded in developing large networks that offer basic social services such as education and healthcare to impoverished Egyptians. This impressive web of charities has allowed the Brotherhood to step in where the state had largely failed, making it one of the most powerful grassroots Islamist movements in the region.

A second noteworthy Islamist movement is the Islamic Group (*Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*), which emerged in the late 1970s as a student offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. It was first active on university campuses and carried out further recruiting within Egyptian prisons, as well as in the country's poor urban and rural areas. The Islamic Group was created primarily in reaction to the Muslim Brotherhood's repudiation of violence as a tactic to combat the "heretical" government in Cairo. Although loosely organized, the group was involved in a series of attacks during the 1980s and 1990s aimed at deposing Egypt's secular, autocratic government and replacing it with an Islamic theocracy. These attacks included the 1997 killing of Western tourists in Luxor, the attempted assassination of President Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995, the Cairo bombings of 1993, and several other armed operations against Egyptian intellectuals and Coptic Christians.

The movement's spiritual leader, Umar Abd al-Rahman, was connected to Ramzi Yusuf, the perpetrator of the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993.[6] Rahman and nine followers were subsequently arrested and convicted of plotting to blow up the United Nations headquarters in New York, the New York Federal Reserve Building, the George Washington Bridge, and the Holland and Lincoln Tunnels. In 1999, the Islamic Group declared a unilateral ceasefire in its longstanding struggle against Cairo. This declaration marked a major ideological shift and was accompanied by a steady drift away from the use of violence, which was completed in 2002. The Islamic Group's members have not claimed responsibility for any armed attack since.[7] Subsequent moves to diminish radicalism within the party drove a faction of the Islamic Group's more violent adherents to join al-Qaeda in 2006.[8] In the 2011-2012 parliamentary elections, the Islamic Group ran under the Building and Development Party and won thirteen seats in the lower house.[9] Members of the Islamic group have protested the Egyptian military's deposing of Morsi and the dissolution of his government, but in February 2014 announced it was ready to engage with the interim government to end Egypt's political impasse.[10]

The third Islamist group that has played a major role in recent Egyptian history is the Islamic Jihad (*Al-Jihad*). Active since the 1970s, it was officially formed in 1980 as a result of the merger of two Islamist cells led by Karam Zuhdi and Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj. Faraj's famous manifesto, *The Absent Duty* (*Al-Farida al-Ghaiba*), outlined the new movement's ideology.[11] Like those affiliated with the Islamic Group, members of the Islamic Jihad represent a relative minority within Egypt's Islamist spectrum and are mostly former members of the Brotherhood. Some are believed to have fought alongside the Afghan *mujahideen* in the 1980s against the Soviet Union. The organization's stated objective was to overthrow the Egyptian "infidel" regime and establish an Islamic government in its place. The Islamic Jihad also sought to attack U.S. and Israeli interests in Egypt and abroad. The group is infamous for assassinating President Anwar Sadat in 1981 and for additional attacks on Egyptian government officials in the early 1990s. It is also believed to have attacked Egypt's embassy in Pakistan in 1995 and to have been involved in planning bombings against U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. In June 2001, the group merged with al-Qaeda to form a new entity, called *Gama'a Qa'idat al-Jihad*, headed by Osama bin Laden's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Over time, Egypt's Islamist landscape has evolved considerably. One of the most significant changes has been a gradual "deradicalization" of Islamist movements and their ideological abandonment of violence. While the ideology of Egyptian Islamist groups might remain radical and anti-democratic in nature, there has been tangible movement away from violence as a vehicle to achieve their goals.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood began undergoing broad deradicalization, and it increasingly disavowed *jihad* in favor of political moderation. In 1969, Hassan al-Hudaybi, then the movement's supreme guide, released a book entitled *Preachers, Not Judges*, in which he justified the decision to reject violence and developed a series of theological counterarguments to Qutb's radical views.[12] Under the influence of al-Hudaybi and his successor Umar al-Tilmisani, the Brotherhood gradually distanced itself from armed action, gave an oath to Sadat not to use violence against his regime, and even named him a "martyr" after he was killed in 1981. This ideological shift drew condemnation from other Islamist groups, most notably the Islamic Jihad and its commander Ayman al-Zawahiri, who severely criticized the Brotherhood's reorientation in a book entitled *The Bitter Harvest: The Muslim Brotherhood in Sixty Years* (*Al-Hasad al-Murr: Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi Sittin 'Aman*).[13] In this book, al-Zawahiri condemned the Brotherhood's good relations with King Farouk and Presidents Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak:

> The Muslim Brotherhood, by recognizing the tyrants' legitimacy and sharing constitutional legitimacy with them, has become a tool in the tyrants' hands to strike *jihadist* groups in the name of [fighting] extremism and disobeying *sharia* [Islamic law]. There should be no doubt that we are proud to be outside of this "legitimacy of disbelief," which the Muslim Brotherhood has accepted and approved.

For deradicalization to be successful, militant Islamist ideas first had to be countered through rational and theological arguments promulgated by charismatic and authoritative former *jihadists*. One of the most prominent instances of this trend occurred within the Islamic Group. In July 1997, during a military tribunal, one of the group's activists, Muhammad al-Amin Abd al-Alim, read a statement signed by six other Islamist leaders that called on their affiliates to cease all armed operations in Egypt and abroad.[14] While it elicited considerable controversy within the movement, the statement heralded the beginning of its deradicalization. In March 1999, the group's leadership launched an "Initiative for Ceasing Violence" and declared a unilateral ceasefire. Ideologues and leaders were able to convince their base to renounce armed struggle and support a non-violent approach by authoring a series of texts to provide the ideological justification for their rejection of violence. Leaders published four books in January 2002 under the title of *Correcting Conceptions* (*Silsilat Tashih al-Mafahim*), addressing the reasons behind the Islamic Group's ideological reorientation and explaining why *jihad* in Egypt had failed. Twelve others followed, developing a critique of al-Qaeda's extreme ideology.[15]

In addition to ideological revisionism within these groups, radical Islamists' increasing interactions with other, more moderate, non-violent Islamists, and also with non-Islamists, helped deradicalization to take root. This, surprisingly, occurred within Egypt's prison facilities, where inmates discussed their beliefs and tactics. The Muslim Brothers were the first to undergo such a process following the execution of Sayyid Qutb in 1966. Members of the movement began questioning the relevance of *jihad* as a way to combat the government, and many chose to reject violence. Another notable example of this dynamic—all the more significant considering the tendency for prisons to encourage radicalism—was the interaction between the Islamic Group and the smaller, more radical Islamic Jihad that began in the 1990s and culminated in 2007 when the latter embraced non-violence to some degree. Deradicalization efforts were led by the movement's former leader Sayyid Imam al-Sharif—also known as Abd al-Qadir Ibn Abd al-Aziz or "Dr. Fadl." His *Document for the Right Guidance of Jihad in Egypt and the World* (*Tarshid al-'Amal al-Jihadi fi Misr wa-l-'Alam*) had an enormous impact within prisons and led numerous inmates to reject violent *jihad*.[16]

Eventually, the state's use of repression coupled with positive incentives also contributed to the deradicalization of Egypt's Islamists.[17] Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Mubarak regime increasingly mobilized its resources to tame *jihadists*. In the case of the Islamic Group, the regime provided fighters with pensions, and the Interior Ministry offered other incentives such as business grants to reformed *jihadists*.[18] In addition, Egyptian security forces' heavy hand against radical movements encouraged the view that armed resistance was no longer a promising method to achieve their goals.

At the same time, however, some deradicalization efforts by leaders of militant groups have not found resonance among their membership. The case of Islamic Jihad, for which deradicalization has only been partially successful, illustrates this point. While the group's leaders have publicly abandoned violence, some affiliated factions continue to advocate *jihad*, sometimes even leaving the movement to join other groups more aligned with their beliefs. One cell of Islamic Jihad, for example, joined al-Qaeda and was likely involved in the wave of attacks that hit Egypt after 2003. The Islamic Group faced similar difficulties. In an interview, Nagih Ibrahim, one of its leading ideologues, emphasized that although the group's formal rejection of violence had obviously helped limit the spread of violent Islamism in Egypt, such ideological revisions had had less impact on the younger generations, especially those sympathetic toward or active within hard-line *jihadist* groups such as al-Qaeda.[19]

Cases of re-radicalization within the Muslim Brotherhood became clear before the 2011 uprising through the group's affiliation with, and public support for, movements such as the Iranian-backed Hamas (itself a Brotherhood offshoot) and the Hezbollah Shi'ite militia. Several little-known violent offshoots, like the *jihadist* "Abdallah Azzam Brigades in Egypt" or the "Holy Warriors of Egypt,"[20] also emerged in the 2000s, spreading radical and extremist ideologies, conducting anti-regime activity, and accusing society and state institutions of "apostasy."[21] Another group calling itself "Monotheism and Holy War" (*Tawhid wa-l-Jihad*), connected to al-Qaeda, emerged during that period in the Sinai. It has since targeted the country's tourism sector in a wave of bombings that first hit the town of Taba in 2004 and then the resort towns of Sharm al-Sheikh and Dahab in 2005 and 2006.

The Sinai Peninsula, in particular, has been a hotbed for Islamic extremism for years. The Peninsula has been largely neglected by the state for decades, and clauses in the Egypt-Israel peace treaty severely restrict Egyptian security operations in the Sinai. This has created an environment in the Sinai where groups can organize and plan activities without the threat of being discovered, and a number of militant groups have expressed the goal of creating an independent Islamic Emirate in the Peninsula.

When the Mubarak regime fell, Islamic extremist activities took on a new intensity. On multiple occasions, armed fighters attacked Egyptian security forces, police stations, and the al Arish-Ashkelon pipeline exporting natural gas to Israel and Jordan. Other operations targeted Israeli patrols and soldiers.[22] New *jihadist* groups emerged, such as the "Supporters of Holy War" (*Ansar al-Jihad*),[23] while other existing groups like "Excommunication and Exodus" *(Takfir wa-l-Hijra), established in 1965 by Muslim Brother Shukri Mustafa, have been reconstituted.*[24] After the military ousted President Mohammed Morsi on July 3, 2013, violence has surged to degrees of a low-level insurgency in the Sinai, conducted mostly by small-cell, extremist militant groups that have little to no command structure.[25] The offensives are retribution for what these groups consider the military's attempt to destroy the project of political Islam. Some organized Islamists groups, such as *Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis,* have stepped forward to claim responsibility for a number of the attacks.[26] On August 7, 2013, the army launched an operation into the Sinai and killed sixty suspected terrorists, losing thirty from their own ranks.[27] Overall, the Sinai region with its mountainous terrain, particularly in the areas of Rafah and Sheikh Zuwaid, provides vast hideouts for *jihadist* networks and has become increasingly unstable since the July 3 coup.

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

Since the 1950s, state retreat, economic stagnation, and political exclusion have provided opportunities for reactionary Islamists to expand their influence in Egyptian society. Islamists have managed to establish themselves with their ideology as a source of legitimacy, and they have set up a number of informal institutions (charities, educational organizations, health services) that impact the livelihoods of countless impoverished Egyptians.[28] Despite the fact that some extremist groups started to deradicalize in the 1970s, the central government's strategy of repression and severe restrictions on political freedoms backfired to some extent, contributing to the creation of violent offshoots from groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. This resulted in the return of a more radical discourse in many Islamist circles. A number of *jihadists* who were incarcerated before recanting violence had little or no formal education and once again embraced extremism and violence as tactics when they realized the Egyptian state was unwilling to incorporate them into the system.

The combination of severe political repression and poor economic conditions under Mubarak contributed to the popularity of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, with their wide-reaching social services and informal networks, and also to the prominence of even more conservative Islamist tendencies, such as Salafism.[29] Salafists inherit their name from the Arabic term "*al-salaf al-salih,*" meaning the "righteous ancestors," a phrase referring to the first generations of Muslims after the Prophet Mohammed's death who sought to emulate his practices and maintained a literalist reading of the Qur'an and the hadith (the sayings of the Prophet). Salafists consider those first generations of Muslims as the upholders of true Islam, and anything that deviates from this interpretation of the creed is condemned as "innovation" (*bida'a*), and therefore tantamount to "apostasy" (*kufr*). Salafists have been traditionally opposed to political activity (electoral politics in particular), instead focusing on the personal and spiritual development and transformation of the individual. Salafism, in its early stages, was relatively apolitical, but would engage actively in party politics after the downfall of Mubarak in early 2011.

The presence of Salafists in Egypt began in the early 20th century. The first Salafist association, the "Sharia Assembly," was created in 1912, even before the formation of the Muslim Brotherhood. Another group, named the "Supporters of the Sunna" (*Ansar Al-Sunna*), was founded by Sheikh Mohammed Hamid al-Fiqi in 1926. Its members were focused on protecting monotheism and fighting un-Islamic practices and beliefs.

However, Salafism truly began to gain traction in the 1970s and 1980s, when Egyptians working abroad in places like Saudi Arabia, home to the radical form of Islam known as Wahhabism, returned to Egypt. One of the largest and most prominent Salafist movements, the "Salafist Call" (*Al-Da'wa Al-Salafiyya*), emerged in 1977. In 1980, the Salafists institutionalized their activities, and the Salafist Call became active in education and charity. Yet the Egyptian state soon outlawed the movement, and regularly arrested its members.

Although few Egyptians openly identified themselves as Salafists under the Mubarak regime, there were signs that this puritanical interpretation of Islam was gaining ground among the general public. This was, for instance, evidenced by the growing number of women wearing the full veil (*niqab*) and men growing their beards. Beyond the traditional role of radical *imams* in mosques, satellite television channels also started to adopt explicitly Salafist rhetoric—*Al-Naas* and *Al-Rahma* are two examples of this—and widened their audience in the process.[30] The phenomenon was worrisome to a number of secular Egyptians, especially as it related to the protection of women and minority rights, which most Salafists reject.

Radical Islamists have openly targeted religious minorities for years in an attempt to provoke sectarian warfare in Egypt. Coptic Christians, a community that represents 10 percent of the population and derives its name from the Arabic "*qubt*," meaning "Egyptian," have been politically marginalized since the 1952 Free Officers Coup and have been regularly persecuted. Militant Salafists commonly portray them as "infidels" who conspire against Islam, and have regularly called for violent attacks on them.[31] A devastating attack occurred on New Year's Day, 2011, when the bombing of a church in Alexandria killed more than twenty Copts and provoked clashes between Muslims and Christians. Many Copts were detained under the Morsi regime and their homes and stores looted and set ablaze. During the elections, some radical preachers called them "heretics" and threatened to expel them if they did not pay the "*jizya,*" a tax levied on non-Muslims.[32]

Since the 2011 uprising, Salafists have engaged in a massive anti-Coptic hate campaign. The campaign has proved a disaster for Egypt's Christian community, which has begun to flee the county en masse.[33] In 2012, several Salafists accused Copts of being "traitors" for voting against Islamists in the presidential polls.[34] Currently, Copts continue to be attacked and persecuted for supporting the military takeover that ousted the Muslim Brotherhood government.

Salafists have also targeted other sects of Islam, such as the Shi'a, Baha'i and Sufis, viewing them as un-Islamic because of their unorthodox views.[35] Before 2011, Salafists managed to ban the *dhikr* (a devotional act of Sufi orders) and continued to call for the prohibition of all Sufi ceremonies. In addition to labeling Sufis as "infidels," Salafists accuse them of encouraging sin and debauchery by mixing the sexes at shrines and during their rituals—a practice that Salafists consider improper. They have, for example, regularly pointed to the mosque of Ahmad al-Badawi in Tanta—where the founder of the Sufi *Ahmadiyya* order is buried—which does not enforce segregation between men and women, except during prayers, as one instance of un-Islamic behavior. Moreover, Salafists target the symbols of ancient Egypt, most recently demanding the destruction of the "idolatrous" Pharaonic statues and the Great Pyramids.[36]

Finally, Salafists have increasingly targeted Egyptian women. In 2009 a Salafist preacher called for the "Islamization" of all Coptic women in order to "destroy apostasy."[37] In 2011, a Salafist leader refused to appear on a political talk show until the female presenter agreed to put on a headscarf. Others have suggested phasing out revealing swimwear on beaches, banning women from driving as in Saudi Arabia, or even legalizing "sex-slave" marriages.[38] Egyptian Salafist groups have also actively campaigned for legislation compelling all Egyptian women, including non-Muslims, to wear the veil.[39]

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

From the 1970s until the overthrow of Mubarak, the Egyptian state actively fought Islamism, both as a social and political phenomenon, by detaining its militants, jailing its leaders, and targeting its resources. In particular, the Muslim Brotherhood, which had managed to erect a vast network of popular support through charities, was subjected to harsh repression and mass arrests of its members, which resulted in the emergence of other, more radical factions like the Salafists.

For his part, Mubarak saw the Brotherhood as a potential counterweight to the more radical Salafists, and he thus allowed them a certain degree of operational autonomy. The Brotherhood's activities in Egyptian society also relieved the state's budget to a certain extent. At the same time, however, the organization remained marginalized from the formal political process until they established the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in 2011.

In 2005, the Brotherhood fielded candidates in parliamentary elections as independents, winning eighty-eight seats in total, which made it the biggest opposition bloc to the Mubarak regime. Mubarak saw these political gains as a growing threat, and in response the Egyptian regime engineered constitutional amendments and a restrictive new electoral law in 2007 that made it impossible for the Muslim Brothers to participate in either parliamentary or presidential polls. The new electoral law prohibited all political activities and parties "based on any religious background or foundation." The following year, these restrictions resulted in the rejection of more than 800 Muslim Brothers as candidates for local council elections. Additional constitutional changes further extended the "temporary" emergency law enforced after the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981; the adoption of a new anti-terrorism law (Article 179), while ostensibly designed to protect democratic rights, gave security forces extensive powers to crack down on Islamists.

Given their longstanding confrontation with successive political regimes, one might have expected the Brotherhood and other Islamists to be at the vanguard of the January 25, 2011 uprising. Yet most Islamists did not rally in Tahrir Square at the beginning, being suspicious of the youth-led protests and fearing a backlash from the regime if the movement failed. Salafists, who for the most part stayed on the sidelines of the demonstrations, sometimes argued that the Americans would have ordered Mubarak to "massacre them all" had they decided to participate.[40] As for the Muslim Brotherhood, its members did not fully endorse the protests until it became clear that the protests would succeed in putting an end to Mubarak's almost thirty-year-long rule. This calculated posture toward participation later became a source of criticism from secular and liberal forces, who accused the Islamists of opportunism and exploiting the uprising for their own benefit.

This criticism notwithstanding, Egypt's Islamists showed remarkable pragmatism and political acumen in capitalizing on the openings provided by post-uprising Egypt. In

February 2011, Mubarak was forced out of the presidency, entrusting the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) to preside over a transitional period. The SCAF opened Egypt's political arena, allowing for formal registration of new political parties, including ones grounded in Islamic principles. Islamists from all backgrounds signaled their intention to participate in the transition and coordinated with secular parties in the initial stages of the transition to reassure the Egyptian people of their commitment to a truly democratic order. The Muslim Brotherhood aligned itself with former IAEA head and Nobel Prize winner Mohamed ElBaradei and called for political reforms. In a historic move, the group announced in late April 2011 the creation of its "Freedom and Justice Party" (FJP), stating that its policies would be grounded in Islamic principles, but that the party would be non-confessional and tolerant, including both women and Christians in its ranks. In June 2011, the FJP received official recognition as a political party, enabling it to run candidates in the 2011-2012 parliamentary elections.

In a surprising and unexpected move,[41] the Salafist Call too entered party politics, establishing the "Light Party" (*Hizb al-Nour*), led by Imad Abd al-Ghaffour, as did the Islamic Group with its "Building and Development Party" (*Hizb al-Bina' wa-l-Tanmia*). The new Salafist end of the political spectrum also included smaller movements such as the ultraconservative "*Al-Asala* Party" in Cairo, founded by Adil Abd al-Maqsoud Afifi. This marked a considerable historical departure for Salafist groups, which had always been apolitical. Members of the groups generally refused to work with un-Islamic state institutions, dismissing the concept of democracy as "alien."[42] But under the guidance of charismatic preachers, Salafist movements opted for participation as a pragmatic way to incorporate *sharia* law into Egypt's new government.[43] Salafists also sought to provide ideological justification for their entry into politics. One important concern for leaders was to make sure that its members did not view the decision to enter the political arena as an abandonment of religious principles. Their arguments hinged on pointing to the duty incumbent on Muslims to try and implement *sharia* law wherever possible. Given the contested political environment of post-Mubarak Egypt, this duty was now achievable, and the alternative (namely, a secular regime) would constitute negligence of that duty.

Secular and liberal political parties, due to their inexperience and lack of organization, fared poorly in the parliamentary elections of late 2011 and early 2012. In contrast, both the Muslim Brotherhood's FJP and the Salafist "Coalition for Egypt," also known as the "Islamist Bloc," led by al-Nour, enjoyed considerable electoral success. The Muslim Brothers took the largest share of seats, at 38 percent, and al-Nour came in second, with 29 percent.[44] The Salafists' electoral gains were by far the most unanticipated development of the election and the biggest surprise for liberals, external observers, and their fellow Islamists.[45]

Salafists were able to expand their influence in government even further when Mohammed Saad al-Katatni, al-Nour's secretary-general, was appointed speaker of the new parliament.[46] This Islamist success immediately provoked major concerns, not only among Egypt's secular and liberal democrats, but also from moderate Muslims, many of whom felt deprived of "their revolution" and started to fear that Islamists could use their new institutional position to oppress women and minorities, curb freedom of speech and belief, and ultimately establish an Islamic state in Egypt.

The shortened timeframe of the elections favored Islamists, since the Muslim Brotherhood was the most organized and politically experienced group. This was not the only reason for its success, however. The Muslim Brotherhood also offered a worldview and vision for Egypt that resonated with many Egyptians, evidenced by their increasing popularity throughout the preceding decades. In contrast, after the destruction of Mubarak's National Democratic Party, secular parties and the country's liberals failed to articulate a coherent positive vision for Egypt, having been united only by what they opposed.

But liberals were not alone in the struggle for unity. The Islamists, too, had their own disagreements and internal fissures after coming into power. The Muslim Brotherhood's FJP and the Salafist al-Nour party disagreed on a number of issues, including the appropriate pace and extent of the Islamization of Egyptian society through *sharia* law. As a result, the expectations that the two groups would form an alliance in parliament proved incorrect.

The Brotherhood opted for an approach that gradually implemented *sharia* over time and attempted to maintain an image of moderation and openness to other parties. Salafists, however, were far more dogmatic, insisting that *sharia* must be the only source of legislation. They feared collusion between the Brotherhood and the military in a potential attempt to suppress them, ultimately leading to the decision to quit the FJP-led Democratic Alliance in November 2011. Salafists then rallied in April 2012 with a coalition of moderates against the Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood, too, had its own problems among its ranks. The decades-old internal conflict between the movement's reformists and hardliners resurfaced in the post-Mubarak era and, in some cases, led members to leave the Brotherhood to establish their own political parties.[47] The conflict involves a generational divide that has long pitted an aging, conservative, and ideologically inflexible leadership—embodied by supreme guide Muhammad Badie[48]—against younger cadres seeking to bring about change within the organization.[49]

Shortly after the Muslim Brotherhood created the FJP in 2011, it stated that it would not put forth a candidate for the presidential election but would instead place its support behind another candidate. However, in March 2012, the Brotherhood announced that Khairat al-Shater, a wealthy businessman and senior member of the organization, would be the FJP's candidate for the presidency, contradicting that earlier commitment. Shater, who had been jailed under Mubarak for funding the Brotherhood, was quickly disqualified from running by the national electoral commission,[50] along with other leading contenders, such as former vice president and intelligence chief Omar Suleiman and Salafist leader Hazim Salah Abu Ismail.[51] This prompted the Muslim Brotherhood to nominate FJP head Mohammed Morsi as its official candidate for president. The final list featured thirteen candidates, including Mubarak's former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq, the leader of the democratic movement Hamdeen Sabbahi, and former head of the Arab League Amr Moussa. The elections took place on May 23-24, 2012, with Morsi ultimately securing victory with 24 percent of the votes.[52] Morsi's victory was remarkable not only for his Islamist background, but also for being first elected, civilian president in Egypt's history.

But the Morsi administration and the Freedom and Justice Party became targets of growing criticism during its first year in power. Polls indicated that 70 percent of Egyptian citizens thought that Morsi had failed to live up to his promises, and that most Egyptians considered themselves to be worse off under Morsi than they had been before.[53] Morsi exacerbated the problem with a decree in November 2012, which gave the executive office sweeping powers and insulated the office from judicial review, sparking fears among Egyptians of yet another authoritarian ruler. Additional concerns from the Coptic community, women and minorities, along with profound economic turmoil all contributed to popular dissatisfaction and culminated in new waves of demonstrations throughout 2012 and 2013 that resulted in the military overthrow of President Morsi in July 2013.

In the wake of the July 3, 2013 military coup, there were intense protests and demonstrations in Cairo from the country's Islamists. Protesters denounced the interim government installed to replace Morsi as illegitimate. The sit-ins were met with a strong response from the security forces, and the height of clashes between pro-Morsi protesters and authorities took place in August 2013. On August 14, Morsi supporters staged a sit-in near the Rabaa al-Adawiyya mosque in Cairo to protest Morsi's removal, which security forces violently dispersed. According to a report on the incident, 632 people were killed, the majority of which were peaceful and unarmed protesters, and that attacks in retaliation for the dispersal killed seventy-four Egyptian police officers.[54]

The interim government labeled the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist group on December 25, 2013,[55] and there has been a significant increase in radical Islamist activity and violence in Egypt since. Islamic extremist groups have perpetrated attacks against the military in retaliation for its ouster of Morsi and as a response to the repression used against fellow Islamists. These groups largely have their operational bases in the Sinai, where they enjoy a relatively free-flow of weaponry from neighboring Libya along with Iranian weapons transported through places such as Sudan. Increasingly, radical groups are targeting major population centers and cities along the Nile Delta, such as Ismailiyya, Mansoura, and locations in the Sharqiya governorate. Even more worrying is the rise in attacks in the country's capital, Cairo, including an assassination attempt on the Minister of Interior in September 2013.

In an effort to stamp out these extremists, the Egyptian military has been engaged in the largest military operation in the Sinai Peninsula since Mubarak's ouster and the most extreme fighting since the 1973 war. [56]

There are a few radical groups who have claimed responsibility for assaults against the government. The most prominent and vocal group is *Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis*, ("Supporters of Jerusalem"). *Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis* started its violent operations immediately following Mubarak's ouster in 2011, targeting Israel and Israeli interests in Egypt, such as the al Arish-Ashkelon natural gas pipeline, which has been bombed repeatedly since 2011. Since the 2013 coup, however, the Egyptian military has been the organization's primary target. There is speculation that *Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis* is affiliated in some way with the Muslim Brotherhood, and also that it is possibly funded by Hamas.[57] The link to the Brotherhood should be viewed as one of convenience, however, as most extremist Islamic groups are critical of the Muslim Brotherhood's decision to embrace electoral politics. Many point to Mohammed Morsi's decision to grant presidential pardons (without securing an oath to recant violence) to a number of imprisoned extremists as having contributed to rise of the group's membership. Although the group is widely portrayed in the popular press as being affiliated with al-Qaeda, the evidence for this assertion is scarce.[58]

There are other extremist groups emerging in Egypt as active combatants against the state. One such group calls itself *Ajnad Misr* ("Soldiers of Egypt"), and first came on the scene in late January 2014, saying that it was targeting "criminal" elements of the regime. As of early February 2014, the group has claimed responsibility for seven attacks in Cairo.[59] *Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis* has referred to *Ajnad Misr* as "brothers" and suggested that the two organizations have cooperated on attacks in the past, but neither the extent nor the nature of the collaboration is currently known.

ENDNOTES

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[14] Omar Ashour, "Lions tamed? An inquiry into the causes of de-radicalization of armed Islamist movements: the case of the Egyptian Islamic Group," *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 4 (2007), 596-597; Rohan Gunaratna and Mohamed Bin Ali, "De-Radicalization Initiatives in Egypt: A Preliminary Insight," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 4 (2009), 277-291.

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