RUPTURES AND RIPPLE EFFECTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND

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A Panoramic Perspective on Islamist Movements in the Middle East

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Abstract This article discusses and analyses the landscape of Islamist movements in Egypt using a network approach, and showing where connections lie between different movements across North Africa. The article unpacks the centripetal forces that bring Islamist movements together in 'uber-ideology coalitions' and the moments where centrifugal forces serve to divide and splinter movements. The article challenges the mainstream narrative on Islamist movements and violence in two critical ways. First, contrary to analysts' forecasts of a 'post-Islamist age', one of the ripple effects of the Arab Spring was the revival and proliferation of Islamist movements on a grand scale. Second, the article challenges the discourse that attributes the rise in radical militancy almost exclusively to the obfuscation of democratic politics through the emergence of counter-revolutionary forces. Rather, it argues that the Arab revolts created the political and security environment that allowed radical Islamist movements to flex their muscles.

1 Introduction

The state of Islamism (political Islam) in Egypt is of particular importance for the region and global politics. It is the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood, the oldest and most significant Islamist movement to call for the establishment of an Islamic state governed according to the Shariah, and from which sister movements were established across the world. It is also home to some of the most well-established jihadi movements, which have strong links with other movements across the world. Finally, its geostrategic position means that it has served as a central node in relation to other Islamist movements in Palestine, Libya and North Africa and Syria.

Many analysts and observers believed that the Arab uprisings marked the beginning of the end of religious-inspired violence, or jihad, in the Middle East and particularly the Arab world, believing this strain of violent thought to be on its way to obsolescence (Bakr 2012a). It appeared to them that the peaceful Arab revolutions in Egypt,

Tunisia, Libya and Yemen had proved the failure of jihadi thought, having achieved in such a short time what jihadi groups had failed to accomplish over three decades: namely, the overthrow of Arab regimes. But shortly after the uprisings had toppled the regimes in those countries, setting loose a new wave of jihad perhaps even fiercer than in the past, this analysis proved questionable.

Conditions in the region have fostered the rise of jihadi groups and, in turn, religious violence. Unlike the wave of jihad in the 1990s, all indications are that the current upsurge is a long-term development with substantial staying power. The article argues that the positioning of the Islamist movements in Egypt after the January 25 revolution of 2011 not only affected the situation domestically, but also had spillover effects in Libya and Gaza, and the region more broadly.

The article is organised as follows: the first part presents a typology of Islamist movements after the January 25 revolution, with a particular focus on three key players: (1) the Muslim Brotherhood; (2) Salafi groups; and (3) the jihadi and *takfiri*[1] movements. The second parts examines how, following the ruptures that led to the ousting of regimes in countries such as Egypt, the movements responded with flexibility to collective action. On the one hand, possibilities existed for post-ideological alliances; and, on the other, at times divisions and splinter movements became quite pronounced. The third part examines in more depth the various movements' relationship to violence, examining in particular a number of dynamics: the centripetal forces that led Salafi movements to join jihadi movements, the factionalism that affected jihadi movements and the ideological regression among some movements that led them to abandon violence as a means of achieving political ends. The final section (3.7) examines the fluidity and dynamism of jihadi networks across borders.

2 Typology of Islamist movements after the January 25 revolution

The typology presents the categories and self-identities used within Islamist movements, with the qualifier that in many cases ideological essence and political thought overlap, even if they follow distinct organisational orders. One cannot understand religious violence after the January 25 revolution in Egypt without also understanding the changes the revolution wrought on Islamist movements. The uprising pushed many Islamist groups into the political process; as they sought to reach the seat of governance, these movements often deviated from their hitherto peaceful courses of action and took up violence to reach this goal.

Since the January 25 revolution, the alignment of Islamist movements in Egypt has shifted more quickly than ever before in their history. For decades, this map was static and well defined. Even allowing for the ideological revisionism of groups such as the Jama'a al-Islamiya and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), discussed below, changes were minimal and gradual, allowing close study and a full understanding. In contrast, the most recent shifts are so rapid that it is more difficult to track them and identify their strategic and programmatic implications.

2.1 The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood is by far the largest and oldest political Islamist organisation in Egypt, and played a leading political role after the January 25 revolution. The Brotherhood is also the best able to maintain its organisational cohesion in the face of challenges, largely because members have been ideologically inoculated to contain the impact of dissension. The term 'ideological inoculation' refers to the group's inculcation of a particular intellectual and jurisprudential doctrine that, for members, makes the Brotherhood synonymous with Islam and vice-versa. Any deviation from the group constitutes a deviation from Islam.

This process of indoctrination insulates the Muslim Brotherhood against the impact of splits and schisms. The group has therefore produced an extensive literature that entrenches the duty of working within the confines of its community and preserves it from discord or division. To do this, the Brotherhood applies to itself scriptural texts that enjoin the unity of Muslims and discourage divisions in the community, and furthermore upholds the principle of obedience to its leadership. A juridical and intellectual framework that enjoins and protects the larger brotherhood of Muslims thus protects the movement also, and its literature valorises enduring membership and discourages rebelling against the group or leaving it.

The Muslim Brotherhood's programme, teachings and literature are thus filled with scriptural citations that confirm the importance of allegiance to the general guide and proscribe going against the group. The following prophetic hadiths are illustrative: 'He who dies without having sworn an oath of allegiance dies a pre-Islamic death'; 'God's hand is with the community of believers'; 'Hear and obey, though you be in the charge of an Ethiopian slave'; 'He who obeys my commander has obeyed me.' These and other texts have been employed in indoctrination to build the Brotherhood and ensure its continuity without dissension. Followers are made to believe that dissent against the movement is dissent against Islam itself, because the movement represents the faith. In practice, it makes it very difficult for followers to separate themselves from the movement.

Several features distinguish the Muslim Brotherhood from other Islamist movements: its strong organisation, its members' facility with politics and party work, and its experience with legislative elections, by which it has developed the ability to make partisan alliances and become adept at the electoral process. The Brotherhood is also able to mobilise the Egyptian street, a result of long years of outreach. Moreover, Brotherhood members have integrated themselves into most of the country's institutions and sectors.

In the post-January 25 revolution stage, the Muslim Brotherhood sought to bring all Islamist organisations under its wing, bringing all the groups that had grown out of the Brotherhood back into the fold to integrate

them into the organisation's broad, popular base. Brotherhood members were ordered to let their beards grow long, making it difficult for the average person to distinguish a Brother from a Salafi and creating an external similarity among all Islamist groups. The Brotherhood also took part in rallies in Assyout, Cairo and Minya, welcoming the return of the Jama'a al-Islamiya.[2]

The Muslim Brotherhood's mode of action after the revolution included maintaining the secrecy of the movement, despite the fall of Mubarak's dictatorship, refusing to compromise to resolve internal generational conflict, and refusing to discuss fully integrating women by giving them the right to compete or vote for internal positions in the movement, although the notion of providing security and protection for the movement's women had become obsolete. In its political practice, the Brotherhood chose the worst model, preserving a hierarchal structure, while establishing a political party as its political arm but without allowing it independence. The Brotherhood rejected party founders who were not Brotherhood members whom its leaders across the country had vetted, and it only offered membership to those people selected it had selected. This meant that the party was not a genuinely popular party, but rather the Brotherhood party.

Finally, the Muslim Brotherhood allied itself to Salafi movements and used them to reclaim legitimacy and build a new, massive popular base. It also used the Salafis to gin up fears about a rejection of constitutional amendments, in particular Article 2.[3] In return, the Brotherhood turned a blind eye to the Salafis' actions, even adopting some of their slogans and declaring that voting for the amendments was a religious duty. Members hung up banners to this effect in Alexandria and preached it in their mosques before later trying to disown these actions and confirming their differences with the Salafis, perhaps in response to the shocked outrage of the political and cultural elite. Hence, relations with the Salafis went through various stages of centrifugal and centripetal engagements.

Immediately after the January 25 revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood sought alliances with the Salafis, seizing the political opportunities of strengthening its core constituency and the legitimacy of the Islamist movements' political platform. However, the Salafi branch that sought to engage in politics and formed al-Nour party resisted attempts to bring it into the fold, concerned that the Brotherhood would try to dominate all the other Islamist factions. Moreover, the Salafis became a political liability as elites exposed their 'uncivil' forms of engagement, and the Brotherhood sought to distance itself from them.

As is shown below, the phase under the presidency of Mohammed Morsi (July 2012–June 2013) saw various moments of collaboration (to counter the non-Islamists), as well as times of confrontation (when the Salafis felt they were insufficiently represented in power-sharing arrangements). Periods of collaboration and confrontation foreshadowed the period after Morsi's ousting.

2.2 The Salafi movement (the Salafi umbrella)

The religious movements brought together under the Salafi rubric have many intellectual and juridical disagreements, but they are united by the general pillars of Salafi thought such as holding fast to the Holy Quran and the Sunna (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammed), purifying Islam of all untrue doctrine or practices, striving for the application of the Shariah, the creation of an Islamic state, and the reinstitution of the caliphate in the Islamic world. The Egyptian Salafi movement, or what could be called the Salafi umbrella, has undergone the most radical shifts of any Islamist movement since the January 25 revolution.

Prior to January 25, the Salafis were also united by their non-participation in politics and party work. Indeed, some Salafi groups believed that all political work was prohibited, and even if they had wished to undertake it, they could not have done because of the restrictions the regime of president Hosni Mubarak (1981–2011) had imposed on them. In short, there was virtually no political participation by Salafi movements prior to the revolution.

Salafi movements as a whole did not initially support the January 25 revolution and therefore did not take part in the protests and demonstrations in the early days. This was due to the nature of Salafi ideology and thought, which prohibits rebelling against a Muslim ruler in any way, even through protests. When the protests escalated, however, individual Salafis began to take part in demonstrations. But Salafis who participated in the revolution did so as individuals, not as part of a collective. Most Salafi sheikhs opposed the revolution and participation in it, and many even issued fatwas to their members. Gradually, however, and as the Egyptian army maintained its neutrality, then protected the demonstrators and refused to fire on them, some Salafi leaders went to the square to take part in the sit-in. They were still a minority, but individuals' participation increased day by day.

The winds of change the revolution ushered in also touched Salafi movements, sparking off an intellectual revolution. Salafis soon rushed headlong into politics. Even those movements that prohibited political action and participation did not prohibit others from taking part or condemn them for it, and soon they too joined the political fray. Salafis engaged with politics from all directions, joining and creating parties, but their political presence was the clearest when they mobilised the street to vote for proposed constitutional amendments.[4]

Salafi movements engaged in fierce competition against other political forces who opposed the amendments, mobilising all their forces: individuals, leaders, sheikhs, and preachers of all stripes. It was the first time in the history of the movement that it had been so involved in politics, and soon after the referendum, some Salafi movements began to announce their future plans. The EIJ announced that it had formed the Safety and Development Party (Al Rafat wal Tanmeya). The Jama'a al-Islamiya declared it too would be creating its own party, and the traditional Salafi movement founded al-Nour; other Salafi parties followed.

What is remarkable in the Salafi turn to politics is the speed of the intellectual transformation involved. Such shifts usually take some time, but the Salafi movement transformed its position on political participation in a few months. In so doing, it began addressing issues it would never have broached in the past, given their incompatibility with Salafi thought and doctrine, such as citizenship, Coptic rights, the rule of law, the civil state, and the regeneration of religious discourse. However, Salafis' doctrinal stances remained by and large far more conservative than those of, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood.

Since the 2013 revolution, Salafism has become an umbrella movement that comprises innumerable Islamist groups that follow the Salafi programme and doctrine, abjure violence, and do not participate in politics, such as Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya, the Shar'iya Association, and the post-revisionism of the Jama'a al-Islamiya and the EIJ, as well as traditional Salafis. Indeed, in the period from 2006 to 2010 the Salafi camp came to encompass nearly all religious movements in Egypt, with the exception of the Muslim Brotherhood, some small *takfiri* groups, and the Sufi orders.

Drawing a typology of Salafi movements after the January 25 revolution is a complex endeavour due to the numerous, but overlapping schools of thought. But, in general, there are two types of Salafi movements in Egypt.

Traditional Salafis
Also known as scholarly Salafis, these include Salafi schools and sheikhs in Alexandria, Cairo and Mansoura, as well as independent preachers such as Mohammed Hassan, Mohammed Hussein Yaqoub, and Mahmoud al-Masri. Traditional Salafis fall into three types:

(a) **The Salafi Call.** Growing out of student activism in the 1970s, the movement took on an organised form in 1980 when young Salafis formed a quasi-federation for preachers; they later called themselves the Salafi School. After several years of grass-roots work, they renamed the organisation the Salafi Call, after it spread all over the country and won hundreds of thousands of followers. They were also known as the Alexandria Salafis or Academic Salafis.

(b) **Movement Salafis (Ultra-Salafis).** While the Salafi Call was establishing itself in Alexandria, in Cairo's Shubra neighbourhood a group of young Salafis formed another movement, calling themselves Movement Salafis. They have virtually the same programme as the Salafi Call (the Alexandria School), but go further by declaring individual rulers unbelievers if they do not rule by God's revealed law, and they preach this in their sermons. They believe that participating in elected bodies is prohibited because these are governed by something other than God's law and put a man-made constitution above God's law, which is unbelief. These are ideas they held prior to the January 25 revolution.

(c) **Independent Salafis.** An extension of the old Salafi trend in Egypt, represented by numerous groups and associations since the early twentieth century, such as the al-Hidaya Association, led by Sheikh Mohammed al-Khidr Hussein, which called for observance of the Sunna and countering harmful innovations. Its members are concerned with adopting external markers of their adherence, seen in clothing, beards, hair, and the headscarf. The movement does not believe in collective, organised action. Individual leaders became immersed in politics after the January 25 revolution, but not under an institutional umbrella.

Salafi-oriented movements

These comprise numerous Islamist groups that are Salafi in doctrine and belief, but not in their organisation and operations; they have their own ways of working, and independent outreach and preaching styles. They include:

(a) **Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya.** Which has one of the largest networks of charity organisations and advocates Islam as a comprehensive system that governs all aspects of life.

(b) **The Shar'iya Association.** Founded in 1912 by Sheikh Mahmoud Khattab al-Subki as the Shar'iya Association for the Cooperation of Those Working with the Quran and Muhammad's Sunna, the primary objective of the association at the time of its establishment was preaching and guidance, calling for compliance with the Sunna and countering innovations, and supporting cooperation and social solidarity among the people. The association has 350 branches throughout Egypt.

(c) **Jama'a al-Islamiya and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad.** The Jama'a al-Islamiya emerged in the 1970s in the permissive climate that president Anwar Sadat (1970–81) fostered. At the time, it comprised members of what would later become the EIJ, which split from the Jama'a after 1981. The Jama'a al-Islamiya and EIJ engaged in a comprehensive revision of their ideological foundations from 1997–2005 onwards, an experience unique to Egypt and these Islamist groups. With the adoption of this revisionist thought, the Jama'a al-Islamiya and EIJ left the jihadi movement and joined the Salafi camp, being naturally inclined to the Salafi programme and doctrine; once they had given up the armed struggle, they became like other Salafi movements in Egypt. After the revolution, these groups experienced an ideological relapse, as they took a clear turn towards violence, in theory and practice, particularly after allying with the Muslim Brotherhood following its removal from office.

To conclude, Salafi movements of all kinds underwent an atypically rapid ideological shift, entering politics from all directions, despite having declared the political process illicit in the past. They did this without advancing any proof of the permissibility of political action

as they had once offered hundreds of proofs for its prohibition. This raises questions and doubts about the transformation, leading observers to believe that Salafi movements see the post-revolution phase as more akin to a war – and war is deception, as the hadith has it (Nasera 2011).

If Salafis do not fight this war, they will have wasted a valuable opportunity to see the implementation of Islamic law, establish an Islamic state, and move closer to achieving the cherished dream of a greater Islamic state under the caliphate. Salafi movements may have joined the political process out of what they viewed as legitimately exigent circumstances. This is also what led Salafi movements later to turn to violence; they viewed the use of violence as a legitimate necessity, in much the same way that they viewed engagement with politics.

Jihadi and *takfiri* organisations

A number of jihadi groups emerged in force amid the security vacuum that followed the January 25 revolution. Founded in the Sinai Peninsula, these organisations grew and expanded during Morsi's tenure. The president turned a blind eye to them, which led to an explosion of jihadi activity in Sinai (Bakr 2012a). The groups are united by their goal of overthrowing the Egyptian regime and attacking Israel with force of arms. Although there are not many of them, the groups are influential and can deal painful blows to the Egyptian regime and Israel.

The *takfiri* groups' thought leads them to declare society as a whole an infidel society. They therefore consider the ruler to be an infidel along with others who deny certain religious teachings. They even go so far as to declare anyone who does not hold the ruler to be an infidel to be an unbeliever. From there, they consider the general population to be unbelievers, seeing them as content with unbelief or refusing to condemn it. *Takfiri* thought in Egypt is not widespread. Indeed, it is always in sharp conflict with society, which utterly rejects its weak premises and logic, its extremism, and its deviation from Egyptians' generally peaceful disposition.

Nevertheless, *takfiri* groups are dangerous insofar as they resort to violence and sanction bloodshed and attacks on property, particularly against what they view as infidel state institutions, Copts, and police and security personnel. In general, *takfiri* groups believe that their noble ends justify the means, but they cannot easily find purchase in Egyptian society, due to the absence of strong organisational links between their members and the lack of a hospitable location in most of the country.

Jihadi groups pursue violence against the 'secular' apparatuses controlling the state, to defeat them. These include groups such as Ansar Beit al-Maqdes, Ansar el Jihad and Jeish al-Islam. Their aspiration was to establish a separate emirate in Sinai by first eliminating the army and police presence, then taking over the judiciary and the main institutions of the state as a pathway to taking over the country. A faction of these groups initially opposed this plan, but after Morsi's overthrow they

considered violence against the regime as a natural outcome. These groups espouse a *takfiri* ideology and believe in armed violence as a means of establishing an Islamic state. They also claim that anyone who does do not follow their ideology is an infidel.

The relationship between jihadi groups and these apparatuses is one of mutual war, with each side attempting to defeat and eliminate the other to implement its political and intellectual project. Regardless of jihadi groups' differing programmes and political and ideological references, other factions, movements, or groups will always declare them non-believers or not Islamic enough, opposing them either with violence or fatwas declaring them infidels.

The most significant jihadi and *takfiri* groups in Egypt now, particularly in Sinai, are:

(a) **Al-Tawheed wal Jihad.** An extremist, violent jihadi group, it is closer to the *takfiri* school than the Salafi thought most jihadi movements embrace (Bakr 2012b). This organisation was responsible for bombings in Taba and Sharm al-Sheikh in 2004 and 2006. Almost all its members are natives of Sinai, and they rely on weapons left over from wars and other campaigns in Sinai. The group has maintained strong links with several Palestinian factions such as Jeish al-Islam (originally known as Jeish al-Fatteh) led by Mumtaz Daghmash. They received military training in Gaza, and many used tunnels to reach the Gaza Strip, where they trained in weapons and explosives. A few Palestinians joined the group and trained members to use the explosives deployed in the Sinai bombings. The organisation has curbed its activities substantially following an Egyptian security crackdown after the bombings.

(b) **Ansar Beit al-Maqdes.** A jihadi, Salafi organisation, it seeks first and foremost to threaten the Israel and its Zionist supporters worldwide by various means, including bombing gas pipelines between Egypt and Israel and firing rockets into Israel from Sinai. The organisation comprises Egyptians and Palestinians, most of whom are adherents to al-Qaeda's line of thought. The group has distinguished itself through its ability to undertake successful bombings of the pipeline; for example, on 9 December 2014. It has been reported that some Palestinian organisations maintain ties with the group and supply it with money and weapons, as well as expertise, advice and military training (Amer 2014). It is a relatively new organisation compared to Tawhid and Jihad. Other nationalities besides Egyptians and Palestinians are joining the organisation, raising numerous questions about the group and its emergence at this critical juncture.

(c) **Ansar al-Jihad.** Ansar al-Jihad in Sinai is an al-Qaeda franchise. First appearing in the media after al-Qaeda announced Ayman al-Zawahiri's leadership on 16 June 2011, it emerged out of the Egyptian revolution and the attendant security vacuum and loss

of control over Sinai. The organisation is largely composed of Egyptians from Sinai and other provinces, but it has been reported that former members of the EIJ joined after escaping from prison during January 25. Ansar al-Jihad in Sinai seeks to establish an Islamic emirate in Sinai, with Islam the sole basis of legislation. To achieve this goal, it is attempting to expel the army and police from Sinai and take over all security offices. It also sought to pressure the Egyptian government into cancelling the Camp David Accords and intervene to end the siege in Gaza.

Ansar al-Jihad has carried out successive bombings of the gas pipeline to Israel. The group in July 2011 attempted to set fire to the second-largest police station in Arish, when some 200 masked attackers gained control of the station using advanced weapons (rocket-propelled grenades, grenades and automatic weapons). Army and police forces countered the attack – the first of its kind in Egypt – and the clashes left five people dead, including one police officer and one military officer, and 19 seriously injured. That month the group also attacked the Egyptian Border Guard, and in August carried out a bomb attack in Eilat in southern Israel, which killed eight Israeli soldiers.

3 Religious movements' turn to violence in the transitional phase: causes

Several changes after the January 25 revolution clearly had an impact on Islamist movements' relations with one another. These fostered a rapprochement between movements that in the past had strong disagreements, which was achieved by forging new alliances that went beyond doctrine and programmes of action to become post-ideological alliances. These shifts also gave rise to a new strand in the Islamist movement – a third way – as some jihadi movements embraced revisionist thought and renounced violence, but without offering a clear picture of the new path and programme they would pursue, which would enable observers to understand how they would engage with relevant or new issues. After the revisionist process, these movements did not join other existing groups (Salafi movements or the Muslim Brotherhood), remaining separate but without a distinct ideology to identify them.

The most dangerous shift has been the intellectual apostasy seen in some movements that had embraced revisionist thought and abandoned violence and terrorism. Under the rise of the Islamists, these movements reverted to their earlier ways, using violence, even if somewhat covertly, in inflammatory speeches, though some members engaged in open violence.

Transformations in the region have also brought some movements to prominence at the expense of others. Large swathes of Salafis in some areas of the region have turned to jihadi thought. This shift outpaced the migrations from the jihadi camp to the Salafi camp, which had taken a substantial period of time, indicating perhaps that the turn to violence is easier in the region than the turn away from it. The jihadi umbrella also benefitted from the rise to prominence of al-Qaeda in the region after the Arab revolts, in particular al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

and Ansar al-Din, and in East Africa al-Tawheed wal Jihad. Other Salafi movements in the region joined them, especially from Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. The dominant voice began to shift from Salafi circles to more jihadi ones, as was the case in Tunisia. In Egypt this was also apparent in the Salafi discourse around the time of the 2011–12 elections, when former vice-president and head of the intelligence service Omar Suleiman[5] stood for president and members of the Jama'al-Islamiya threatened him with violence if he ran for office.

A significant consequence of these shifts is the sharp divisions they have created in the ranks of jihadi organisations across the region. Jihadi groups have witnessed so many splits in their ranks that divisions have become an endemic feature. One jihadi group may split into two independent groups because of disagreements and soon enough each new group is plagued by its own divisions, leading to a proliferation of organisations. The fragmentation within the ranks of the jihadi movements is due to several factors, the most important of which is the power of influential leaders who gain popularity among the people to convince them to split from the mother movement.

The reasons for this are differences in thought and ideology. For example, if within the movement a group emerges that considers there to be a deviance in thinking that needs addressing and the leadership refuses on the basis that it is unchangeable, a splinter emerges. This explains the emergence of groups such as Ansar al-Jihad, Majles Shura al-Mujahedeen, Ansar Beit al-Maqdes, Jeish al-Islam and al-Tawheed wal Jihad. It creates an air of competitiveness among the different splinter groups rather than complementarity, as each group tries to show the rest that it is more active and more 'jihadist' than the others. This splintering not only means that acts of violence occur more often, but that it is more difficult to enter into negotiations because they will not necessarily agree on the same position, and representatives of one group may not be entitled to speak on behalf of other groups. It also means it is more difficult to control them.

3.1 Post-ideological alliances
Political Islam emerged after the fall of the caliphate in 1924 with the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, followed by the birth of other movements. Since then a state of hostility has prevailed among these groups due to ideological and doctrinal differences, which at times has led some groups to declare others infidels. Often these movements have waged fierce battles against one another, particularly among the three main Islamist camps in the region: Salafi movements, jihadi movements and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The enmity between Islamist groups is stronger than their enmity towards non-Islamists because it is based on doctrinal disagreements, each movement seeing itself as the possessor of the absolute truth and the true representative of Islam, with the others as distorted versions of Islam. The latter are thus more dangerous to Islam than liberal or

nationalist movements, which do not claim to be Islamic. Battles with non-Islamists are not difficult; they can easily be defeated by turning the dispute into a religious battle. But other Islamist movements wear the same cloak of religion and speak the same language, with the same logic; they are therefore a much more formidable enemy because they use the same weapons.

After the Arab revolutions, however, many Islamist movements drew closer together, and formed strong alliances, despite sharp ideological differences. These were post-ideological alliances, partnerships that disregarded ideological differences to achieve common interests. 'Coalitions above ideology' were formed because movements found that when pressed, political and financial interests require joining forces irrespective of ideological differences.

One of the most well known of these alliances was the National Coalition to Support Legitimacy, which was announced on 27 June 2013, three days before the 30 June uprising. The Coalition brought together the Muslim Brotherhood, the Jama'a al-Islamiya, remnants of the EIJ, and several Salafi movements as well as political parties.[6] The Coalition is significant because it brought together various political forces who had major ideological differences with the Muslim Brotherhood.

In addition, an alliance was created between the Muslim Brotherhood and some jihadi and *takfiri* organisations in Sinai, which had previously declared the Brotherhood and Morsi to be infidels, adding that there was no difference between Morsi and Hosni Mubarak: both were unbelievers who did not rule by God's law.

These alliances were based on common interests that went beyond ideological tenets. Islamist movements recognise two types of differences, those that are unbridgeable and those that allow for a diversity of opinion. The first type precludes any alliance or even cooperation between the two differing groups, while the second does not. In general, the disagreements between allied movements were of the first type, for they were primarily based on ideological and doctrinal disputes. To achieve their common interests, however, these movements disregarded doctrine to conclude a post-ideological alliance.

These alliances played an important role in feeding the violence in Egypt in the transitional period. They put all movements on the same side as violent jihadi groups, joining together to support the Muslim Brotherhood. While the jihadi movements played a larger role in the violence, other allied movements supported and aided them, which had not been the case in the past. Given this support, the violence of jihadi groups was even more extreme. The Brotherhood managed to create these alliances for the first time in the history of Islamist movements by allowing the presence of militant groups in Sinai, and turning a blind eye to their access to funding and arms, in return for their supporting the Brotherhood in office and defending it.

The post-June 2013 situation indicates that these alliances are spreading. Islamist movements have discovered that post-ideological alliances are the shortest path for the biggest gains, leading them to place interests and political and material benefits above doctrinal and ideological principles. Examples include AQIM, which has included a number of Salafi groups that were previously enemies. This suggests that the network of such alliances may spread in the coming period, which will have serious ramifications for the entire region.

3.2 The Muslim Brotherhood and the turn to violence

The Muslim Brotherhood is fundamentally a political, religious outreach organisation that relies primarily on public action, and it is therefore unlikely that the Brotherhood will go entirely underground. The danger, instead, is that it will establish a secret apparatus to undertake violent operations the organisation does not wish to claim, much like the secret organisation it established in the past. This move carries many risks, however, and in the past had dire repercussions for the group. The Brotherhood appears to have realised this and is therefore unlikely to take this step, especially when it has an alternative: namely, relying on the jihadi organisations with which it has allied itself, especially during Morsi's presidency, as well as depending on Hamas.

As the revolution moved forward, the Brotherhood and its Islamist allies were thrown off balance and rushed towards violence. They began by threatening and attacking opposition demonstrations, but then took several confused steps to address the crisis. The non-Islamist movements' ability to mobilise such large groups of people caught them by surprise, and the Brotherhood leadership found it difficult to agree on the best course of action to take. Some called for a general jihad as the only way to prevent Morsi's overthrow, others for peaceful protests to ensure that the movement's projected commitment to non-violent democratic engagement was upheld.

In the end, they pursued a number of sometimes apparently contradictory tactics. For one, they mobilised their supporters in force in an attempt to balance out opposition forces, portraying matters to their supporters as a conflict between Islam and secularism, while trying to present the battle on the ground internationally as a coup against legitimacy. Mobilisation was in full force, bringing supporters from Upper Egypt, the Delta and all over Cairo, assembling in Nahda Square to coincide with pro-Morsi demonstrations in several governorates. This came after the Brotherhood issued a 'general alert' to defend legitimacy. At these demonstrations, supporters brandished clubs and bladed weapons, and performed military exercises to terrorise citizens. This was a clear sign of impending violence (Ghoneam 2013).

In this charged atmosphere, when demonstrators attempted to storm the Brotherhood headquarters in Muqattam the Brotherhood responded with violence. Eight demonstrators were killed in the clashes and 70 more injured (*Al-Arabiya* 2013). They captured a Brotherhood

sniper, who said that 250 people were on top of the headquarters armed with shotguns and automatic weapons. On the evening of 2 July, the Brotherhood sent out armed groups in the capital to attack local residents, in an attempt to sow violence and foment unrest in various areas of Cairo and the governorates. The objective was to prompt Gen. Abdel Fatah el-Sisi, the head of the armed forces, to retract his decision and keep Morsi in office, out of fear of sparking off a civil war. Sit-ins at Rabia al-Adawiya and Nahda Squares also brought violence with them. After protesters refused to leave the squares, security forces used force to disperse them, which led to violent confrontations on 14 August; 632 people killed, including eight police officers, 1,492 injured, and around 800 arrested. The National Council for Human Rights pointed out that while protesters had fired first, the police's response was excessive and out of proportion (*ahramonline* 2014).

The crisis was the worst the Muslim Brotherhood had experienced in its long history. For the first time, it found itself out in the cold because of its use of violence. Long accustomed to confrontation with the state, the Brotherhood had derived a sense of victimhood and persecution, and it was one of the primary reasons that many Egyptians sympathised with it.

Although the crisis proved too big for the leadership and its capacities, the Muslim Brotherhood maintained its organisational cohesion, because it was protected ideologically in the minds of its members. The Brotherhood has a singular ability to maintain internal cohesion and counter divisions because its thought has focused on equating the group with Islam and vice-versa in the minds of its members. It draws on Quranic verses and hadiths that prohibit going against the larger community of Muslims, and applying these texts to themselves, thereby leading individual Brothers to believe that deviating from the Brotherhood's teachings is tantamount to deviating from Islam.

In addition to this internal cohesion, the Muslim Brotherhood enjoys sympathy among sections of the people, especially in Upper Egypt. Nevertheless, its turn to violence has given rise to several severe crises. First of all, it can no longer mobilise support as in the past due its declining popularity in the street, particularly in the Delta. This has become apparent in the poor attendance at Brotherhood demonstrations since the June 2013 revolution, many of which numbered only in the hundreds. Moreover, its organisational performance has been weakened by the arrest of active leaders who could make important and strategic decisions, leaving the leadership to those unable to deal with current challenges. This has led to haphazard decision-making and an inability to define a clear vision for the current phase.

Finally, although the cohesion that has been built into the Muslim Brotherhood over its long history makes it unlikely that that the group will collapse or fragment into smaller entities, circumstances since mid-2015 may have a greater impact and foster increased divisions in the group's ranks. The Brotherhood suddenly finds itself confronting

millions of Egyptians after taking up violence to achieve its goals, contradicting three decades of claims to have definitively renounced violence. Internally, a leadership struggle is taking place. Many young members would like to challenge the movement's leaders, but are waiting until the current crisis passes.

Any predictions about the future of the Muslim Brotherhood, and how to engage with it or integrate it into society therefore depend on the consequences the current crisis has for the organisation and if it resorts to the use of further violence. In any case, the cost of surviving the crisis of violence will be very high indeed.

3.3 Third way movements

Since the late 1990s, the Arab region has seen a wave of unique ideological transformations, as numerous jihadi movements renounced violence in what became known as the revisionist wave.[7] Thousands of former jihadis or their sympathisers turned away from jihadi thinking and were persuaded of the failure of the jihadi enterprise the movements promoted. These transformations were a process of self-criticism aimed at these organisations' former concepts and ideological assumptions, as well as the practices that accompanied them, and it involved establishing new ideological foundations and priorities that differed from the previous priorities and inevitabilities (Fiqqi 2010).

The movements that engaged in this process were thus left without an identity. That is, they had no particular intellectual orientation or defining features that would permit one to identify their ideological underpinnings. In turn, it became difficult to categorise them among the major Islamist movements in the region – the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi trend – because when they abandoned their old ideas as part of the revisionist process, they did not adopt a new way of thinking that could ground them or define their programme and objectives. They thus became 'third way' groups of unknown identity and indeterminate ideas, which raised many questions about their aims and future.

Several organisations in the region underwent this process, holding no distinct ideological features, most notably the Egyptian Jama'a al-Islamiya. The group unilaterally declared a ceasefire in 1997 before announcing a wholesale revision of its thought, conduct and organisational structure in 2002; the Jama'a eventually produced 25 books detailing the revisionist process. It was followed by the EIJ, some of whose leaders began the revisionist process in prison, led by Sayyed Imam al-Sherif, the author of *The Document to Rationalize the Jihad in Egypt and the Islamic World* and *The Exposure*.[8] Despite the general support for the revisions within the EIJ in Egypt, the group was not as successful in its transformation as the Jama'a al-Islamiya, with some leaders outside Egypt continuing to reject the entire process. After the revisions, the Jama'a al-Islamiya and EIJ became third way movements because they had not offered any alternative programme of thought (Al-Khateeb 2008).

The danger third way movements pose is that they have no specific identity or clear intellectual framework that would permit an understanding of their current orientation and future plans, particularly because movements such as the Jama'a al-Islamiya and EIJ have become clearly opportunistic, power-hungry organisations, looking for political and economic gains by any means. Without an ideological framework to govern their actions, they wait for the moment to ally themselves with another movement that will enable them to achieve these gains. Moreover, some have resumed their use of violence, among them members of the Jama'a and EIJ. Indeed, another danger of third way movements is that they are liable to (re)turn to violence at any moment.

3.4 Ideological apostasy

In the wake of the relatively peaceful Arab uprisings, many researchers believed that jihadi movements in the region were on the wane, especially because the uprisings were preceded by the revisionist process undertaken by many jihadi movements, starting in Egypt with the Jama'a al-Islamiya and followed by the EIJ, the Islamic Fighting Group in Libya, the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front, several Salafi movements in North Africa (particularly Mauritania), and leaders of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

A the beginning of the Arab Spring, several former jihadi movements that had embraced revisionist thought engaged with the political process, which they had previously boycotted and declared prohibited. In Egypt, jihadi movements vied to establish new political parties, with the Jama'a al-Islamiya forming the Construction and Development Party, and the EIJ creating the Safety and Development Party.

Despite the move to renounce violence and enter the political fray, an ideological relapse or retreat has been evident. Some of these movements have begun to reconsider the bases of the revisionist thought that led to their renunciation of violence, such as the prohibition on taking up arms and rebelling against the ruler. Jama'a al-Islamiya leaders in Egypt, for example, allowed taking up arms in self-defence against an unjust ruler and to rebel against him. Members of these movements again took part in violence. Many members of al-Qaeda in Sinai (Ansar al-Jihad) are thought to be former members of the EIJ, and Jama'a al-Islamiya leaders appealed to the Egyptian government during the uprising in Libya against Muammar Gaddafi to permit the group's youth wing to join fighting there.

This act of ideological apostasy by jihadi groups opened the door to the return of violence, which soon began to grow out of control and has contributed to a spike in religious violence in the country, which has manifested itself in attacks on Coptic Christians, churches and Sufi shrines. In fact, in 2016 two types of jihadi movement exist. The first, including the jihadi organisations scattered across the Sinai, are those in the region that continue to practise armed violence and seek to use it achieve their objectives. The second group, however, is more

problematic and more dangerous: jihadi movements that engage in armed violence after having embraced revisionist thought. We are thus faced with a wave of religious violence due to this ideological apostasy that is spreading day by day.

3.5 The shift from Salafi thought to jihadi thought

The shift from Salafi to jihadi thought is one of the most dangerous seen in Islamist movements since the Arab revolutions, particularly in Egypt during the transitional period. Jihadi movements in the region have expanded into a 'jihadi umbrella' at the expense of what used to be the largest Islamist umbrella movement prior to the Arab Spring, the Salafis. The Salafis had expanded when several jihadi groups turned to the Salafi programme of action and ideas based on religious outreach, disseminating the faith, the oneness of God, a desire for religious knowledge, and an absolute prohibition on armed struggle. Indeed, non-violence is the most significant feature that distinguishes the Salafi movement from the jihadi movement.

The shifts within the Jama'a al-Islamiya and the EIJ after the revisions were the most renown expression of the move from the jihadi to the Salafi umbrella. After the January 25 revolution, however, a shift in the opposite direction took place, as Islamists moved out of the Salafi camp and into the jihadi camp. This move was rapid, far outpacing the gradual transformation from jihadi to Salafi. This indicates that the turn to violence might be much easier than the turn to peace.

When al-Qaeda in Sinai emerged, it attracted numerous Salafis to its ranks. Jihadi movements such as the Jama'a al-Islamiya and EIJ that had embraced revisionism also began to change their rhetoric after January 25, moving closer to a jihadi discourse. Indeed, from time to time, Jama'a al-Islamiya warned of its potential to take up violence again (for example, as mentioned above, when Omar Suleiman announced that he would run for president). Many Salafis also turned to violence, reflected in the demolition of shrines in numerous areas and attacks on Coptic churches.

Increased jihadi activity at the expense of Salafi activity has repercussions for the region. It has grave security consequences: jihadis have successfully carried out major operations that threaten the security of entire countries and their territorial integrity by taking control of certain regions and imposing their rule, as was the case in Sinai immediately after Morsi's overthrow. They can also inflict major casualties in the ranks of those fighting them. Attacks lead to capital flight and impede production; some directly target tourism in areas where it is vital to the local economy. Moreover, state facilities have been attacked and destroyed,[9] entailing major economic losses.

At the same time, these groups' activities have serious political ramifications, insofar as they aim to overthrow all regimes in all states in the region, including those that describe themselves as Islamic, with

the goal of establishing a caliphate through jihad and armed action.
Meanwhile, the relationship between the jihadi and Salafi camps is
inversely proportional: when one grows, the other shrinks. Current
conditions indicate that the jihadi camp is expanding at an exponential
pace, which may have serious consequences for religious violence in Egypt.

3.6 Jihadi factionalism

Immediately before the Arab revolutions, jihadi groups across the
region were on the retreat, and virtually none were active in Egypt.
Paradoxically, the Arab Spring, a series of peaceful uprisings that were
thought to mark the beginning of the end for jihadi movements in the
region – and maybe the world – actually inaugurated a new jihadi wave,
stronger and more active than the wave of the 1990s. Subsequently,
however, jihadi movements experienced numerous splits in their ranks,
to the point that factionalism has become a defining feature of the
movement. For example, following the Arab Spring, al-Tawheed wal
Jihad emerged out of AQIM in 2011, and then 'tanzim al mouq'eoon
bel dema'a', which came into being in December 2012, led by former
AQIM leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar. Also to splinter off from AQIM is
Ansar al Shari'a in Yemen which became an independent movement
with its own ideological and tactical features. Meanwhile, in Egypt
Ansar Beit al-Maqdes split from Ansar al-Jihad, and Kat'aeb al Forqan
subsequently split from Ansar Beit al-Maqdes.

Divisions occur in jihadi ranks for various reasons, but the most
significant factor is the presence of an influential figure who attracts
followers, which leads to a schism, having persuading those around him
to break off from the parent organisation. The causes of division can be
ideological or doctrinal. One group in an organisation may believe that
some doctrinal shortcoming must be addressed, while the leadership
does not deem it a shortcoming, believing that doctrinal frameworks are
sacrosanct. In turn, the dissenting faction splits off with a new ideology,
usually composed of the old body of thought with a layer of new ideas,
under a new leadership.

Divisions may also occur for political reasons. One faction may believe
that it will not achieve its political interests inside the organisation and
therefore splits off to pursue these interests. Personal factors also play
a role. Someone who aspires to leadership may see this as his natural
place, from which he will carry out major operations that the current
leadership cannot. He therefore breaks off and establishes a new group,
setting himself up as leader and attempting major operations, to prove
to others that he is worthy of the leadership and was right to splinter off.

Factionalism will have major negative consequences and lead to an
increase in religious violence. Relations among jihadi groups in general,
and particularly splinter groups, are competitive: when one jihadi
group undertakes an operation, another (splinter) group will attempt
an even bigger operation to prove that its members are more devoted
and fervent supporters of Islam and the jihad. Factionalism also leads

to the proliferation of jihadi organisations, making it difficult to control or negotiate with them, or even bring them together to agree on a position. This in turn makes it difficult to engage with and confront these organisations in the short and long term. The greater the number of splinter groups, the greater the proliferation of acts of terrorism and violence.

3.7 Regional ripple effects

Three types of Jihadi movements are present in the region that have become particularly active since the Arab Spring, most of which subscribe to al-Qaeda's thinking. The first is the 'mother' movement itself, al-Qaeda, which Osama Bin Laden established in 1988 under the name of 'the Islamic international front for jihad against the Jews and Crusaders'. It formed out of a number of jihadi forces in various parts of the world, and focused its activities on Pakistan and Afghanistan. The second are branches of al-Qaeda that were formed under Bin Laden's direct instruction. These include al-Qaeda in Gaziret al Arab, which is active in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. While some extend their ideological thinking from the mother movement, they are organisationally separate and do not get their directions or instructions from al-Qaeda. The third type comprises groups that looked to al-Qaeda as a model for jihadi activism, and follow its ideological thinking and way of organisation, but are not formally linked to al-Qaeda, either the mother movement or its offshoots, and were not formed by Bin Laden. These include Ansar al-Jihad, AQIM, Jama'at Ansar al-Jihad in Sinai and al-Qaeda fi bilad al Rafedeen in Iraq.

The map of jihadi movements in the Middle East has changed since the Arab revolts. The fall of the security apparatus in countries in the midst of chaos, the relaxation of many states' border patrols, the circulation of weapons, humans and resources have enabled such movements to thrive in the Arab world. Many of these organisations recognise that this is a moment in the region's history that has afforded them the opportunity to spread and strengthen ties between one another, with a view to establishing an Islamic caliphate based on a model of forming Islamic emirates in land they occupy, as with attempts at establishing Islamic emirates in the south of Sinai, in Tunisia, in Yemen, in Iraq and the north of Mali. This has resonance from one country to another, with ripple effects. The growth of the jihadi movement in Egypt after the January 25 revolution had a ripple effect in acting movements elsewhere. Likewise, the regional crisis that has grown out of Syria, and the situation of jihadi movements in the region, influences the positioning of the jihadi movement in Egypt. What we see is the emergence of an situation that is very much conducive to the growth and strengthening of networks of jihadi groups everywhere.

Notes

1 Those who assume '*takfiri*' thought hold others who do not espouse their version of Islam to be infidels, even if they are Muslim and members of Islamist movements. In the eyes of members of *takfiri* movements, it is legitimate to kill people and take their wealth if they are declared to be *kafir* (infidel).

2 From insider information, it appeared that the Muslim Brotherhood looked favourably on the rallies that the Jama'a al-Islamiya held in February 2013 in support of the Brotherhood and the current administration.

3 Article 2 of the Egyptian constitution since 1977 has stated that 'the principles of Islamic Sharia are *the* main source of legislation.' Before the 1977 amendment to the constitution, Article 2 stated that 'the principles of Islamic Sharia are a main source of legislation'. Following the January 25 revolution, a controversy erupted about whether 'secularists' wanted to revert to the pre-1977 formulation in a new constitution, which would in effect dilute the centrality of Islamic Sharia in governance and legislation.

4 These included easing of the conditions of eligibility for a presidential candidate, full judicial oversight over the presidential elections and clear articulation of the processes representing a roadmap.

5 He was also in charge of negotiations between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood during Mubarak's presidency.

6 These include the Labour Party, the Reform Party, the Watan Party, Arab Unity Party, Raya Party and Islamic party.

7 The revisionist wave encompassed the Jama'a al-Islamiya. In a number of publications, the jihadists denounced violence – but not necessarily in favour of political activities. This ideological revisionism continued up to the January 25 revolution. Subsequently, some of these movements appear to have reversed their positions on violence, as speeches of the late Essam And el Maged and Tarek el Zomor, leaders of the Jama'a al-Islamiya, reflected.

8 These documents are of paramount importance to revisionist thinking on jihad.

9 See, for example, www.masress.com/alwafd/621466 .

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