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■ THE DAWN OF THE ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND ASH-SHAM

Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi

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The Dawn of the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham

By Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi

IN THE COURSE OF THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR, TWO MAJOR REBEL FACTIONS have emerged who share al-Qaeda's ideology: Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), which was founded at the beginning of 2012 by Abu Mohammed al-Jowlani, and the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS). In April 2013, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI—the umbrella front for al-Qaeda in Iraq), proposed that JN and ISI merge together. He thus announced the formation of a new Islamist polity, ISIS, which included territories in Iraq and Syria (ash-Sham). Baghdadi argued that Jabhat al-Nusra had been initially set-up with financial support and manpower from the ISI and therefore that the Syria-focused JN was a mere “extension” of the Iraq-based organization. Jowlani, however, rejected Baghdadi's proposal to combine their efforts on the grounds that he was not consulted. Subsequently, he renewed JN's *bay'ah* (pledge of allegiance) to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of al-Qaeda Central.

In June of 2013, al-Jazeera revealed a leaked letter in which Zawahiri ruled in favor of maintaining a separation between ISI and JN in Iraq and Syria respectively. The network released video footage of Zawahiri reading the letter aloud in November 2013. Many observers interpreted this televised pronouncement from al-Qaeda Central's leader as a renewal of the call to disband ISIS, although sources within ISIS circles inform me that the video in question had, in fact, been in private circulation among their members for months. In any event, Baghdadi

has personally rejected the call to disband ISIS. Similarly, ISIS's new official spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, a Syrian veteran of the Iraq War, has also rejected the proposal in even more forceful terms, going so far as to accuse Jowlani of "defection" and affirming that ISIS would not accept geographical limitations based on "Sykes-Picot."

There are variations in the membership composition of both JN and ISIS that are worth noting. Indeed, the differences between the two groups have national as well as ideological dimensions. JN has a greater proportion of native Syrian members in its ranks, while most foreign jihadis fighting in Syria have declared their allegiance to ISIS. The national differences between the two factions are significant; however they must not be exaggerated. Most foreign fighters in Syria are disproportionately represented among ISIS's leadership and elite paramilitary corps. The vast majority of ISIS fighters in the rank and file, however, are Syrian nationals. Therefore, while there is a distinct national difference between the two groups, it is not the most important factor that distinguishes them from each other.

In the first few months after Baghdadi announced the formation of ISIS, its relationship with JN in Syria was not always clear. In March 2013, for example, members of the local JN faction under the leadership of a local commander called Abu Sa'ad al-Hadrami seized the city of Raqqa. The names and banners of JN and ISIS remained interchangeable throughout the city until July 2013. Hadrami had, in fact, pledged allegiance to Baghdadi, but he was not opposed to the presence of the JN. By July of 2013, circumstances had changed: Hadrami reaffirmed his allegiance solely to JN. He cited concerns over ISIS's conduct in Raqqa and argued that continuing to wage jihad under the name of ISIS constituted disobedience to Zawahiri. Subsequently, he withdrew from Raqqa with his followers to Tabqa, and announced a return to Raqqa in September 2013 under the banner of JN.

The return of JN to Raqqa as a faction that is distinct from ISIS reflects the widening gap between the two groups over time. JN still cooperated with ISIS in the overall administration of the city through participation in Raqqa's Sharia Committee, a ruling body that also included the Salafist faction Ahrar ash-Sham. However, distrust between JN and ISIS became increasingly apparent. Tension between the two groups boiled over last summer. In August of 2013, ISIS expelled the main FSA contingent in Raqqa thereby leaving many fighters in the city with no army to which to pledge their loyalty. As a result, ISIS and JN began to compete for new recruits among those formerly aligned with the FSA. As such, ISIS has tried to seize some of the bases of these former FSA fighters only to have JN intervene to stop them in the name of the FSA's allegiance to the Syrian JN.

Violence between the two al-Qaeda-inspired groups followed. As the opposition outlet *Aks Alser* recently reported in November of 2013, ISIS tried to seize an apparent JN base in Raqqa leading to exchanges of gunfire. A local contact explained to me after the incident that it was not strictly a JN base, but rather the headquarters of *Jabhat al-Tawheed*, a battalion that had previously pledged allegiance to JN.

Despite the turf wars and violence between ISIS and JN, not all those who have pledged their allegiance to JN or ISIS are necessarily hostile to members of the other faction. For example, the *Kata'ib Junud al-Haq*, a battalion of rebel fighters in the Syrian town of Abu Kamal on the border with Iraq, initially declared itself a branch of JN. It later switched its emblem and pledged allegiance to ISIS, only to then revert back to JN after *Zawahiri's* letter emerged calling for the separation of the Iraqi and Syrian jihadist groups. During the battalion's time as an ISIS affiliate, however, the group's Facebook page still featured imagery in support of JN, such as photos of JN banners. Furthermore, in an interview I conducted in November 2013 with *Kata'ib Junud al-Haq's* media activist *Zaid Osama Albukamali*, the battalion's representative made it clear that despite the reversion to an exclusive JN allegiance, *Kata'ib Junud al-Haq* is not hostile to ISIS and seeks cross-border cooperation, even though it supports *Zawahiri's* directives for separation between ISIS and JN in Syria.

Open hostilities notwithstanding, there have been plenty of instances in which both JN and ISIS have managed to cooperate in Syria. Examples include a siege of the base of the Syrian Army's 17th Division in the Raqqa governorate, a coordinated offensive against regime strongholds in the Homs desert area, as well as operations against the Kurdish YPG (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*) militias and regime forces in the Qamishli area. In each of these operations, both groups have succeeded in uniting against a perceived common enemy.

Despite the capacity of both factions to cooperate, the JN-ISIS split is perhaps the greatest internal division in the transnational jihadist movement in a single country. It is also the only known instance in which a local commander, the emir of ISIS *Baghdadi*, has openly disobeyed the al-Qaeda Central emir *Zawahiri*. The JN, by contrast, has more recently gone to great lengths to stress its loyalty to *Zawahiri*. In fact, the JN has begun using an alternative name on its banners, "*Al-Qa'ida in Bilad ash-Sham*," amid alleged attempts by other rebel groups (e.g. the Islamic Front's *Jaysh al-Islam* under *Zahran Alloush*) to co-opt JN away from al-Qaeda.

In assessing these instances of cooperation and divergence between JN and ISIS and its implications for the future of the jihadist rebellion in Syria and Iraq,

it should be noted that the dynamics on the ground between the two groups remain very fluid and contained. Open conflict on a national scale between the two factions anytime soon is highly unlikely. Moreover, given the ideological leanings of the current JN leadership, it is also unlikely that they will drop their affiliation with al-Qaeda Central.

Jihadist Political Strategies

AS EVIDENCE OF THE COMPETITION BETWEEN JN AND ISIS MOUNTS, BOTH factions have tried to consolidate local political support by intensifying their public outreach efforts. Their respective bids to “win hearts and minds” have involved a wide array of activities, from media outreach to the provision of economic aid and social services such as running bakeries and supplying bread at prices lower than those in the conventional black market. Furthermore, both groups have shunned engaging in criminal behavior, a practice that has favorably distinguished JN in the public’s eyes from the FSA-banner groups in the rebel-held northern areas.

ISIS has arguably distinguished itself from all of the other rebel groups in its outreach to Syrian populations by employing social media with remarkable effectiveness. Indeed, the extent of ISIS’s political and media outreach aimed at garnering local support is unprecedented in the history of global jihadist movements. ISIS is trying to demonstrate in Syria that it has somehow “learned the lessons” of al-Qaeda’s failures to hold onto power in the Anbar province and its ultimate defeat in the Iraq War. When Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was at the helm of al-Qaeda and the jihadist insurgency in Iraq, the Al-Qaeda fighters behaved with extreme brutality towards Sunni Arab locals. This helped to ignite the “Anbar Awakening” that in the course of the U.S.-led troop surge in Iraq resulted in the formation of the anti-al-Qaeda Sahwa movement.

Now, ISIS has tried to show that it has taken care not to repeat those mistakes in Syria. Indeed, ISIS has carefully crafted and implemented a political strategy that calls for the establishment of its own political institutions. Given its success, ISIS will be able to realize its wider, transnational project: the incorporation of territories in both Syria and Iraq. Looking into the future, the group’s ultimate vision is to establish a Caliphate across the Muslim world.

Currently, ISIS’s political control over Syrian territory has exceeded anything that ISI accomplished during the Iraq War. The group has maintained exclusive

control over some eastern localities in the Hasakah province and several northern border strongholds in the Aleppo and Idlib governorates, such as ash-Shaddadi in Hasakah, the towns of Azaz and Jarabulus in Aleppo, and until January 2014, ad-Dana in Idlib. The group has also governed multiple districts of the Aleppo urban center and metropolitan areas, such as Tariq al-Bab and Mashhad.

Until now, however, the predominant method of ISIS governance has consisted of joint rule through a coalition with other groups. As a result, ISIS lacks the ability to dislodge rivals from the majority of the localities where it has a presence. In the Aleppo governorate, for example, ISIS has shared power with other rebel factions in towns such as Manbij and al-Bab. Tensions have, in fact, emerged in both places over the ISIS presence: locals regularly accuse ISIS of unilaterally asserting sole control over services like baking and distributing bread. In the Idlib province, there has been an ISIS presence in several towns, including Ma'arat an-Na'aman and Saraqeb. In the Raqqa province, ISIS is arguably the most prominent faction of the provincial capital and one of the main groups in the important northern border town of Tel Abyad. There is also an ISIS presence in most of the remaining rebel strongholds in the Latakia province along the Mediterranean coast, as well as in the towns of the southeastern province of Deir az-Zor.

In the Damascus governorate, ISIS has a much smaller presence. It has controlled a single locality: Yabroud. Yet the group runs a training camp in Ghouta, and it regularly harasses Assad's forces in the Qalamoun Mountains, East Ghouta, and in regime-held districts in the city of Damascus. The Deraa governorate on the Jordanian border, by contrast, lacks a substantial ISIS presence and is dominated by Jabhat al-Nusra.

Building an ISIS State

ISIS IS DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHER REBEL FACTIONS IN SYRIA FOR ITS FINANCIAL resources. ISIS enjoys substantial monetary support from donors in the Persian Gulf, an extensive extortion network in Ninawa province of northwestern Iraq and control of some oil reserves in eastern Syria. Financial support for ISIS likely increased after the group directed a successful prison break from Baghdad in July 2013 that freed hundreds of fighters who had been imprisoned since the insurgency in Iraq of 2006-7.

When ISIS establishes itself in a new locality, particularly one already in rebel-held areas, it aims to consolidate its authority through outreach to locals in the

form of *da'wah* meetings. (The term *da'wah* literally means “call” or “invitation” in Arabic and is more widely used in Islamic discourse to refer to missionary outreach to non-Muslims.) For ISIS, *da'wah* meetings are opportunities to both build-up ties to Muslim locals in an attempt to promote their ideological worldview, and to strengthen their political power. In addition to convening meetings in public spaces, other forms of *da'wah* outreach include the distribution of pamphlets outlining ISIS's ideology and establishing *da'wah* offices. ISIS's *da'wah* outreach, of course, continues well-beyond the group's initial establishment of its presence in the locality. In a bid to ensure that their political rule lasts, ISIS's *da'wah* efforts have particularly targeted children. The group has also sought to recruit children during Muslim religious festivals by offering them gifts. The most egregious case of this took place in ad-Dana, where ISIS distributed Western-brand toys, including Spiderman and the Teletubbies, on Eid al-Fitr.

As part of its wider strategy to foster a new generation of Syrians in support of its ideological agenda, ISIS also runs a number of schools in areas where it has consolidated its presence. Unlike the Afghan Taliban, ISIS does not prohibit girls from attending school, but the group does enforce gender segregation and normally requires girls from the fifth year of primary school (that is between the ages of 10 and 11) to wear proper Islamic dress in order to attend. ISIS offers other services to complement their educational outreach, such as their school-bus services in the Aleppo town of al-Bab.

For both boys and girls, lessons in ISIS schools do not consist of anything beyond rote memorization of the Qur'an and Sunna (the latter referring to the Prophet's example as outlined in the *Hadith* and the *Sira*), religious exegesis, and the history of the *Rashidun* Caliphs of Islam. Some evidence indicates that ISIS is using textbooks in schools in Raqqa and Jarabulus whose contents and covers have been plagiarized directly from the Saudi Ministry of Education. The textbook on Tawhid, *Monotheism: a Central Doctrine in Islam*, is the most noteworthy example. Because of the limited nature of the ISIS curriculum, the group has little to offer in the way of conventional university-level education. In Raqqa, where a number of colleges exist, ISIS has used the facilities to host *da'wah* meetings for university students. In cities like Raqqa, ISIS is also providing education in mosques.

In addition to its educational initiatives, ISIS has also set up Islamic courts in areas where it has established a presence. ISIS considers Sharia to be the sole source of legislation, and the application of “Islamic justice” includes the use of *hudud* corporal punishments for an assortment of crimes such as theft and blasphemy. Sharia is also applied in family disputes. In addition to administering Islamic

courts, ISIS has also begun providing law enforcement; in some areas, it has set up police stations that have their own patrol cars. ISIS's Sharia-enforcement squads have targeted those accused of being "Alawite soldiers" and defenders of the Assad regime, as well as rival rebel leaders with a reputation for warlordism. Recently, ISIS "police" squads in the Aleppo governorate wiped out a gang known as the Ghuraba ash-Sham (Strangers of ash-Sham). While the Ghuraba group has a reputation for ideological "moderation" compared to al-Qaeda-inspired groups, it was renowned for its criminality not only in the eyes of ISIS but also a variety of other rebel factions.

ISIS in Syria has also applied the classical Sharia concept of *dhimma* (literally, "protection pact") in its conduct toward minority Christians. In this, Christians are subjected to treatment as second-class citizens, and their lives and property are threatened if the conditions of *dhimma* (e.g. payment of the *jizya* poll tax) are violated. In Tel Abyad, for example, ISIS desecrated the local Armenian Church at the end of October 2013 on the grounds that it violated the *dhimma* pact. Meanwhile, ISIS has taken advantage of the fact that most Christians have fled the sectarian violence in Raqqa to convert the churches into ISIS-run *da'wah* offices.

Another service ISIS offers in its outreach efforts is the distribution of bread. Whenever ISIS has moved to expel rival factions from a locality (such as Northern Storm from Azaz and Liwa Ahrar al-Jazira from the eastern border town of Yaroubiya, from which ISIS was subsequently expelled by the Kurdish YPG), ISIS administrators have subsequently lowered the price of bread to co-opt any locals who display sympathies for a rival faction. Of course, bread is not the only form of economic aid on offer, and in some Aleppo suburbs, ISIS has introduced a formal ration card system.

Since the days of 9/11, pundits have often debated what the goals of al-Qaeda and its affiliates are. Some describe al-Qaeda as a reaction to Western foreign policy in the Middle East and they characterize the jihadist movement's goals as limited to expelling foreign forces from the Muslim world. Others see al-Qaeda's goals as much more ambitious, and focused on the establishment of a new Islamic political order. ISIS's portrayal of its own goals in Syria-Iraq indicate that it seeks to establish an Islamic state that can become the core of a new Caliphate that will eventually strive to dominate the rest of the world. Despite their ongoing disagreement with Zawahiri, ISIS abides by Osama bin Laden's dictum that there are only three choices in Islam: conversion, subjugation, or death. ISIS's presentation of these goals in Syria contrasts the image it is trying to establish for itself in Iraq, where it lacks any substantial territorial control and the mechanisms of a proto-state. In Iraq, ISIS has tried to portray itself as the protector of the Sunni

population that is defending against provocations from the “Safavid” government.

ISIS’s globalist pretensions are evident in the video testimonies of its members from Syria. In one case, an ISIS fighter named Abu Omar al-Ansari, who participated in the ISIS-led capture of the Mannagh airbase in the Aleppo governorate in August 2013, makes it clear that it is necessary to establish an Islamic state over the entire world, and that the project is not limited to Syria. In another video testimony, an American fighter for ISIS, Abu Dajana al-Amriki, expressed similar sentiments: “We’ll bring the right of Islam to rule all of the entire world.” British ISIS fighters interviewed by the publication VICE have also expressed the same view. Indeed, ISIS’s discourse is much more open on the matter of building a more transnational caliphate than that of JN, and has clearly impacted the movement’s political strategy. In Aleppo, ISIS supporters have notably established a “Co-ordination [Network] of the State of the Caliphate” to organize demonstrations demanding the establishment of a pan-Islamic Caliphate. These rallies occur regularly after Friday prayers in areas of Aleppo that have been ISIS stronghold districts like Tariq al-Bab.

In the nearer term, ISIS has stated that its most immediate goal is to establish a single Islamic state spanning the territories of Iraq and Syria. In this, they’ve acted in accordance with Baghdadi’s pronouncements that JN and the ongoing jihad in Syria are mere “extensions” of ISIS’s campaign in Iraq. After successfully setting up the institutions of a proto-state in many areas, ISIS has become increasingly emboldened to express its real desires, that is, to become the staging ground for a larger transnational jihad.

Conclusion

ISIS IN SYRIA EMBODIES THREE IMPORTANT NEW TRENDS IN THE OVERALL development of the global jihad movement. First, the group’s existence in Syria marks an open challenge to the leadership of al-Qaeda Central, and to Zawahiri’s directives in particular. An unprecedented split in the jihadist movement in the Fertile Crescent has resulted. Though ISIS is striving to realize the same transnational political vision as al-Qaeda’s central leadership, the ISIS leader Baghdadi has been purposefully ambiguous about whether he or his group has any sort of allegiance to Zawahiri. Is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi seeking to establish himself as a Caliph by launching his own Islamic state-building project in Syria independent of Zawahiri’s directives? If so, then infighting with Jabhat al-Nusra, whose ultimate

amir is Zawahiri, will become a logical inevitability. Will ISIS and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi eventually displace al-Qaeda Central and Zawahiri as the main figures of reverence for jihadist fighters and their supporters worldwide? This, of course, will ultimately depend on ISIS and the success of its efforts in Syria.

Second, ISIS in Syria has enjoyed a level of success in the founding of an Islamic state that is unmatched by any al-Qaeda affiliate or group sharing al-Qaeda's ideology. Because of its efforts to design and implement a political strategy through social services, the media and educational outreach, it is likely that ISIS in Syria will become the model for current and future jihadist movements seeking to consolidate their control over territory in a lawless environment. Third, despite the disagreement among ISIS members as to whether ISIS is actually an al-Qaeda affiliate, it is ISIS in Syria that perhaps most openly expresses the global jihad movement's true long-term goals: namely, the establishment of a Caliphate that should encompass the entire world

Nevertheless, the future viability of ISIS's "state-building" and its political outreach is in serious doubt. The situation in Syria is simply far too fragmented to allow ISIS to unite the country as a whole under its rule. Indeed, for ISIS to achieve such a goal requires opening up too many fighting fronts, an approach that has already cost ISIS some significant territorial control within Syria. Such is evident in ISIS's open conflict with the Kurdish YPG militias following its expulsion from the northern border town of Ras al-Ayn in July 2013. While ISIS quickly countered by expelling pockets of YPG militias from multiple locations in the Raqqa and Aleppo governorates (such as the Jarabulus area in July 2013, and Tel Abyad in August), the group has suffered serious setbacks in the far northeast at the hands of the YPG. As a result, ISIS commanders have had to rely on reinforcements from the Ninawa province in Iraq. This diversion of manpower to the northeast has resulted in weaknesses along the Aleppo front against regime forces. Consequently, the Assad regime has managed to exploit rebel infighting in the Aleppo area and to retake some territory.

Moreover, despite ISIS's political outreach, the group faces a fundamental problem in dealing with other rebel factions and thus in consolidating political control. This is partly because ISIS already sees itself not merely as a "group" or "faction" like the other rebels but as a "state" that has the prerogative to rule over all others. Therefore, ISIS is inherently unwilling to share power, and often adopts a particularly brutal approach to dealing with other rebel factions. In fact, insurgent groups in Iraq, like Jamaat Ansar al-Islam, and also in Syria, like Ahrar ash-Sham, have all complained about ISIS's intractability. Tensions between ISIS and other rebel groups are likely to grow, as the serious infighting between ISIS

and other rebel groups in Aleppo, Idlib, Raqqa and Deir az-Zor governorates suggests. In January 2014, ISIS killed a leading figure in Ahrar ash-Sham, Abu Rayyan, who had attempted to mediate a dispute between Ahrar ash-Sham and ISIS over the latter's seizure of an Aleppo town called Maskanah.

In all likelihood, the murder will exacerbate existing tensions among the Islamist rebel factions. At present, two rebel coalitions—the Jaysh al-Mujahideen of Aleppo and the Syrian Revolutionaries Front in Aleppo, Idlib and Hama—are committed to evicting ISIS out of Syria. A third coalition that formed in November 2013, the Islamic Front, has been more ambiguous with respect to ISIS. While some of its fighters have battled with ISIS, the Islamic Front's leaders do not indicate a desire to destroy ISIS *per se*, but rather lack the ability to restrain their fighters in various localities.

ISIS has weakened itself by fighting along too many battlefronts; it has spread itself too thinly in various towns where it has sought to consolidate political control. On January 10, 2014, rival factions evicted ISIS from almost all Idlib localities except the town of Saraqeb. In Aleppo, Azaz remains the only substantial ISIS stronghold in the Raqqa province. Even there, however, ISIS must continually fight with FSA-banner militants who pledged allegiance to Jabhat al-Nusra in the city of Raqqa. In Deir az-Zor province, fighting broke out in the town of Mayadeen between Ahrar ash-Sham and ISIS, culminating in a suicide car bombing by the latter against the former's local headquarters in the town.

It is worth noting that the rebel groups that have emerged in opposition to ISIS differ from the ones which ultimately became the Iraq "Sahwa" movement in three important ways. First, Islamic Front fighters generally decline to have any kind of Western support in the fight with ISIS. Second, this fighting has been spontaneous and opportunistic, rather than a pre-planned initiative against ISIS. For example, the murder of Abu Rayyan provoked widespread demonstrations in northern Syrian towns against ISIS, thereby allowing members of the Syrian Revolutionaries Front and the Jaysh al-Mujahideen to exploit the opportunity to attack ISIS. The squabbling that ensued dragged Islamic Front fighters into the conflict. Third, there is a degree of localization to these clashes: Ahrar ash-Sham fighters still collaborate with ISIS on the Qamishli front against the YPG, and some Ahrar ash-Sham affiliates (e.g. in Tel Abyad) refuse to fight ISIS. Likewise, Jabhat al-Nusra tries to play a mediating role in Damascus and Idlib provinces and to protect ISIS fighters in Qalamoun.

So far, ISIS's loss of territory has been substantial, but the infighting among these rebel Islamist groups should not be construed as the beginning of the end of ISIS in Syria. The group can still retreat into the shadows in its all out-war against

the “Sahwa” among the rebels (to quote ISIS’s spokesman in a recent speech on the clashes), and it can pursue clandestine sabotage attacks in an attempt to undermine its rivals within the rebel ranks. Thus, the ISIS bombings and assassinations targeting Sahwa militiamen that we observe in Iraq with regularity today may well become the new norm in Syria.

Since January 2014, however, ISIS’s brutal conduct toward rival rebel groups has drawn strong condemnation from central figures in al-Qaeda. In one instance in Jarabulus, an ISIS suicide car bomb targeting other rebels killed 33 people. Abu Khalid al-Suri, the man appointed by Zawahiri to mediate between ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra, has since released a statement distancing bin Laden, Zawahiri, and even Abu Musab al-Zarqawi from ISIS’s recent “crimes.” He called on ISIS members to repent. It now appears the gap between al-Qaeda Central and ISIS will continue to grow.

Islamism, Post-Islamism, and Civil Islam

By Uğur Kömeçoğlu

CIVIL DEMOCRACY DISTINGUISHES PHILOSOPHICALLY AND MORALLY between political life and religious faith. Religion and politics are not mutually exclusive under such modern conditions. Indeed, it is possible to be devoutly faithful and to embrace civil democratic politics, just as it is possible to be faithful and to adhere to an anti-democratic political ideology. Such is the case with Islam and Islamism; Islam the religion is compatible with civil democratic modernity, but Islamism is an anti-democratic political ideology. Whereas Islam is defined in the Quran as the “path to God’s blessings and eternal salvation,” Islamism as a political project seeks to energize and organize Muslims to struggle against what it perceives as a Western-dominated world system.¹ More specifically, Islamist ideology seeks to oppose Islam against secular, pluralistic and liberal understandings of the emancipated self and the democratic public sphere.

As a religion, Islam is widely considered to be essentially different from other religions in that its concepts of belief and political rule have been fused in different historical contexts. Because of this, Islam and the Muslim ideal of the “Islamic State” are generally assumed to be resistant to pluralist democracy and religious modernity. This is certainly the view propagated by the Islamist movement, which has largely defined political action in revolutionary terms and as inherently opposed to the modern liberal order. In 1941, the Pakistani ideologue

Abul A'la Mawdudi wrote that “Islam is a revolutionary doctrine and a system that overturns [modern] governments.”² Through this politicization of religion, Islamism has appropriated the ideal of the Islamic State and claimed it as its own.

Islamists imagine Islam as a totalistic and divine system for organizing politics, culture, law and economic life. For them, the Quran offers a programmatic blueprint for an “Islamic State” that contains prescriptions for all aspects of everyday human life. Indeed, like other modern political ideologies, Islamism is totalitarian in nature. Consequently, Islamists concern themselves mainly with the duties and obligations that their political project requires. They reject democratic pluralism and civil society, and they see little point in reflecting on ethical responsibility or in determining and safeguarding the rights of individuals. In fact, as with other totalitarians, Islamists do not respect the religious beliefs or conscience of others.

Islamists are focused principally on power, and they seek to achieve their goals of transforming society through its acquisition. Indeed, to the Islamist, power is more important than spirituality, and he will often sacrifice the latter for the sake of political action. Islamists are usually not men of dialogue, but instead are fond of constructing insurmountable borders by denouncing others—pious Muslims and non-Muslims alike—as secularists, liberals, and unbelievers. Islamist rhetoric is thus by design harsh and severe and Islamist preaching and proselytization is repulsive rather than inviting. Islamists seek to blame non-Islamist Muslims for the problems that many modern Muslim societies face; they attach little importance to the spiritual development of individuals and service to civic society and they focus their efforts instead on political action and their struggle against the enemies that they’ve made for themselves. There are, of course, multiple manifestations of Islamism and one can talk about the variety of Islamisms, not a single type. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned characteristics can mostly be found in all variations of Islamism.

Contrary to what Islamists would argue, however, Islamism is only one of the interpretations of Islam by Muslims. In an alternative Islamic understanding that might be broadly described as “Civil Islam,” Islam isn’t corrupted or transformed into a political ideology, nor is it state-centric. Instead, the main focus of Civil Islam is on the spiritual development of individual Muslims and the promotion of the general conditions for human flourishing, including a robust civil society, human rights, religious freedom, peace, ethics, social justice, and the rule of law.

Unlike the Islamists, the Muslim practitioners of Civil Islam do not view the West or modern secularism as an adversary, nor do they engage in shallow ideological rhetoric. Instead, their primary concern is with living the core Islamic injunction of “amr bil ma’ruf and nahy anil munkar” (enjoining the good and

discouraging the evil) by performing good deeds and acting in a virtuous and pious way. Moreover, in this understanding of Islam, secular and pluralist democracy is the only satisfactory and feasible modern political arrangement for Muslims. Civil Islam is critical of anti-religious secularist ideologies, but it is not threatened by the Anglo-Saxon understanding of secularism and, in fact, it embraces this form of religious modernity. In this perspective, so long as core human rights and especially the freedom of religion and expression are ensured, there is no need for a revolutionary Islamic state. If anything, Civil Islam holds that the state should be secular, and that it should remain neutral in its policies toward all religions. Indeed, Civil Islam does not seek to determine the political order of things, but concerns itself instead with spirituality, the individual soul and with the improvement of social life.

According to Nilüfer Göle, Islamism as a revolutionary and authoritarian movement initially distinguished itself with an “anti-systemic stand and a rigid ideological corpus.”³ Some Islamists, however, have since matured in their approach. Today, a new generation of Muslims who were reared on Islamist ideology has begun to adapt their behavior to the norms and expectations of civil democracy. Consequently, in some contexts, the Islamist movement’s internal dynamics and ultimately its political objectives have also begun to change. In some, though not all countries, the Islamist obsession with revolution has declined, and a process of distancing and individuation from collective militancy has taken place. Many have called the resulting form of subdued Islamism “post-Islamism.”⁴

Post-Islamism can be understood as both a condition and as an ongoing political project. As Asef Bayat has described it, post-Islamism is a political and social condition in which “the appeal, energy, symbols and sources of legitimacy of Islamism get exhausted even among its once ardent supporters.”⁵ Put another way, post-Islamism results after political Islamism is attempted in practice and fails. As Islamists become aware of their movement’s anomalies and inadequacies as they try to rule, they become compelled, both by Islamism’s own internal contradictions and by societal pressure, to reassess and reinvent their political ideology through democratic competition with other intellectual and religious tendencies. As such, Bayat further defines post-Islamism as a political project, or “a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains.”⁶ In this way, post-Islamists are seeking to update Islamism and marry it with individual choice, freedom, democracy, and religious modernity. A notable example of this trend may be the current Ennahda leadership in Tunisia.⁷ Post-Islamism acknowledges secular exigencies and seeks freedom from rigidity in breaking down the monopoly of religious truth.

In short, whereas Islamism represents the fusion of religion with political ideology and instrumentalized conceptions of divine law, post-Islamism emphasizes religiosity, human rights, and ethical responsibility.⁸ Thus, as a political movement, post-Islamists can enter into fruitful discussions about other ideas, including religious modernity and liberalism. For these reasons, post-Islamism has the potential to serve as a bridge away from Islamism and towards Civil Islam. At the same time, however, post-Islamists remain vulnerable to the revolutionary ideology and authoritarianism that is inherent in more standard Islamism.

Islamism, post-Islamism, and Civil Islam are each considerably influential in today's Turkey. For decades, Turkish Islamists have endured state repression, forced closures of their political parties, and the meddling of the military-bureaucratic "deep state" in their everyday activities. Since the 1980s, however, a still ongoing process of reforming and opening up the country's political system has created new democratic opportunities for Islamists to participate in public life. Through this, Islamists have become more experienced at participating in the democratic process, and they have learned to compete successfully with other movements for favor with the Turkish electorate. They have influenced the formation of political parties, most notably the now-ruling and politically dominant Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP).

The AKP, however, is not simply an Islamist party. It is rather an amalgamation of different groups, not all of which may be accurately considered Islamist. As prospective officials running for election and as ruling politicians, Islamists within AKP have had to address and also represent the interests of a group much larger than their own ideological constituency. The combination of this democratic learning process with the existing political constraints imposed on Islamism by the established secular order has contributed to a strong tendency toward post-Islamism in Turkish religious and political life.

Civil Islam has also had significant influence in modern Turkey. Among other things, it has played an important role in moderating the Islamist tendencies within AKP. Indeed, the growing influence of Muslim groups in Turkish civil society has been a crucial factor in Turkish Islamism's transformation and the resulting trend toward post-Islamism. The Hizmet movement is the main proponent of Civil Islam in Turkey. As part of the coalition that makes up the governing AKP, the Hizmet movement's adherents have been instrumental in the development of a more tolerant political platform within the party that has competed with and constrained its Islamist tendencies, and that ultimately aims to jettison Islamist ideology entirely. Today, there is a growing competition within Turkey and inside the AKP in particular between Islamism and the practitioners of Civil Islam. If the

post-Islamist condition in Turkey is to deepen and to ultimately yield to a stable accommodation between Islam and democratic pluralism, it will be the result of Civil Islam's progress against Islamism.

Understanding the Hizmet Movement

THE HIZMET MOVEMENT ORIGINATED IN TURKEY AND IS NOW ACTIVE IN education, civil society, business and other activities in over one hundred and fifty countries worldwide. Fethullah Gülen (b.1941) is the social and the spiritual leader of the movement. The movement, which is not sponsored by a government or by a political party, is a transnational civic initiative rooted in the spiritual and humanistic tradition of Islam. One of the main goals of the Hizmet organization has been the elevation of a Muslim consciousness that is compatible with modern civil democracy and opposed to Islamism. For Gülen, Islamists are usually motivated by personal and political agendas rooted in the pursuit of worldly ambitions and power as well as by anger and hostility toward others:

Muslims cannot act out of ideological or political partisanship and then dress this partisanship in Islamic garb, or represent mere desires in the form of ideas; strangely enough, many groups that have put themselves forward under the banner of Islam export a distorted image of Islam and actually strengthen it.⁹

As a Muslim movement, Hizmet seeks to revitalize religious faith, and it also believes Islam has a role to play in enriching and sustaining civic and democratic political life. But in sharp contrast with Islamists, participants do not seek to become a political party, nor do they seek political power for themselves or for the purposes of spreading a particular political ideology. Instead, the movement aims to improve modern society and advance the human condition by strengthening spirituality and individual piety. Hizmet does this through encouraging individuals to embrace certain "life-strategies" which stress worldly asceticism (*zuhd*), self-negating altruism and service to others.

The pietistic character of Hizmet teachings and the movement's focus on individuals are important to grasp. Gülen's understanding of Islam and Islamic

scripture is esoteric rather than an exoteric. While Islamists promote a juridical and politicized interpretation of the Quran, Gülen's approach to the Quran aims to reveal its deepest teachings on spirituality and humanity's longing for the Divine Being. Indeed, the importance of Sharia law is mentioned only two times in the Holy Book (42:13 and 45:18) whereas the exigency of faith is manifest on numerous pages. Through rich and literary exegesis, Gülen helps to reveal Islam's inner spiritual dynamics and he stresses over and over again the "self-transcendent" experience that is possible to anyone in everyday life. Illuminating these aspects of Islam was Gülen's motive in composing his four-volume study, *Emerald Hills of Heart: Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*. Through a learned reconstruction of traditional Sufism and concepts, the study shows, among other things, the limits and fundamental poverty of Islamist thought and it helps to overcome the seeming incompatibility of Islam and civil democratic modernity.¹⁰

While Fethullah Gülen's multifaceted teachings are clearly rooted in classical Turkish Sufism, he is best understood as a modern reformer of these spiritual traditions who is involved in updating them for the modern world.¹¹ In the Sufi approach, those who are fettered by and obsessed with worldly ambitions cannot perceive or come close to *Nur*, that is, "the Light." In religious practice, therefore, everyday desires and attachments to the material world are drastically devalued, and complete closeness with the Divine Being is sought. Gülen's very style of preaching is unique and charismatic, and meant to underscore his mystical and personal asceticism. His sermons are full of symbolism, allegories and aphorisms; instead of canonical interpretation, the spiritual and internal dimensions of Islamic belief are accentuated. Gülen often weeps during his sermons, and he points to the example of the early Muslims (the *Sahaba*, the friends and helpers of the Prophet Mohammad) in an effort to re-enact their well-known sufferings and their struggles in the way of Islam. Such emotional performances serve as an expressive vehicle to establish connections between the earliest Muslims and contemporary ones.¹² But in contrast to the harsh rhetoric of Islamists, Gülen's preaching looks to the early Muslims' compassion and love; as the Prophet had said to his friends, "God Almighty is kind and likes kindness in all things" (Bukhari 6601). Through this, a type of saintly personality is suggested as a model for emulation, and believers are encouraged to take as their life-project the goal of triumphing over carnal desires, politicized ambitions and the fleeting pleasures that the world offers to the egotistical self. For Gülen, "when one sacrifices his enjoyment of material pleasures, he grows perfect as long as he frees himself from selfishness and self-seeking and lives only for others."¹³ Through this, the selfish ego and worldly political ambitions vanish in the all-pervasive ocean of Islamic spirituality.

While such self-transcendent practices are emphasized, Gülen does not call for renouncing or withdrawing from modern society. The world should be abandoned only in one's own soul, that is, internally, but not externally. In this, Hizmet participants depart from the ways of the dervishes of the traditional Sufi brotherhoods. The dervish's focus is exclusively on the "other-world" and is thus radically anti-social. By contrast, the personal asceticism taught by Gülen stresses the importance of involving one's self in the modern world; far from being an obstacle to self-transcendence, Gülen's followers regard deepening engagement in modern civic life for the benefit of others as an opportunity to become closer to God.

On the basis of this, the Hizmet movement rejects the politicized approach of Muslim Brotherhood ideologues like Said Qutb who call on believers to renounce the *jahalliya* (ignorance) of the modern world and to struggle against the "un-Islam" of civil democracy. Indeed, as Paul Heck has argued, in contrast to the puritanism of Wahhabism, the anti-modern pietism of Tablighism, and the harsh and enmity-filled ideology of contemporary jihadism, reformed Sufism as practiced by the Hizmet movement adopts a positive view of the modern world. In this Islamic perspective, "the internal workings of the universe (science, history, politics, philosophy, art and culture) are not something Muslims should fear or try to stuff into an Islamized box but rather engage positively in view of the spiritual insight of Islam."¹⁴ As such, the Hizmet movement actively concerns itself with shaping and improving society in the image of rationalized religious ideals, including by altruistic service to others.

Living and engaging in the world not for selfish interests but for the benefit of others forms the basis of the Hizmet movement's whole social action. For Hizmet participants, self-negating service to others can be regarded as a form of modern religious practice. This service to others is a function of individual choice; unlike in some traditional Sufi orders where prayer is imposed on individuals by the larger community, service to others is not externally-imposed or strictly systematized in Hizmet practice. Instead, individuals are encouraged to choose the intensity and frequency of their practice. For these reasons, participants can choose to apply the rationalized religious maxim of "living only for the others" in their roles as committed and pious teachers, as scientists, doctors, engineers, businessmen, tradesmen and so on. Because of this core teaching, it is not surprising that the movement has expanded rapidly—and not only in Muslim countries, but also in non-Muslim ones.

Gülen's rationalization of religious ideals and principles that are in tune with modern secular practices forms the basis for his Islamic approach to civil society. He teaches the importance of living Islam in this world: "Our right foot is fixed

upon the center of the truth (*haqiqa*) while our left foot is rotating in and around the seventy-two nations.”¹⁵ As such, a Muslim’s identity and the call to Islam is not an obstacle to live in peace with the people of other faiths and secularist actors. Instead, Islam is a call to critical engagement and communication with others and to working together for shared goals like the betterment of human society. According to this secularized understanding of Islam, the purpose of a Muslim’s involvements in “the world is to tell the other persons diamond-like truths that they try to represent.”¹⁶ It is on this basis that the Hizmet movement has competed directly with the revolutionary and authoritarian ideas of Islamists. The religious attitude of Civil Islam rejects the politicized doctrine and the “us vs. them” approach of Islamists, and instead stresses the importance of living Islam through sincerity, honesty, personal piety, and through selfless service to others through modern civil society.

Civil Islam and Democratic Modernity

THROUGHOUT GÜLEN’S TEACHING, ONE CAN SEE AN ABIDING CONCERN WITH fostering a communitarian ethos that aims to improve modern society through the revitalization of Islamic spiritualism, individual religious piety and service to others. Of course, in some secularist contexts—such as in the post-Soviet countries of the larger Turkic world—this could be seen as a challenge to the normative framework and to purely areligious forms of sociability. This may be one reason why critics have mistakenly suspected the Hizmet members as crypto-Islamists who harbor a hidden agenda. But the movement’s approach to transforming interpersonal relations through Civil Islam and achieving peaceful socio-cultural change is very different from the Islamist approach, both in terms of its relation to the public sphere and also because it is not at odds with modern secularism and civil democracy.

Gülen’s ideas are effective in practice because they have rationalized religious ideals and shown their core compatibility with secular interests. This is a projection of worldly mysticism onto his understanding of secularism. In fact, he seeks to eradicate the elements which give rise to actual and potential conflict between Islamic religious interests and the modern world. The absence of any deep antagonism between “the divine” and “the worldly” in Gülen’s theology facilitates

this idealistic effort. As a practical matter, Gülen takes seriously the general failure of many Muslims to succeed at modernizing their societies in the realms of science, technology and education. For these reasons, he seeks to prove that science and Islam are not at odds. In his view, the more Muslims witnessed the perfect order of nature by the use of modern sciences, the greater they understand God. Through this, the modern idea of progress through the advance of science, technology and education is shown to be perfectly compatible with an esoteric and spiritual understanding of Islam. As early as 1997, Gülen explained his understanding of modern secularism, stating firmly that it does not represent a non-Muslim way of life.¹⁷ The modern separation between the sacred and profane is accepted in reformed Sufism. For him, “secularism cannot be rejected...[it] consists of worldly affairs which are a part of human life... Secularism includes both the sacred and profane wherein they are separated.”¹⁸

According to Gülen, such an understanding of secularism based on the dichotomy between the sacred and profane actually existed before the modern era in the times of the Seljuks and Ottomans. Indeed, the numerous volumes of Ottoman Secular Law (*Osmanlı Kanunnameleri*) demonstrate the Sublime Porte’s secular approach to solving worldly problems: the body of law relied on secular reasoning independent from Sharia. Moreover, Gülen has argued that without secularism, the Ottomans’ multi-ethnic and multi-religious administration of a population of two hundred fifty million people on three continents could never have succeeded.

While Gülen embraces modern secularism, he is opposed to radical secularism, including the imposition of the idea that humanity can be religion-free; to the general trend toward the de-sacralization of human nature; and to anti-democratic oppressive ideologies which are rooted in secularism, such as communism. As he writes:

Secularization is an inevitable characteristic of human nature. But man is not only a body. He has a soul, too. He has a metaphysical dimension besides the physical one. He has both sacred and profane aspects. Therefore a perfect democracy can welcome both the physical and metaphysical needs of its subjects.¹⁹

In a newspaper interview on the same subject, Gülen went further, arguing that modern democracy actually requires religion to nourish and sustain it:

The needs of a person are not solely made up of worldly needs. People should have the benefits of freedom of thought and free-

dom of economic action, but they also have another side which is open to eternity... If democracy is to be a full-fledged democracy, it needs to include things that help to fulfill such demands and it needs to give support to them. That means, democracy requires a metaphysical dimension. It also needs a side that is open to our accounts for the other world, to our unfulfilled accounts. Why not have such a democracy?²⁰

Gülen's understanding of secularism is connected to his efforts to transcend the conflict promoted by Islamists between Islam and modern pluralism. The Hizmet movement does not make the stark distinctions that Islamists make between Islam and un-Islam. Instead of the binary opposition promoted by "dar-al Harb" (place of war) and "dar-al Islam" (place of Islam), Gülen describes the modern world as "dar-al Hizmet," or as a "place of service." For this reason, Klas Grinell defines Gülen as a "border transgressor."²¹ Gülen imagines the world through this secular dimension, and his idea of "service to humanity" is the core of his Civil Islam approach. Moreover, he does not see the *Ummah* as a political entity, that is, as the "Muslim Nation," but as a socio-cultural space that is internally diverse and not opposed to the non-Muslim world. For these reasons, the movement has spearheaded inter-faith initiatives and other forms of outreach aimed at curtailing the clash between Islam and the West promoted by Islamist movements and others. As John O. Voll has observed, "in the clashing visions of globalizations, F. Gülen is a force in the development of the Islamic discourse of globalized multicultural pluralism. As the impact of the educational activities of those influenced by him attests, his vision bridges modern and postmodern, global and local, and has a significant influence in the contemporary debates that shape the visions of the future of Muslims and non-Muslims alike."²²

Against the Islamist conceit of the Islamic State, Gülen stresses the fact that "Islam does not propose a certain unchangeable form of government or attempt to shape it."²³ In fact, the only fundamental principles that Islam prescribes for political life are the "social contract and [the] election of a group of people to debate common issues."²⁴ Thus, rather than opposing civil democratic modernity, Islam requires many of its core tenets:

On the issue of Islam and democracy, one should remember that the former is a divine and heavenly religion, while the latter is a form of government developed by human beings. The main purposes of religion are faith, servitude to God, knowledge of

God (*ma'rifah*), and good deeds (*ihsan*). The Qur'an, in its hundreds of verses, invites people to the faith and worship of the True (*al-Haqq*).²⁵

In this approach, the separation of the religious and political domains that civil democratic modernity rests upon is obvious; human beings are existentially free not only to make choices about their personal lives but also to make choices with regard to their political actions.²⁶

... in Islam it is not possible to limit the concept of governance and politics into a single paradigm...²⁷ If secularism is understood as the state not being founded on religion, hence it does not interfere with religion or religious life; as the faithful living his religion does not disturb others; and furthermore if the state will accomplish this task in a serious neutrality, then there is no problem [for Muslims].²⁸

While Islamists remain focused on their political and other worldly agendas, Gülen keeps reiterating that a Muslim's life revolves around worship. He is thus deeply critical of Islamism's literalist approaches to the Quran and politicized Islam and focuses instead on what is most important to modern Muslims, that is, the renewal of their faith:

If a state... gives the opportunity to its citizens to practice their religion and supports them in their thinking, learning, and practice, this system is not considered to be against the teaching of the Quran. In the presence of such a state there is no need to seek an alternative state.²⁹

Through this, Gülen strongly opposes Islamism's penchant for seeing the Quran as the foundation for a political project:

The Quran is an explanation of the reflections of the divine names on earth and in the heavens... It is an inexhaustible source of wisdom. Such a book should not be reduced to the level of political discourse, nor should it be considered a book about political theories or forms of state. To consider the Quran as an instrument of political discourse is a great disrespect for the Holy Book and is

an obstacle that prevents people from benefiting from this deep source of divine grace.³⁰

On the basis of this, the Hizmet movement seeks to promote a new Islamic attitude, one that embraces secularism and that stresses tolerance and respect for all people regardless of their faith and worldview. Such an attitude is not only necessary for civil democratic modernity, but it is also required in Civil Islam.

Civil Islam and Turkey's Future

OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES, THE HIZMET MOVEMENT HAS HAD A MAJOR influence on the ongoing transformation of Turkish political and religious life. The spread of Civil Islam has helped not only to usher in the post-Kemalist era, but it has also stimulated changes inside Turkish Islamism. Like the Muslim Brotherhood in Arab societies, the Turkish Islamist movement in the 1970s was hostile toward modernity, and it conflated religious belief with the need to struggle against the secular order and Western influences. The spread of Islamist ideology, therefore, has only sharpened the distinction between religious faith and loyalty to the modern Turkish state and its founding secularist ideology. But Civil Islam offers Muslims an alternative model, one that shows that it is possible to live as a pious Muslim while embracing secular democratic pluralism. Through this, religious faith and citizenship have become increasingly reconciled for sizeable segments of the Turkish electorate. The spread of Civil Islam has opened new possibilities for engagement with civil democratic institutions, just as it has counteracted Islamist efforts to politicize religion and fostered a new post-Islamist orientation.

Civil Islam has also been a major factor behind the political rise of the AKP. Of course, these developments cannot be understood in isolation from the larger sociological changes that have taken place across the country, most notably, the new economic and political vitality of Anatolia, where the AKP's core political base lies. In many ways, the new Anatolian middle class embodies the Hizmet teachings: they are religiously conservative, but democratically and civically engaged professionals and business people. Civil Islam is deeply influential in Anatolia through Hizmet-affiliated educational and media institutions. In fact, many Anatolian business people as well as AKP politicians have sent their children

to Hizmet schools. Moreover, the Hizmet-run daily newspaper *Zaman* has the largest circulation by far in Anatolian towns, and the majority of the AKP's supporters are regular readers.³¹ The entrepreneurial and pro-business outlook of this population has been fostered by civil associations, including the Hizmet-affiliated organization known as TUSKON (Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists), which includes 7 business federations in 7 regions of Turkey, with a total of 176 business associations. As a whole, this has weakened the appeal of radical Islamism on the wider socially conservative masses of Anatolia, who have become increasingly open to international engagements.

For these reasons, Hizmet had considerable influence in shaping the AKP's agenda during its first two terms as the ruling party, from 2002–2011. As the political scientist Ahmet Kuru and others have observed, the interactions between the Islamist elements within the AKP and the Hizmet movement played an important role in the formation of the party's early perspectives on secularism, business and civil society.³² Civil Islam in particular helped to weaken Islamism's adversarial, anti-Western and authoritarian dimensions as it provided Muslims with a new way to connect to civic democratic institutions. Today, participants of the Hizmet movement are actively seeking to influence the AKP by stressing the importance of cooperation with non-Muslims and secularist Muslims, and also democracy and human rights.³³ Moreover, the movement has also been a clear advocate for the EU membership process, and at home it has been an advocate for egalitarian democracy and free-market reforms.

Civil Islam as it has evolved in Turkey has the potential to influence other Muslim societies. Major developments in Turkey have already been followed by considerable interest by the media, thinkers and activists in many Muslim societies, and for its part, the Hizmet movement has increased its activities throughout the Muslim world. In 2006, the Hizmet movement responded to criticism that it was not paying sufficient attention to the Muslim world in comparison with its focus on dialogue with non-Muslims by launching a new initiative of the Abant Platform, which is a part of Journalists and Writers Foundation in Istanbul. The platform invited Arab, Jewish and Turkish intellectuals from Middle Eastern countries to discuss the future of the region. Later in February 2007, the platform co-organized a meeting in Egypt with the prominent Al-Ahram Institute to discuss Turkish and Egyptian experiences with democracy, modernization and secularism. A more recent 2011 meeting directly suggested that Turkish Civil Islam could become an inspirational model for the Arab countries to emulate.³⁴ Moreover, the Hizmet movement, being aware of the need to situate itself in the Middle East and demonstrate the relevance of Civil Islam to Arab countries,

has published an Arabic-language magazine, *Hira*, since 2005.³⁵ *Hira* has been bringing together Turkey and the Arab world for eight years. 37,000 copies of the journal are distributed to intellectuals in the Arab world via subscriptions. The magazine and its social platform have organized more than 27 symposia and conferences in a number of countries (including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, Sudan and Turkey) that have attracted more than 2,500 Arab scholars and intellectuals. *Hira*'s media and social activities as well as educational initiatives draw attention to Civil Islam in Turkey, and the free exchange of ideas about Civil Islam has already helped establish some new educational initiatives in Arab societies.³⁶

Taken together, the spread of Civil Islam teachings has helped to change the cognitive and normative political frameworks of observant Muslims in Turkey and beyond. It has shown that Islam and civil democratic modernity can go hand in hand. This has helped to ameliorate the societal tensions generated by the ideas propagated by Islamists, creating a new post-Islamist tendency. At the same time, it has created new tensions. After all, the Hizmet movement's understanding of Islam is stateless and cosmopolitan, and thus different from the perspectives of post-Islamists who still seek to use the state and democratic politics to promote Islamist practices against secular democratic ones. As Gülen puts it, Islam does not need a state to survive; in the modern age, civil society can independently maintain Islam even where Muslims are not the majority.³⁷

The current struggle between Civil Islam and Islamists within the AKP will be the defining one for Turkey's future. Indeed, now that the AKP has entered its third term in power, many have begun to question—and with good reason—whether the party is reverting back to Islamism. Some AKP politicians have engaged in heavy-handed rhetoric that resonates with modern Islamism. Prime Minister Erdogan's renunciation of the Gezi Park protestors in Istanbul in the Summer of 2013 is seen by many as a sign that he and others in the AKP are becoming intolerant of secularist voices. Not everyone in the AKP supports this, however. Indeed, during the Gezi Park incidents, leading AKP political figures, including the popular President Abdullah Gül and the Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç, openly disagreed with Erdogan. Since then, Erdogan's criticisms of co-ed student housing at universities and his insistence on closing down prep schools and tutorial centers (opened to prepare students for achievement tests and university entrance exams) which belong to the private sector have raised new fears of the state being used to promote an Islamist agenda.

Erdogan's Islamist bluster can damage his party. It has already deepened the fissures inside the political coalition that makes up the AKP. The proponents of

Civil Islam within the AKP have largely resisted Erdogan's growing authoritarianism, and they have sided with the country's honest democrats. The Civil Islam of Hizmet once more verifies the movement's anti-Islamist stance. The politicization of Islam is a dangerous path, one that could lead to totalitarian control of the state by giving ambitious men the religious licence they seek to undermine the civil society and the separation of government powers that constrains them. If Turkey is to pull back from its current drift toward Islamist autocracy, then its citizens will need to resist the instrumentalization of religion for worldly power and demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with civil democratic modernity.

NOTES

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6. Asef Bayat, *Islam and Democracy: What is the Real Question*, ISIM Papers, N8 (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p. 18.
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11. Fethullah Gülen, *Görüntülü Vaaz Seti I, 20 VCD* [Audio-Visual Sermons I, 20 VCDs] (Nil Yayınları Sesli Görüntülü Eserler, 2001).
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16. Ibid.
17. Fethullah Gülen's comments in Samanyolu Television channel (*STV - Haber Kritik*), March 29, 1997.
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21. See Klas Grinell, "Border Thinking: Fethullah Gülen and the East-West Divide," in Esposito, John and Yilmaz, Ihsan, *Islam and Peacebuilding: Gülen Movement Initiatives* (Clifton, NJ: Blue Dome Press, 2010).
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24. Ibid, p. 17.
25. Fethullah Gülen, "An Interview with Fethullah Gülen," *The Muslim World (Special Issue on Islam in Contemporary Turkey: The Contribution of Fethullah Gülen)* Vol. 95, No. 3 (2005), p. 451-452.
26. Ibid, p. 453.
27. Ibid, p. 454.
28. Mim Kemal Öke and Osman Özsoy's interview with Fethullah Gülen, in Armağan, Mustafa and Ünal Ali, *Medya Aynasından Fethullah Gülen, Kozadan Kelebeğe* (Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), p. 108.
29. Fethullah Gülen, "An Interview with Fethullah Gülen," *The Muslim World (Special Issue on Islam in Contemporary Turkey: The Contribution of Fethullah Gülen)* Vol. 95, No. 3 (2005), p. 451.
30. Ibid, p. 456.
31. Marie-Elisabeth Maigre-Branco, "The Influence of the Gülen Movement in the Emergence of a Turkish Cultural Third Way," in Greg Barton et al. *Muslim World in Transition: Creative Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 102.
32. Ahmet Kuru, "Globalization and Diversification of Islamic movements: Three Turkish Cases," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.120 No. 2 (2005), pp. 253-274
33. The movement's dialogue with non-Muslim religious leaders, for example with Ecumenical

- Patriarch Bartholomew, and the related support for the re-opening of the Greek Orthodox *Halki* Seminary is significant. All these acts mean that Hizmet defended the rights of religious minorities in Turkey and supported the idea of inter-faith dialogue.
34. Etga Ugur, "Organizing Civil Society: The Gülen Movement's Abant Platform," in Greg Barton et al. *Muslim World in Transition: Creative Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), p .60-61.
 35. For a detailed analysis of Hira magazine see Paul L. Heck, "Turkish in the Language of the Qur'an: Hira," in Greg Barton et al. *Muslim World in Transition: Creative Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013).
 36. In part because of the *Hira* platform's efforts, the Selahaddin College was launched in Egypt after the magazine's first publication. Moreover, an Arab businessman, inspired by *Hira*, donated a vast amount of land for the construction of a school in Aden, Yemen. A substantial amount of investment has also been made to build a huge college campus and constructive steps have been taken to open five schools through donations from Moroccan philanthropists.
 37. See Ihsan Yilmaz, "Beyond Post-Islamism: The Transformation of Turkish Islamism to Non-Islamism" in Greg Barton et al. *Muslim World in Transition: Creative Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013).

Islamist Responses to the “End of Islamism”

By Samuel Tadros

NO SOONER HAD EGYPT’S MILITARY MOVED TO DEPOSE PRESIDENT Morsi in July 2013 than an onslaught of articles came predicting the impending demise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and, indeed, of Islamism as whole. Such prophecies of the looming “end of Islamism” are hardly new. Long before the Arab Spring, various scholars and journalists had contended that Islamism had failed, or was on its way to failure, and that we were moving into a new, “post-Islamist” world. While events over the past three years have cast serious doubts on those theories, Egypt’s military coup and the accompanying mass protest against the Muslim Brotherhood’s rule has simultaneously provided them ample ammunition.

While scholars debate what the events in Egypt and elsewhere mean for Islamism’s future trajectory, an important voice has been missing from the discussion—that of the Islamists themselves.

Given the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s important contribution to the ideological evolution and organizational spread of Islamism, it is no surprise that Islamists from Indonesia to Morocco have followed developments in Egypt with great interest. They have debated among themselves and also sought to respond directly to their critics and interlocutors in the West about what the fall of the Brotherhood from power means for their overall movement and ideology.

Given their ties to the Egyptian mother organization, Brotherhood sister organizations have been at the forefront of those attempting to interpret and react to developments in Egypt.

While they offered moral support for their Egyptian brethren and criticized the Egyptian military, these organizations have reacted largely in accordance with their local conditions. Such is evident in the case of the Jordanian Brotherhood; fearful that they would meet the same fate as the Egyptian Brotherhood, they were quick to dismiss the possibility that Amman would ban and repress the organization, and insisted that “each organization has its own circumstances.” Moreover, they have emphatically pointed out that Jordan’s monarchy has never dealt with their organization in such a manner, all the while praising the King’s outreach to all political groups, Islamists and non-Islamists alike.¹ In Syria, the Brotherhood faces a dual threat from al-Qaeda and the Assad regime. In response, it has echoed the language of its Egyptian counterpart in calling for constitutional legitimacy, demanding that the government commit to the ballot box and in criticizing the military coup.² Historical fears and experiences of military coups have shaped Islamist reactions in Tunisia and Turkey,³ while Morocco’s two main Islamist groups, the Justice and Development Party and the Justice and Benevolence Organization, have each used the Egyptian case to reinforce their own positions and criticize the other group’s approach.⁴

The Brotherhood’s affiliate groups were not the only Islamists to react to Morsi’s ouster, however. Indeed, many groups from across the whole spectrum of the Islamist universe have pointed out that the disaster that befell the Brotherhood in Egypt was the result of the Brotherhood’s “political” approach. The jihadists have been especially critical, arguing that the Islamist dream can only ever be achieved through armed struggle. As al-Qaeda stated: “Anyone who calls to resist falsehood with peacefulness is swimming in a sea of illusions, and perhaps in a sea of blood, in vain.” Moreover, the jihadists added that “falsehood will not be removed and will not go away except with force and with power.”⁵ Similar calls to arms were echoed by al-Shabab in Somalia⁶ and by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).⁷ In a powerful statement, ISIS quickly declared:

The Islamic State had known that Right cannot be restored except by force, so it chose the ammunition boxes and not the ballot boxes and that the lifting of injustice and change cannot happen except by the sword, so it insisted on negotiating in the trenches and not in hotels, and abandoned the lights of conferences.⁸

ISIS further indicted the Brotherhood as “a secular party with an Islamic garb,” saying that the Brothers “are more evil and cunning than the secularists.”⁹ Egyptian jihadists echoed the criticism, accusing the Brotherhood of not striving to establish an Islamic State.¹⁰

The prominent jihadist Shaykh Abu Mohamed Al Maqdisi has rejected much of the jihadist criticism and cursing of the Brotherhood from his prison cell. In a long and important letter to fellow jihadists,¹¹ Maqdisi seemed to revise longstanding jihadist arguments against Islamist movements that accept the democratic process. He wrote that it was unfair to equate the Brotherhood with secularists, and he rejected criticism of the Brotherhood while they face a crackdown. He declared: “Let the whole world know we do not call the Brotherhood apostates. They are Muslims even though we disagree on many issues.”

The Islamist critique of the Brotherhood was not, however, limited to those who disagree with its acceptance of the ballot box as a means of transforming society. In fact, many Islamists who agree with the Brotherhood’s general worldview have highlighted its numerous mistakes while it held power. Even before the coup, Zuheir Salem, one of the Syrian Brotherhood’s top leaders, criticized the Egyptian mother organization for its decision to field a presidential candidate and thus inherit “a sinking ship.”¹² Abdel Fattah Mourou offered a lengthy critical assessment of the Brotherhood and Islamists in general in which he highlighted their lack of experience in politics as well as actual governance, their preference for loyal instead of qualified members, their lack of specific plans to address modern problems, their inclination towards majoritarian rule instead of consensus, and most importantly, their obsession with change through the political process when ruling should not be its sole goal of the Islamist project.¹³

Other prominent Islamists have echoed similar criticisms, highlighting the Brotherhood’s grab for power, their pursuit of “societal hegemony,”¹⁴ and their misguided attitude towards the state as if it was a “prize.”¹⁵ Others blamed the Brotherhood’s complete lack of knowledge of how the state operates¹⁶ and, more profoundly, what one described as “a terrible absence of intellectual and cultural *ijtihad* and a fatal laziness¹⁷ in providing new perspectives of the state of the *da’wah*, the State, and society, until the January revolution surprised everyone.”¹⁸ Many condemned the Brotherhood’s failure to distinguish their rigid ideological *da’wah* from politics,¹⁹ a failure that in practice meant they appointed loyal but unqualified members to government positions.²⁰ Others argued that the Brotherhood’s conservative and staid approach was unsuitable for a revolutionary moment that required radical change.²¹

Islamists analyzing events in Egypt were not all critical of the Brotherhood,

however. Many blamed a conspiracy²² against Islamism for the failure of the Brotherhood's experiment in power.²³ Zuheir Salem suggested that "outside powers want to see the Muslim Brotherhood fail. They don't want to see something like Turkey."²⁴ Moreover, it was argued that the Brotherhood should have recognized that it could not transform society "in a domestic, regional and international environment that is at least not welcoming, if not hostile to it."²⁵ Abdel Fattah Mourou argued that "talk of the assessment of the experience of the rule of Islamists is highly excessive, because the one posing that question gives us the impression that Islamists are ruling, or that they are about to rule, and this is not true. The Islamists today are not ruling."²⁶ Khaled Mostafa offered a similar defense.²⁷ Meanwhile, Abdel Rahman Farhana argued that "Islamists did not have ample time in power to be judged,"²⁸ whereas others thought the people's expectations of the Brotherhood when they came to power were too unrealistic, especially given the difficulties of ruling post-revolutionary Egypt.²⁹

Lastly, many Islamists began to debate what the impact of the Brotherhood's fall would be on the future of the overall Islamist project. Traditionalists sought to assuage Islamist fears by arguing that victory was inevitable: the history of Islam had proven that believers, no matter the obstacles, prevailed in the end.³⁰ Increasing internal schisms and an overall return to da'wah work instead of politics were both presented as possible outcomes, as were an escalation and continued confrontation with Islamism's adversaries, maintenance of the status quo, and a thorough-going reexamination of the Brotherhood's political approach.³¹ Mohamed Kamal suggested a "migration to society by focusing on the problems of society without looking for close or distant political gain."³² Anas Hassan made an entirely different argument that had interesting implications for Islamism's future. He claimed that in the past, "Islamists have been forced to acknowledge the reality of geographical divisions and the nation state while rejecting them in theory," but that events in Egypt and Syria would drive Islamists to rethink the nation state for the first time.³³

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ARE ISLAMISTS CONCERNED THAT EVENTS IN EGYPT MAY INDICATE AN END TO the Islamist resurgence? Not really—many, in fact, rightfully ridicule the rumors of Islamism's demise as a "childish reaction,"³⁴ and as wishful thinking on the part of Islamism's opponents. For years, some Islamists have been deeply aware of such predictions by Western analysts and journalists—and they have sought to refute them. In fact, two of the articles translated below offer their answer to such

claims. Ghannouchi's piece is obviously a rebuttal to Olivier Roy's ideas about the failure of Islamism.

In addition to the translated articles, other Islamists have also weighed in, offering their counter arguments to such predictions. El Sayed Haydar Reda argued that the Brotherhood's failure in Egypt was theirs alone (or more narrowly Morsi's), and therefore that it will not affect the future of the overall Islamist movement.³⁵ Yasser El Zaarta argued that Islamism did not begin with Mohamed Morsi, and it will not evaporate due to his failures.³⁶ Abdel Rahman Farhana claimed that it was a military coup, not the will of the people, which caused the Brotherhood's experiment to fail.³⁷ Yasser El Zaarta stated that no state-level decision could possibly eradicate Islamism.³⁸ Granted, Egypt's current repression of Islamist political activity is significantly harsher than in the past. Just as Bozekry Mohtady has claimed, however, it will not succeed simply because repression alone cannot end Islamism.³⁹ Yasser El Zaarta argued persuasively that the very success of Islamists after the Arab Spring followed years of state repression.⁴⁰ Moreover, El Zaarta and Farhana maintained that repression is much more difficult in a globalized world after the revolution in information technology:⁴¹ people will wake up.⁴² Roushdy Bouibry added that repression will also make people more sympathetic to Islamists.⁴³ Farhana wrote that no government or policy could possibly eradicate Islamism in the foreseeable future because the sources of its success persist into the present day: Islamists are both stronger organizationally and closer to the people than any of their ideological adversaries in the Middle East.⁴⁴ Zaarta further added that Islamists will not be crushed while watching idly; they will soon regroup and lead the counter attack.⁴⁵ Farhana claimed that Islamists proved better than others, as their reign did not witness human rights violations, the silencing of the press or massive financial corruption. Furthermore, they have remained peaceful even in the face of repression.⁴⁶ Al Sayed Haydar Reda wrote that Islamism in the twentieth century still has a comprehensive program that covers all walks of life, just as it did during the time of the Rashidun Caliphate.⁴⁷

Islamists have made two key arguments that stand out for their importance. First, they claim that Islamism is deeply rooted in Muslim countries,⁴⁸ that it "is not a foreign plant in the [Muslim] nation's body"⁴⁹ and that, in fact, the Islamist "project stems from the people's identity."⁵⁰ This argument deserves serious consideration. Indeed, Islamism by its very nature does not claim to be a political ideology within the world of Islam, but rather that it represents *the* political manifestation of Islam. Of course, such claims should not be accepted outright given the modern nature of the ideology, the contribution of modern European ideologies to its foundation, as well as Islamism's clear break with traditional Islamic political

thought. However, these claims can't be dismissed offhand. Islamists' second significant argument is that the political alternatives to their agenda in the Muslim world have been completely discredited.⁵¹ Non-Islamists have not been able to defeat Islamists in a democratic competition and have relied instead on the military to contain and suppress the Islamist project, proving their lack of commitment to the very principles they proclaim and more importantly their continuous weakness.⁵² Simply put, Islamism's competitors have not articulated a viable political alternative to Islamism. Thus Islamism continues to be the only available ideology that claims to offer a coherent answer to the crisis of modernity that has come to overwhelm the Arab and Muslim world with the discovery of European technological, material and military superiority.

The three articles translated below on Islamism's future were written by leading Islamist thinkers in Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. They provide an important window into the current thinking among Islamists, their interpretation of events in Egypt, and perhaps most importantly, how they view themselves and their professed ideology. Rachid al-Ghannouchi and Mohsen Saleh present forceful rebuttals to those proclaiming the impending demise of Islamism. Belal el-Taleedy, meanwhile, agrees that Islamism will not fail, and then devotes his article to analyzing the different paths that Brotherhood organizations in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia have taken, and to charting the movement's future course.

Rachid al-Ghannouchi's article is particularly interesting because this is not the first time he has attempted to offer a counter-argument to predictions about the end of Islamism. In fact, his article is clearly modeled on an earlier one that he wrote in 2009 both in structure, style and in many of its fundamental arguments. Nevertheless there are key differences, or more accurately omissions, from the previous article that deserve to be discussed.

In a March 19, 2009 article entitled "Did Political Islam Fail or its Opponents?"⁵³ Ghannouchi takes for granted the notion that the West hates Islam and clearly regards the existence of a Western conspiracy against Islam and the Islamist project as self-evident. He states that the Western "machine and its funding, which was directed towards dismantling the buried Soviet Union, was transferred to undermine Islam at the beginning of the nineties." Moreover, he views Western claims about the demise of Islamism, something which he calls "counter-preaching," as potentially beneficial to the Islamist cause. He argues that these claims "may decrease the degree of maliciousness against [Islamists] in Western decision-making circles," by encouraging the West to grow "confident that evil has eaten each other and collapsed from the inside, so there is no need to mobilize armies and spend money, after endless coffers have been drained in pursuit of Islamic terrorism."

Ghannouchi further adds that the disasters that have befallen the Islamist project in recent years are “due to the Western bet on achieving its interests in the region, not through accommodation with the will of the peoples, i.e. democracy, after that became associated with the quicker road for Islam and Islamist rule, but on the usurper savage Zionist entity and its allies from corrupt dictatorships.” Israel, or the “Zionist entity” as Ghannouchi calls it, is at the core of Western hatred of Islam. He describes Israel’s policies as the “atrocities of Nazi Zionists in Gaza,” and rejects all peace treaties with the Jewish state claiming that those who have signed them have “succumbed to the logic of Zionist Western arrogance to sign treaties of compliance and submission.” Partly for these reasons, he hails the Iranian regime:

As to the Iranian experiment, it too lives under the impact of the international embargo and struggles to achieve a degree of balance of power with its dangerous enemies. This drains a large amount of its resources to guarantee its survival in the face of the largest international conglomerate assisted by regional complicity. Despite that, the Iranian model has succeeded in establishing a stable system which achieves a transfer (of power) within the framework of the official ideology of the state (Vilayat Al Faqih)⁵⁴ and provides for the independence of its decision and its determination of pursuing a huge developmental project, and provides support to resistance to the Zionist project, to which the region nearly surrendered.

He further praises all those who resist Israel and Western hegemony:

As is seen in the creativity of the great youth of Gaza, the youth of Hezbollah, and the youth of the Iraqi resistance, who have put an end to the arrogance of materialism and the arrogance of weaponry testifying to the power of Right and man’s predominance over the machine and the victory of faith over tyranny and *Kufr*.⁵⁵

Ghannouchi further professes doubts that the 9/11 attacks were perpetrated by Islamists and, even if they were, he argues that the attacks pale in comparison to the atrocities committed against Muslims:

If the attribution of the 9/11 bombings to whom it was attributed is true, an action regardless of who did it that does not deserve

from a Muslim anything but condemnation without reservation and sympathy with its victims, to the same extent that one sympathizes with all the victims of similar or worse genocidal actions taking place in Iraq, Palestine, Chechnya and other places.

He praises jihad against occupation:

Islamism is leading the nation's major battles in Palestine, in Iraq, in Afghanistan. True, some mistakes are committed by Jihadists, though these are quite understandable given Western actions, but these hardly discredit Islamism as a whole. Some energy triggered by the awakening may get out of control as a reaction to the tyranny of rulers who are endlessly backed by Western control centers that become harmful to the Islamic project before anyone else, as has happened in Algeria, Egypt, New York, London, Madrid and elsewhere... Can all this be considered a failure for political Islam just because of a few reckless actions that have never represented the mainstream of the Islamic movement as much as they are fringes that no society is without and the responsibility for which rests with political tyranny, occupation, foreign bases on the land of Islam and all of these are not the responsibility of Islam? Islamism has succeeded in defeating communism, advances at the expense of secularization projects, the most powerful of which was the Communist project, which the intellectual proselytizing Islam and the Jihadist Islam had a huge role and honor in overthrowing, and capitalism will soon follow. The end of capitalism has been proclaimed following its red brother, all in direct relationship to political Islam.

But the most important part of Ghannouchi's article is how he understands Islamism itself, its competitors and what it aims to accomplish. As he writes:

The main idea in Islamic reform since two centuries ago, and especially since the fall of the last form of the Islamic Caliphate in the first quarter of the twentieth century, is the resistance of this *dahriya*,⁵⁶ as Afghani expressed it, or "schizophrenic bile," as the martyr Sayed Qutb expressed it: the separation between faith and life, between worship and conduct, between the mosque and the

market, between religion and state. Resisting this schizophrenic bile, that is, restoring religion to its original monotheism, is the main idea in the Islamic project. It is the antithesis of paganism as presented by the countersecular project: the marginalization of religion and its removal from the struggles of life. Countering this basic idea in the secular project in order to restore the connection between religion and life, religion's leadership of life is the essence of the Islamic reform project for nearly two centuries. Perhaps Islam is, as truthfully confirmed by English social scientist Ernst Gellner, is the only religion that the idea of Western modernization i.e. secularism has failed to penetrate, in fact it was it (Islam) which penetrated modernization, tamed it, and absorbed the essence of modernity, i.e. scientific progress, without being forced to give up anything from its essence, which is what some scholars term, Islamic exceptionalism.

The aim of Islamism is not to protect Islam as mere rituals:

The Islam of rituals has never been a matter of dispute.... rather the dispute has been over the view of the totality of Islam which absorbs modernity and is not absorbed by modernity, above the authority of the state and above its (Islam) authority there is no authority, for which the West has invented the term political Islam. In fact Islamism has a universal mission: the world's need for Islam to restore a degree of morality and justice to a politics and economy that are devoid of them and Islam today represents the hope of the nation and even a sector of humanity in restoring morality, justice, and meaning to a civilization and politics that has undressed from them to a drastic extent. Testifying to that have been the scandals of Guantanamo, Abu Gharib, Katarina, poverty belts surrounding many modern cities such as Paris, as well as the crisis of capitalism and its collapse.

Nothing can stop the advance of Islamism:

which makes the task of empowering⁵⁷ it a matter of time and standing in its way is pure stubbornness to the ways of history and society... attempting to stop it only results in more extremism and

explosion. Islamism is not limited to a party or a group, the Islamic project is broader than being reduced to a party or a governance program, governance is merely a part of its project, and is not the greater part or the most important. This is why countless states of Islam fell while its (Islam) effect remained in the nation and history.... The Islamists' pursuit of power only intensified after the state of "modernity," which grew into a monster until it suffocated the initiatives of society and swallowed it. The center of the Islamic project is man; as an individual, family and societal relations, as it is an upbringing societal project directed at man to achieve in his life, no matter his position, the presence of God in his life, coloring all his thoughts, emotions, all his conduct and relationships with a Divine dye.

Has Rachid Al-Ghannouchi changed all his views dramatically in five years or have the constraints imposed by his newly acquired leadership role in Tunisia limited what can be stated in public? Only time will tell.

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Political Islam: One Step Backwards Towards a Leap Forward⁵⁸

*By Mohsen Saleh*⁵⁹
September 8, 2013

THOSE WHO WERE EUPHORIC AND DANCED WITH JOY TO WHAT THEY CALLED "the fall of political Islam" after the military coup in Egypt are deluded. The Tambourine drummers and incense holders that the various media was filled with should not have hurried in the funeral rituals or gloating, because they apparently did not learn the ways of God Almighty in the universe or the movement of history.

Before going into the details, I would like to initially make two observations. First: the term "political Islam" is a Western term; we were forced to use it because it is widespread and because it appeared the easier way to convey the meaning that we want.

We believe that Islam is Islam, and it is not in need of classification. There is no "political Islam," and there is no "non-political Islam," simply because it is a

comprehensive religion for all aspects of life—social, political, economic, worship, and upbringing and others.

Thus the political aspect is an indivisible part of this religion. Our talk here generally applies to the broader current among Islamists, which is the centrist-moderate current which has a civilizational project, believes in national partnership, and which veers away from violence in its practices and its relations with its countrymen.

The second observation is that the military coup in Egypt formed the head of an aftershock wave aimed at ending the “Arab Spring,” and the restoration of “the remnants” and deep state institutions of the previous regimes, albeit with new gowns, and it happened through an alliance with regional forces and international forces, the future and interests of which the revolutions and the change process constituted a threat. They have found that “political Islam” constitutes the solid base for change, and possesses the confidence of the masses in free and fair elections. Hence, targeting this [Islamist] current (and at its heart the Muslim Brotherhood), is an essential part of the coup’s program in Egypt.

The observer can note how this coup coincided with the [anti-Islamist] campaigns, which facts indicate are coordinated and synchronized in time to thwart the Islamists in Tunisia, Yemen, Morocco, to contain the opposition in Syria, pressure Turkey, and coincide with the fierce media campaign against Hamas, the tightening of the siege on the Gaza strip, the closure of the Rafah crossing and the destruction of the tunnels.

Those facts indicate that “political Islam” has received a severe blow in Egypt, while it has suffered from great difficulties and operations to foil it in other countries that may lead to its decline and thwarting it.

However, a general reading of the political and strategic landscape and an understanding of the nature of the region and its people indicates that “political Islam” will return again with much more strength and popularity, and with a higher capacity to change and lead political developments in the region. The most prominent of these facts include:

First: The current that adopts Islam in a person’s thinking, behavior and way of life is an authentic, deep, and strong stream that is rooted in the Arab nation and the Islamic nation. And that the Islamic revival and reform movements that have played political and revolutionary roles traces its roots back to the first hijri century where it was manifested for example in the revolutions of Husayn Ibn Ali,⁶⁰ Abdallah Ibn Al-Zubayr,⁶¹ Abdel Rahman Al-Ash’ath,⁶² and did not stop throughout the ages.

In modern and contemporary history, the main component of the main force

that confronted the state of underdevelopment in our Nation and faced colonialism in our lands was Islamic, and its driving spirit was Islamic. This includes Wahhabism in the Arabian Peninsula, the Mahdiyya⁶³ in Sudan, the Senussis⁶⁴ in Libya, the martyr Ahmed Khan⁶⁵ movement in India, Ben Badis⁶⁶ in Algeria, the Muslim Brotherhood movements and the Gama'a Islamia⁶⁷ in the Indian subcontinent, the Nursis⁶⁸ in Turkey and others; they are all extensions of this reformist current. This current cannot be marginalized or eradicated because it is simply the most compatible with the religious, psychological, social, cultural and civilizational makeup of the people in the region and because the values and ideals that it carries are the values and ideals held by Arabs and Muslims without affectation or pretension.

This explains how once systems of tyranny and corruption fall and the atmosphere of freedom spreads, this current, and especially the centrist-moderate one, quickly advances the ranks and enjoys the confidence of the masses.

Second: Since the disaster of the 1967 War—in which the Zionists occupied the rest of the land of Palestine, the Sinai, and the Golan Heights, and which revealed the misery of the poor performance of military regimes, as well [as the weakness] of the leftist, conservative, and nationalist currents in Muslim societies—the Islamist current has been in ascendance.

Yes, there is stumbling in some places, retreat in other places, as a result of the poor performance of Islamists sometimes, and as a result of acts of repression by regimes in other instances. But the general line is an ascending line. Regardless of who is in power, the Islamist current is the first popular current in most of our Arab countries.

Third: Since this Nation has been plagued with the retreat of its civilizational role, colonialism, the Zionist occupation, and with internal division and splitting, it is experiencing a state of labor, in which currents and ideologies are wrestling. It is a Nation in search of an identity, for a path that restores its vitality, its renaissance, and its advanced standing among other nations.

Our problem is not economic at its essence, although the economic problem is one of its manifestations. In most of our countries, including the countries of the “Arab Spring,” no one dies from hunger, though many die from overeating and obesity diseases, but many people are dying every day a thousand times due to oppression, and the feeling of injustice and humiliation.

Over the past years, the military regimes have failed, and the regimes that have raised nationalist slogans such as Baathism and Nasserism have failed, and the secular regimes (whether they are socialist leftist or liberal capitalist) have failed. Also failing are the hereditary regimes in answering the questions of identity,

unity, development, and in confronting the Zionist project. Only the Islamist civilizational current that has not had its real chance to rule remains.

Fourth: The Islamist current is the richest current in youth and qualified young men—unlike most leftist, liberal, and nationalist currents, most of whose leaders have exceeded the autumn of life, and who are thus not able to renew themselves.

The sons of the Islamist current remain the most popular, powerful and prevalent among students, university graduates, and syndicates, which means that this current will inherit other currents that have occupied political, media, and economic positions decades ago. We are, in brief, in front of the coming generation and the passing generation.

Fifth: Perhaps it is from God Almighty's kindness towards Islamists in Egypt that the military coup occurred, despite its bloody and ugly repressive practices. For the revolution in Egypt (as in Tunisia and Yemen) is a revolution that has not been completed, and was not accompanied with the revolutionary tools to be able to protect it. Such tools consist of transitional justice, revolution protection institutions, the tools to handle with the counter-media, and the ways to deal with forms of obstruction in the state's deep structure.

Islamists have found themselves in the quandary of leading the scene without the real capacity to change. The military's mounting of the January 25, 2011 revolutionary wave, and attempting to absorb and redirect it, cut off the possibility of the revolution completing its components.

Islamists have tried to implement their program through institutions that have worked on foiling and overthrowing them. They have worked to adapt with these institutions and develop them gradually, believing in peaceful quite transformation; but they paid a heavy price for their civilized behavior in an environment that required revolutionary action.

Yes, they have paid for it with a decline in their popularity and an inability to implement their program, thus it was from the kindness of God that the counter revolution was revealed to everyone, and its relationships, and the tremendous influence it possesses in the structure of the state and its institutions, and what this entails in a new revolutionary wave.

Sixth: The Islamists have presented a distinguished civilizational model in respecting the democratic process, the peaceful transfer of power, respect for the results of the ballot boxes, and won five electoral competitions (The Constitutional Declaration, Parliament, Shura Council, Presidency, Constitution) in free and fair elections. Thus they deservingly represented the will of the Egyptian people.

During President Morsi's era there was not a single political prisoner, and the media (even the government ones) attacked, maimed and painted them [the

Brotherhood] as devils without being shut down or disabled. The headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood were burned and many of their members were killed, and they appeared as a vulnerable entity despite their presence at the helm of power.

Islamists have continued their civilizational model even after the coup, and they proved to have a broad and continuous popular presence. On the other hand, the coup and its supporters revealed the fallacy of their claims regarding democracy: they have continued their smear campaigns, their accusations of treason, slander and dissemination of hatred, and they could not tolerate the other opinion, closed dissenting media, and carried out an enormous unprecedented terrorist eradication campaign against the Islamist current, and against all those who oppose them. The shedding of the blood of hundreds, no even thousands, was made permissible, and massacres were committed against demonstrators and peaceful protesters, and thousands were arrested, and charges were fabricated against symbols and leaders, which revealed the failure of the military and the remnants [of the old regime] and their allies in civilized conduct, their displeasure with liberties, their fear of the truths reaching the masses, and their understanding of their weakness when they give Islamists the same amount of free expression and action.

And because of the putschist's conduct, the popularity of Islamists has increased and not declined; and people's sympathy with them [the Islamists] has increased, as has the embrace of other powers and youth movements; and they proved that they are the defenders of the constitutional legitimacy and the democratic process.

Seventh: The military putschist behavior is in itself a telling confession of the inability to face the Islamists in free and fair elections. The oppressive eradication behavior towards the opponents of the coup, and especially the Muslim Brotherhood, is proof of the putschists and their allies' preference for the top of the tank over the ballot box.

The putschists are preparing cooked up elections suiting their size; otherwise, why were they not patient for two or three months to participate in the house of representatives elections with all guarantees of impartiality available, and implement their electoral program if they win, and determine in a democratic manner the course of the political life in Egypt?

Eighth: The options of the putschists on the democratic path and of the opponents of the Islamist current appear limited and difficult. There is an option of returning back to the former corrupt and autocratic regime, albeit in a new garment, with an attempt to marginalize Islamists or eradicate them, which is an option that will be exposed sooner or later and will not lead to anything, but will only prepare for a popular revolution more vast and powerful, which uproots the old regime and its institutions and establishes a new regime.

And there is the option of partial democracy whose garment is designed at the putschist's size, and perhaps Islamists will be allowed artificial representation after cutting their wings. This option, which appears more intelligent, will be exposed as well, after it is shown to everyone that their democratic game has a ceiling governed by some officers and by the powerful, who despise the people and their will.

The regime [that the putschists will create] will also still carry the elements of its self-destruction through its various crises, at the forefronts of which are the crises of identity, democratic legitimacy, renaissance, corruption, and tyranny.

And there is the option of fully applying democracy and holding free, fair and transparent elections, as the leaders of the coup and their supporters promised, which is an option that opens the door wide open for the return of Islamists to power. Will they respect the results of elections and give the Islamists a real opportunity? Or will they stage a new coup as they are above democracy, above the people and above institutions?

Ninth: The human beings in this region have broken the barrier of fear and the authoritarian and repressive regimes that have been overcome by history cannot turn the clock back.

These regimes have become the only exception on the planet in our contemporary world, and the injections which are supplied to their slouch bodies will not be able to stop man's aspirations to freedom and dignity, which are aspirations that mean at the end of the matter that the peoples will determine their destiny with their own will. This means in practice that the Islamists will have the strongest opportunity to return to leading the scene sooner or later.

Tenth: Islamists are not angels; they make mistakes and also the right choices, they stumble and learn. Islamists have been pushed away from running the state and its institutions for decades, and suffered from attempts at marginalization, so they may need a transitional period to comprehend the action mechanisms in state institutions and regain some of their rights to be present in those institutions according to their experience and competence. Perhaps the previous experience has proved to Islamists that they must:

Be more open to different groups of society and clearer in explaining their programs.

Reassure religious minorities of their civilizational project and open the field of real partnership for them in national action.

Seek to accommodate all qualified and potentially qualified people.

Expand the circle of their alliances, so as to establish a national safety net that protects the revolution and the democratic path in the country.

Establish the appropriate mechanisms to effectively deal with the “deep state institutions.”

Be more capable of dealing with the regional and international environment.

The coup was a hard lesson for Islamists, but it was an invaluable lesson, for they clearly learned the map of friends and enemies, their own vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Perhaps God Almighty destined this to be so that He extracts from Islamists the best that they have, deny their wickedness, and rise to the level of managing society and the state, and the level of managing the conflict with the Zionist project and the Western project in the region. Perhaps His verse applies best: “Do not think it is bad for you, it is good for you” (Al Nur: 11).

Therefore, the counter-wave that toppled the Islamists in Egypt will be for them but “a step backwards towards a leap forward.”

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How Credible is the Claim of the Failure of Political Islam?⁶⁹

By Rachid Al-Ghannouchi⁷⁰

October 24, 2013

WESTERN EXPERTS MONITORING THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT’S PATH HAVE BEEN accustomed, whenever Islamists here or there suffer a setback, or even merely a decline in elections, no matter how small, to herald all over the world⁷¹ with the loudest speakers the failure, collapse and end of political Islam. This is reiterated in their symposiums and talks to the media, which presents them as experts pronouncing judgment and the final word.

Soon their ilk in the land of Islam as well as those working in our media receive these pronouncements as if they were facts that cannot be wrong.

The Egyptian events in the last few months have provided abundant material

for such research, seminars and assurances that this market has flourished and its merchandise became popular.

How credible are these claims? Is what is known as “Political Islam” in the process of significant and growing decline in the direction of ultimate failure and certain collapse? Or is it merely backward turns here and there motivating a new start in an upward curve in its overall direction, which makes it likely that even the points of decline will soon join the overall curve heading upwards?

1. The “Islamic Movement,” which is the term preferred by Islamists as an alternative to what is called “Political Islam,” refers to all the activities that call for Islam as the final word of God to people and a comprehensive curriculum to life and a message to the world. This Islam is confirmed by all statistical studies to be the fastest growing, and most widespread and attractive to minds and wills, religions and ways of life today. Its adherents are the most willing to sacrifice everything dear and precious for it, out of ardor and commitment to it.

What is called “Political Islam” (the Islamic Movement) moves on this religious base that is the most widespread in the world today, and it has been enabled by contemporary technological communications to extend its reach in a speed unprecedented in history—especially since it hardly encounters any significant resistance given the state of ideological emptiness, existential anxiety, and the collapse of the warm incubators around man in contemporary civilization such as the family and clan.

This is taking place at a time when governments have increasingly accelerated their resignation of their duties to care [for the people], which has increased the state of anxiety, isolation and loss of companionship, as one of the effects of accelerated secularism, which is pushing individuals to search for warm incubators and systems where the demands of the body and soul are met, the individual and the community, the religious and the worldly, nationalism and internationalism, and this is what the wandering seeker finds completely in Islam with its comprehensive origins and known moderation. This explains eminent elites from all religions and cultures seeking to embrace it despite the war of hatred and demonization being waged against it, its movements and minorities.

2. The Islamic Movement in its mainstream—and set aside the extremist margins that no ideology and nation is devoid of—presented Islam as the completion of civilization’s achievements and noble aspects. It did not do so as an antithesis in every aspect to the achievements of modernization such as education for all males and females, to the values of justice and equality, rights and freedoms, without discrimination on the basis of belief, sex, and color, which guarantees to everyone the rights of citizenship, humanity, religious and political freedoms as is customary in contemporary democracies, given that equality in those rights and freedoms is a necessary deduction of the divine honoring of the sons of Adam. “And we have certainly honored the children of Adam” (Al Isra’: 70).
3. The Islamic movement which originates from the basis of Islam, the religion of instinct, in search of solutions for the problems of its societies and contributing to solving the problems of humanity, benefiting from all expertise of civilization that are compatible with the values of Islam and its purposes in achieving people’s interests, is the closest to the conscience of our peoples. It addresses them with their familiar values, concepts and language; it cannot be rivaled popularly, if the preachers understand the problems of the people and framed it in accordance with their mental and doctrinal structure.
4. The Islamic movements have been subjected for more than half a century to a series of repression, which hardly rests for a short time before it returns with even more severity.

The continuous repression bequeathed numerous virtues to the Islamist movement: it has instilled in Islamists a legacy of struggle which, binds them to each other, and a common history in which at least three generations have grown up.

The brutal repression has also gained them people’s sympathy with the injustice inflicted upon them. This gave them additional assets and gains that were unavailable to any other political competitor. For as much as one offers, one gains and the peoples gives fighters their dues.

5. The Islamists today more than ever stand in the noblest and firmest position. They are closer to the doctrinal and conceptual cultural position of the people; they are standing, like in Egypt, carrying the noblest slogans such as defending the will of the people and resorting to the ballot box, and they are leading a fantastic peaceful revolution. That revolution defends the values of the revolution, the freedom of the press, which their rule upheld while the coup squandered, and it defends political pluralism and the nation's major causes such as the cause of Palestine.

In contrast, the deeply rooted Egyptian liberalism, including the Wafd party, stands in the camp of the counter-revolution. It seeks support from a military coup and defends it, while its tanks trample on the ballot boxes and crush the people's will as well as their bodies, silences the voices of the media, opens prisons wide open and strikes the unarmed masses in the millions.

As for the Nation's major cause, the cause of Palestine, it has become a major accusation. Was the elected president not charged with espionage with Hamas as a pretext for deposing him, while he was the first democratically elected president, and in order to please Israel?

Is the embroilment of the Egyptian "modernist" elite and its Arab counterparts, which applauded the coup, not a form of collective suicide? This is in contrast with the honorable stand of the Islamist Movement in the face of tyranny with bare chests except with faith?

Is it possible from an historical, strategic, or nationalist point of view to consider supporting the brutal coup a liberal, progressive, nationalist, or secular victory? And is it correct to consider what happened to be a defeat for political Islam and an end to it?

6. We do not doubt that what occurred in Egypt is not a relapse for political Islam, as much as it is a relapse that will end what is left, unfortunately, from the heritage of Arab secular liberalism and nationalism, unless they reconsider their positions and return to their senses. On the other hand, the coup will provide opportunities for the Islamic Movement to carry out revisions in order to correct its mistakes in governance, so that it will be more open to opposition forces in Egypt and elsewhere. This is especially im-

portant during a transitional phase which cannot be governed by a single party or a single current, nor acceptable for its constitution to be written by one trend.

The Islamic Movement in Egypt and elsewhere will realize this, and it will be more open to all the national forces, giving them [the national forces] the space not only to participate and ally with them, but even to occupy positions of leadership in Islamist parties, for Islam is a common heritage of the whole nation.

7. While the Brotherhood in Egypt underwent successive tribulations at the hands of the rulers of Egypt since the monarchy, and especially in the Nasserite era, it cannot be compared, neither quantitatively or qualitatively to what it is enduring at the hands of General El Sisi. The total number of victims during sixty years did not far exceed sixty martyrs, which is the same as the number of the first “Sisian” [Field Marshall Abdel Fatah El Sisi] handshake [encounter] with them in front of the presidential palace. Soon there was news of thousands of killed, wounded and detained, which clearly indicates the weakness of the coup’s legitimacy and its reckless attempt to offset that by repression against escalating peaceful heroic resistance.

8. The difference between what the Brotherhood suffered from Nasserite repression, and the current repression from the standpoint of a value judgment is great. Nasser did not strike the Brotherhood with the sword of the state only, but he struck them with grand projects that he brought to his people and the nation, regardless of how serious some of them were.

The security and political repression [of the Nasser era] had a heavy cover in the form of civilizational and politically tempting missionary projects such as the agrarian reform project, dissemination of education, expansion of al-Azhar, the liberation of Palestine, the unification of the Arab Nation, countering imperialism, and the Non-Aligned Movement. In contrast, what does Sisi offer as a project for his people and nation as a cover for the brutal repression of his regime, which has become so intellectually vapid as to accuse the legitimate imprisoned president of collaborating with Hamas?

9. At the time of open spaces (internet, TV), the crimes of tyrants are taking place under the most powerful microscopes and the brightest lights. This was not possible to the pharaohs of old, whose crimes were carried out under the guise of secrecy. It was thus possible for Moses's Pharaoh to say: "I do not show you except what I see" (Ghafir: 29), imposing his absolute authority over his people through his control over information.

That time is long gone and the crimes of tyrants are taking place under the microscope. There is no future for Sisi and his ilk in the era of open spaces.

Considering all of the above, I can confidently assure you that political Islam was not defeated in Egypt or anywhere else. For the world of ideas is replete with the values of Islam, in a manner unprecedented since we were invaded with modernity on the back of the tanks and dominated by the world of elites. Modernity drove Islam to the margins and promised major projects, most of which were a failure either on the level of freedom, development, justice, unity, or the liberation of Palestine. This returned and renewed the need to think of Islam and search within it for a renaissance project that interacts and absorbs, rather than rejects the achievements of modernity after replanting it in the field of Islam.

What is called "political Islam" is not in a state of decline. Rather it is in the process of correcting its mistakes and preparing for a new phase, which is not far away, of the practice of better governance. It does not need decades to recover larger opportunities that await it in the time of open-source media spaces, and in the face of coup projects which nakedly lack any moral, civilizational or political cover.

They (Islamists) are deeply rooted movements in their societies carrying the values of peaceful democratic revolution and the values of communalism as a substitute for individuality in a successful marriage of the values of Islam and the values of modernity.

"And Allah has full power over His Affairs, but most humans know not" (Yusuf: 21).

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Future of Islamists in the Arab Region after the Overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood's Experiment in Egypt⁷²

By *Belal El Taleedy*⁷³

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IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED AT THE START THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO TAKE THE developments that Egypt has recently known as an indicator to judge the experience of Islamist movements after the Arab Spring. The hasty analysis which rushed to declare the end of Political Islam in the Arab region did not take into account four similar examples which have all led to opposite conclusions. The July 1952 coup in Egypt, which ended with the eradication of the Muslim Brotherhood; General Ben Ali's coup in 1987, which moved almost in the same direction; the coup on the experiment of Erbakan's rule in Turkey; and aborting the Salvation [Islamic Salvation Front] experiment in Algeria after it had won a majority in the electoral process—those four examples have not ended the experiment of Political Islam as many researchers had predicted. On the contrary, these experiences have increased Islamism's strength, or at least, it presented itself in newer forms, and returned once again to form the largest political force in the political landscape of many Arab countries.

It is true that the difference was evident in those four experiences in the way that Islamists dealt with the regimes, but in the end, the weakest link was in Algeria because of the resort to the military option by some factions of the Islamic Salvation Front in response to the coup against the election results. While out of the womb, the Islamic movement in Turkey came out with a new political approach that reexamined the traditional leadership style in dealing with the components of the political field and the outside actors. Whereas in Egypt and Tunisia, the popular movement has played a role in returning the Islamist movement to the forefront of the political scene from its wide gate because of the weakness of the other political elites, and the lack of a political rival which has the same organizational strength that the Islamic movements possesses.

Although the possibility of assessing the situation in Egypt and exploring its

outcome is difficult because the political interactions are still taking place, and the balance of power's entire features have not been completed due to the rapid changes within Egyptian society, the preliminary reading of the reality and outcome of the performance of Islamist movements in power in the Arab region indicates the presence of key governing determinants of the experience's course:

1. The first determinant is associated with the differences between the activism experiences in the Arab region. That variation is the result of the difference in the nature of the political field on the one hand and the nature of the political actors that form it. The Moroccan model, where Islamists manage government work under a monarchical system in which the king retains broad powers according to the constitutional text, is different from the Tunisian model, which is governed by the contract between three political forces which have different intellectual and political references. The Egyptian model differs from those two in terms of the Islamists' position in power, and the weight of the military establishment in the political field. Moreover, the difference in political geography gives a stronger presence and influence in national decisions to the international actor. It is also dictated on the second hand by the different schools of thought to which each movement independently belongs, and the kind of kinetic reference from which it draws. This is especially the case in the relationship between the *da'wah* and politics, and how this impacts the output of the political mind. As the Moroccan experience has chosen the formula of differentiation between *da'wah* and politics, the Nahda movement [in Tunisia] has retained the option of full integration between the *da'wah* and political institutions. While the Freedom and Justice Party is merely the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.
2. The second determinant is associated with the options that the Islamist movement resorts to in its answer to the questions of the post-Arab Spring, particularly with regards to ways of dealing with the state, its infrastructure, institutions and structures. The Moroccan Justice and Development experiment has raised the slogan of "let bygones be bygones" as a springboard to the second political transition, and it adopted the formula of reform in the framework of stability without touching state institutions and their functions,

even if some of them run counter to the will of reform. The Nahda movement's experiment has staggered for a long time with the adoption of revolutionary slogans represented in the slogan of political isolation and purging state institutions from "remnants." It was forced in the end to make concessions in the last government reshuffle, and perhaps in accepting the government's resignation thus slightly detouring to the same style of the Justice and Development Party in Morocco. In Egypt, the Brotherhood's experiment was governed by a great hesitation between prowess and reluctance in dealing with state institutions, as could be seen in their handling of the judicial institution, they wound up ultimately inciting many of the state institutions against them.

3. The third determinant is associated with the way [the Islamist Movement] deals with the political elites. The Nahda movement protected the political transition experiment through its political contract with three political components with different intellectual and political references, and the Justice and Development Party allied with political opponents, some of whom belong to the forces of the left. However, the Brotherhood experiment was forced to conduct its alliances from within the Islamist current alone. This isolated it from the rest of the secular and liberal elites, and enhanced the opportunity of accelerating those forces' alliance against it. Especially that they [secular and liberal elites] maintained important relations to the international actor with all his levels, governmental and civil.
4. The fourth determinant is associated with estimating the size of the international actor and the stakes and contradictions that govern the international position. In spite of the three movements resorting to the production of reassuring discourse, and some of them taking the course of immunizing "acquired" Western interests, the Brotherhood's experiment in particular did not understand the requirements of political geography, and what that geography dictates in building national political consensus that exceeds the Islamist ceiling. [This required] increasing the political offering [to non-Islamists] to succeed in partnering with other forces, whose existence [as partners] reduces the size of the external targeting of

the experiment or at least creates contradictions within the international position.

5. The fifth determinant is associated with the political discourse and the type of political practice produced by the Islamist movement. Despite the three experiments all resorting to mitigating the identity and moral dimension in their political discourse and practice, and resorting to general policies instead of exercising politics with the logic of *da'wah*, and in adopting pragmatism as a substitute for the ideological discourse, the correlation between the *da'wah* and the political did not allow the Brotherhood experiment to go too far in this direction. This made political actors who differ from it ideologically, as well as the international actors, distrustful of the prospect of encouraging and supporting a democratic experiment led by Islamists.

Those five determinants make the future of Islamists in the three experiments governed by three scenarios:

1. The first scenario: consolidating the cumulative reform approach modeled on the Turkish experiment. We can nominate for this [scenario] the experiments of both the Justice and Development Party and the Nahda movement in the case of the continuation of adopting the logic of partnership in political action, and adopting the logic of cumulative reform in dealing with state institutions and bodies [by the Nahda movement].
2. The second scenario: a scenario of the launch of revisions within the Islamist movements, especially within the Brotherhood experiment and even within the Nahda experiment. Unless the historical leadership does not play the role of bridging the gap between them and the managerial leaders. In this case those movements will know the same fate of the emergence of the Turkish AKP from the womb of the Welfare Party, with a new managerial leadership and a new political approach that reevaluates the political field, the nature of its components and their weights and the nature of the interactions with it, and the debate of the domestic and foreign, and the political gate to reform.

3. The third scenario: exactly the opposite of the second. In the case of the failure of the option of toppling Islamists in Egypt, and the broadest political and civil forces bonding around the national coalition in defense of legitimacy, and the success of political initiatives to return to constitutional legitimacy and democracy even partially. It would be expected that the Brotherhood experiment would experience its best state; it will work on marketing its revolutionary model in the Arab region, and creating a model to compete with the Turkish model in resisting those against its experiment which it has been used to call the components of the deep state.

The assessment in the next stage is that the cumulative reform model with its components and attributes detailed in the five determinants, despite its slow nature and the magnitude of the challenges before it, will be the most likely candidate for success in the Arab world. It will be the driver in the future for the Brotherhood movement to undergo deep revisions in its discourse and political behavior in terms of recasting the relationship between the *da'wah* and the political anew, and in building its existing political experience according to a new perspective that answers all the five challenges to which it has failed to provide successful answers. This means in the end, that the experience of Political Islam will not undergo failure or retreat, instead it will undergo changes and revisions which will aid it in re-optimizing its position once again, especially as it will retain a wide base amongst the popular strata which is united around its reference point, its leadership or in solidarity with its victimization.

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55. Guardianship of the Islamic jurists.
56. Apostasy, disbelief, rejection of God.
57. Islamic term used to describe pre Islamic sect which considered mass infinite without a creator. Used in modern times to describe atheists, communists and seculars.

58. Empowerment is the closest translation of the key term Tamkeen, which means, basically, upholding Islam by means of political, perhaps military, power. Naturally, the Jurisprudence of Tamkeen is a major issue for all Islamists. (Khairat al-Shater on "The Nahda Project").
59. Published by Al Jazeera,
<http://www.aljazeera.net/opinions/pages/d08c5074-9aaa-4697-8605-ad0c71e53dac>.
60. Mohsen Mohamed Saleh is an associate professor of Modern and Contemporary Arab History and the general manager of Al Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations since 2004. He is the author of numerous books on Palestinian and Islamic issues. Bio:
<http://www.alzaytouna.net/permalink/6095.html>.
61. Prophet Grandson, third Shia Imam, revolted against Umayyad rule, betrayed by people of Iraq and murdered in the Battle of Karbala in 680.
62. Son of Prophet's cousin, grandson of Abu Bakr, revolted against Umayyad rule and declared himself Caliph in 680, defeated and murdered in 692.
63. Umayyad military commander, revolted against Umayyad rule (700-703).
64. Movement started by Mohammad Ahmad in 1881 when he declared himself Mahdi. It fought against Egyptian rulers successfully defeating them and General Gordon in the battle of Khartoum in 1885. Their rule of Sudan ended in 1899 with their defeat by the Anglo Egyptian army of Kitchener. The movement is currently led by Al Sadiq Al Mahdi, Mohammad Ahmad's great grandson and twice prime minister of Sudan.
65. A Sufi revivalist movement in North Africa founded by Muhammad Ibn Ali Al Senussi in 1843. It fought the Italian occupation of Libya and Al Senussi's grandson became King Idris of Libya (r. 1951-1969) overthrown by Colonel Gaddafi.
66. Syed Ahmed Barelvi (1786-1831), founder of *Tariqah Muhammadiyyah an Islamic revolutionary movement*. *Sought a return to a purer form of Islam. Proclaimed jihad against Sikhs. Killed in 1831.*
67. Abdelhamid Ben Badis (1889-1940), Algerian Muslim reformer, founder of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema.
68. Founded in 1941 by Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi. Broke into separate groups in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh after partition.
69. Badiuzzman Said Nursi (1878-1960), Turkish Muslim scholar, author of Risale-i Nur. His followers are known as the Nur movement. His ideas influenced Fethullah Gulen founder of the Gulen movement.
70. Published by Al Jazeera,
<http://www.aljazeera.net/opinions/pages/b39199ff-292e-43a6-b699-db7acb20d0ba>.
71. Rachid Al-Ghannouchi is the leader of Tunisia's El Nahda movement. A leading Islamic thinker, he helped establish the Islamist movement in Tunisia in the early 80s. After two prison sentences he lived in exile in Europe until his return to Tunisia after the 2011 revolution.
72. The Arabic words are: Yoazeno fe el alameen, which is an expression for spreading the message all over the world.

73. Published by Namaa Center for Research and Studies,
<http://www.nama-center.com/ActivitieDatials.aspx?id=323>.
74. Belal El Taleedy is a Moroccan Islamist. He is a leading member of the ruling Moroccan Justice and Development Party. He is the author of numerous books on Islamism in Morocco and most recently "Islamists and the Arab Spring."

Turkey's Religious Outreach in Central Asia and the Caucasus

By Bayram Balci

THE GREATER “TURKIC WORLD”—THAT IS, TURKEY AND THE MAJORITY of the Caucasus and Central Asia—has had deep connections to the wider Islamic world ever since the Arab conquests nearly 1300 years ago. Despite the region's twentieth century history of Russian and Soviet imperial domination, the diverse peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus region (CAC) have remained thoroughly invested in their Islamic identity.¹ During the Soviet era, Islamic education persisted underground in the predominately Turkic republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.² Despite state-enforced atheism, religious teachers substituted formal Islamic institutions with privately run and very often illegal educational organizations.³

The USSR's sudden collapse in 1991 caused a fundamental rupture in the lives of all nations in Central Asia and the Caucasus, particularly in their relationship with Islam.⁴ For the first time in generations, Muslims who had lived inside the communist empire were free to form relationships with their co-religionists in other countries, and thereby experience new religious and ideological trends.

The Soviet-educated elites who dominated the newly independent republics

of the CAC were initially open to the idea of deepening their country's links with Muslim countries outside the region. However, despite the efforts of the CAC governments to continue to stifle all politically troublesome religious organizations and practices, the populations in these countries became increasingly exposed to international Islamic and Islamist movements. Over the past two decades, new contacts and mutual influences between CAC Muslims and Muslims from elsewhere have proliferated. Various religious educational networks with roots in the Middle East and South Asia have made inroads into the former Soviet Empire. Such connections, combined with the greater numbers of CAC Muslims who have been making pilgrimages to Mecca, has increasingly mixed their Islamic faith with ideas from the Arab, Turkish, Persian and South Asian worlds.⁵

The collapse of the USSR has resulted in a broad-based Islamic Revival in post-Soviet countries as well as a growing competition between different Islamic movements for influence in the CAC. Since many of these movements enjoy state support, including from Iran and Saudi Arabia, the religious competition has also been deeply cultural and political. Turkish groups have been among the most successful in the predominately Turkic countries of the CAC. This analysis looks at the two most important Turkish trends in the CAC: the Diyanet and the Hizmet movement, that is, the representatives of the Turkish State and the followers of the very famous Turkish thinker and spiritual leader, Fethullah Gülen. Turkey's greatest influence among the Turkic populations of the post-Soviet world derives not from their common ethno-linguistic roots, but from the success of Turkey's religious outreach.

The Post-Soviet Islamic Revival

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE MUSLIM POPULATIONS OF TURKEY, CENTRAL Asia and the Caucasus have been highly ambiguous since the early years of post-Soviet independence. Two drivers have resulted in their realization. First and foremost, the Turkish government sought to build strong relations with the new Turkic republics as a result of Ankara's ambition to form a greater Turkic political union with the CAC rooted in a common ethno-linguistic heritage.⁶ Turkey's geopolitical goals and subsequent outreach facilitated the establishment of new commercial relations between Anatolia and the CAC, thus encouraging greater exchanges between civil and religious groups among the various Turkic countries. Secondly, Turkish religious outreach in the CAC was secular and therefore did not

challenge the West in its growing ideological competition with Islamism. Western countries, including the United States, feared the spread of Islamic radicalism in post-Soviet space, and thus encouraged Turkish groups to take an active role in Central Asia to block the spread of Iranian and Saudi influence.⁷ Moreover, Central Asian and Caucasian elites initially welcomed the growing Turkish influence⁸ as Western officials actively encouraged CAC governments to adopt the Turkish model of secularism, democracy and market-oriented economic policies. Consequently, the new CAC republics were generally welcoming of Turkish Islamic groups and their schools.

After the USSR collapsed, the public expression and exercise of Islam was no longer prohibited in the former Soviet Republics. Not only did the majority of people in the CAC practice traditional Islam, but the Islamic faith suddenly enjoyed the strong backing of a variety of prominent institutions in the region.⁹ As a result, the new governments sought to integrate faith into their new national identities as they strove to co-opt the Islamic identity of their citizens. The peoples of the CAC generally adhered in the past to the classical teachings of Sufism, and they came to see their traditions as a bulwark against extremism and radicalism.¹⁰ In Uzbekistan, the government renovated and publicly opened the mausoleum of the great mystic, Bahauddin Nakshibend in Bukhara, founder of *nakshibendiyya*. Meanwhile, in Turkmenistan, the new government renovated and transformed the mausoleum of Najmeddin Kubra into a place of pilgrimage. In Kazakhstan, the authorities publicly worshipped Ahmed Yassavi: the founder of the *yasaviyya*.¹¹ In Azerbaijan, the new regime restored the holy places of Shia and Sunni Islam.¹² Since the opening of Soviet borders in 1991, domestic political considerations also compelled many Central Asian leaders to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

At the same time, the new CAC regimes retained many Soviet-era governing practices with respect to religion. Therefore, they closely monitored religious intellectuals and organizations for real and potential challenges to their political power.¹³ As the Islamic Revival in CAC began to take off, regional governments began intensifying their efforts to control religious practice and expression. The religious revival, coupled with state repression, manifested itself in destructive ways.¹⁴ Such is evident in the founding of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in 1993. The emergence of the IMU marked the start of a new era in radical Islam in the CAC. The IMU began as a fringe movement with little influence in wider Uzbek society. After experiencing brutal repression at the hands of the Uzbek government, the IMU established a base of operations in neighboring Tajikistan from where it staged a string of attacks against its home country.¹⁵

In the late 1990s, the resulting diffusion of radical Islamism into Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, coupled with the insidious influence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, prompted regional governments to adopt increasingly repressive religious policies. The fear of collusion between grassroots CAC radical Islamist movements and the Taliban proved justified, as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan began coordinating their operations in the late 1990s.¹⁶ In response to this new jihadist threat, Central Asian regimes have generally adopted more authoritarian policies toward religion. In addition to the real threat of jihadism, the prevailing assumption of ruling elites across the CAC has been that any Islamic phenomenon is potentially radical. In practice, both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have generally been more liberal in their domestic policies toward Islam than the other CAC polities. In Azerbaijan, for instance, the new state has progressively reinforced its control of Islamic practice and expression, fearing that an absence of control would pave the way for the development of a strong Iranian Shia influence in the country.¹⁷ Similarly, in Uzbekistan authorities have adopted notoriously aggressive and intrusive policies towards Islam to prevent any Islamist movement from taking root in the country. In the 1990s, when Jama'at al Tabligh representatives came to Uzbekistan from South Asia, they were immediately expelled from the country.

Throughout the CAC, the state exerts control over religion through two institutions: the Directorate of Spiritual and Religious Affairs and the State Committee for Religious Affairs. The state's official Islamic scholar, the Mufti of the republic, leads the Directorate of Spiritual and Religious Affairs. He in turn, manages the state's guidelines for Islamic practice, appoints imams, oversees the restoration of mosques, schedules prayers, and so forth.¹⁸ Upon obtaining independence, each CAC country also established a State Committee for Religious Affairs. The role of these committees, which are run by state-appointed technocrats who often have little to no religious training, is to monitor religious organizations and ensure they comply with state law and standards of political correctness. Together, these two governmental bodies are responsible for monitoring and shaping the evolution of Islam in the CAC. They set the standards for acceptable literature, religious discourse and leadership training from abroad. They alone have the power to validate (or reject) the activities of religious organizations, and they have the ultimate power to decide which organizations and which countries are allowed to operate in the CAC. Of all the foreign countries and movements that are conducting religious outreach in the region, Turkey is the one that is most preferred by CAC governments.

Turkish Outreach in the CAC

THE DIRECTORATE OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, *DIYANET ISLARI BASKANLIGI* (more commonly known as Diyanet), is a testament to the complexity and ambiguity of the relations between the state and religion in Turkey.¹⁹ The Diyanet is a distinctive creature of the Turkish republican system. It was established to manage the relationship between the Kemalist state and Islam, and it thus oversees the operation of mosques and religious education in Turkey. As a religious organization, the Diyanet's compatibility with secularism, the founding ideology of the modern Kemalist state, has been the subject of intense controversy in the past.²⁰ While it has been very active in Turkish domestic politics, the Diyanet has also been involved in foreign countries since well before the Soviet collapse. Throughout the 1980s, the Diyanet sent imams and provided other religious services to Turkish expatriates across Europe.

In Turkish embassies and consulates abroad, Diyanet officers served as religious affairs attachés who assisted and also monitored Turkish expatriates.²¹ In the past, the Diyanet rarely cooperated with other Sunni Islamic states, namely Saudi Arabia and Egypt, except on very specific issues such as facilitating Turkish citizens' pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina or their occasional enrollment at Cairo's prestigious al-Azhar University. After the fall of the Eastern bloc, however, the Diyanet became directly involved in the formerly Ottoman regions of the Balkans and in the wider Turkic world of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Consequently, the Diyanet suddenly became a core instrument of Turkish political influence throughout the former Soviet Union, and especially in the ethnically and culturally Turkic republics.

All this begs the question: why has the Diyanet—an institution originally established to manage the thorny relations between Islam and the Kemalist state inside Turkey—become so integral to Turkey's foreign policy in the post-Soviet CAC? The answer is simple: geopolitics. In the early 1990s, Turkish elites felt strongly that the Turkic areas of the former Soviet Union should not fall under the influence of regional competitors such as Iran or Saudi Arabia. Indeed, many Turks feared that the new republics would look elsewhere for authoritative sources of Muslim identity. For fear of losing influence in the CAC, Turkey's capacity for religious outreach became a strategic asset. Prime Minister Turgut Ozal was the first modern Turkish leader to recognize the potential strategic significance of Turkish Islam in the CAC. In recent years, the AK Party (AKP) and its leaders

Recep Erdoğan and Ahmet Davutoğlu have redoubled Turkey's international religious outreach to the wider Turkish world.

The Turkish government's religious outreach into the CAC formally began in 1994 with the founding of the Eurasian Islamic Council, *Avrasya İslam Şurası*. The organization answers directly to the Diyanet and has brought 32 Spiritual Affairs Boards from the CAC, the Balkans, and the autonomous republics inside Russia together.²² The council's purpose is to facilitate dialogue about the proper relationship between Islam and the state and the role of Islam in society. Over the course of eight summits held since 1995, the council has had some success in reaching agreements among participants on a range of issues, including the dates of major Muslim holidays, the structure and curriculum of Islamic education, and the promotion of the unique Islamic heritage, spiritual leaders, and ideas of the greater Turkish world. Thus it has allowed Turkey to convey its unique vision of Islam to countries where it seeks to have political influence.²³ This organization has facilitated the expansion of Turkish influence, including in the Balkans and the predominately Shiite though ethnically Turkish country of Azerbaijan. While the Diyanet has generally made great gains in Central Asia, it has not been successful everywhere—especially in Uzbekistan, where the government has become increasingly resistant to religious cooperation with all foreign countries.

Since the collapse of the USSR, the Turkish government has had a palpable influence in reviving Turkish Islam in the Post-Soviet republics. Through the Diyanet, Turkey has been able to build or restore mosques in all of these countries. Indeed, the Diyanet has built the largest mosques that attract the most fervent believers to Friday prayer in Baku and Ashkhabad. In all the Turkic-speaking countries except Uzbekistan, the Turkish Diyanet has aimed to educate new Islamic elites by establishing theology departments modeled on the prestigious faculty of theology at the University of Marmara. Central Asian and Caucasian students that the Diyanet admits into various theology schools are trained to serve their countries upon their return. Turkish imams are sent to these countries, albeit in small numbers and often only in the month of Ramadan, to preach in mosques in Central Asia and the Caucasus in cooperation with local religious leaders. Finally, extensive Islamic-based literature on the Prophet's life, the essence of Islamic ethics and the history of Islam is printed in Turkey in all the pertinent languages and distributed for free throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus.

While the Turkish government has been especially influential, private organizations not affiliated with Ankara have also been successful in spreading Turkish religious teachings in the former Soviet Union. The primary movements are those of the religious leaders Osman Nuri Topbaş,²⁴ Suleyman Tunahan,²⁵ Sait Nursi

and Fethullah Gülen. Of these, the two who belong to the *nakshibendiyya* brotherhood, Osman Nuri Topbaş and Suleyman Tunahan, are the most plain spoken and adamant about the religious nature of their activities in Central Asia. The two most influential movements, however, are the ones founded by the Sufi revivalist Sait Nursi and the contemporary spiritual leader Fethullah Gülen.

Sait Nursi was born in 1876 near Erzurum in Eastern Turkey. He first gained notoriety through his military service on the Eastern Front against Russia during World War I. An Islamist mystic, he subsequently became an influential religious authority in his home province.²⁶ When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk created the Republic of Turkey out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, he founded the new country on the basis of a secular ideology that respected Islam but aimed to limit its political influence. Nursi, however, rejected Atatürk's secular agenda, then renounced politics altogether after he realized an Islamic state wouldn't be possible in the new republic. It was then that Nursi created what became known as the *Nurcu* movement: a pietistic mystical campaign aimed at revitalizing people's religious faith. As with many other modern revivalists, Nursi sought to remedy what he saw as the "crisis of modernity" by showing that Islam and science were compatible. He believed firmly that Islam needed to be taught in modern schools and also that religious seminaries needed to open themselves up to the study of the secular sciences. The movement organized reading circles devoted to the study of Nursi's core work, *Risale i Nur* (Letter of Light): an exegesis of the Quran that explores Islamic spirituality. Through these study groups, Nursi's teachings spread and his movement grew rapidly underground.²⁷ The movement's influence in Turkey undoubtedly had political implications; however Nursi remained focused strictly on Islamic spiritualism and explaining the Quran and other basic Islamic texts.

When Sait Nursi died in 1960 he left behind an active and growing movement in the country. His disciples divided the movement into several branches, each dedicated to a particular task. These included the dissemination of his masterpiece, *Risale i Nur*, the promotion of his ideas in academic circles, and the revival of Islamic education. Nursi's most notable disciples are Mehmet Kutlular, Mehmet Kirkinci, Mustafa Sungur, and the most influential of all, Fethullah Gülen.

In the 1990s, Nurcu groups greatly enlarged their activities in the post-Soviet Turkic republics. This new wave of Turkish religious outreach was the result of unstructured private initiatives, not Ankara's direction, and were devoted to spreading the teachings of the *Risale i Nur*. While the book was originally written in pre-Republican Turkish, it has since been translated into almost all of Central Asia's languages, including Russian. With the exception of Uzbekistan, the Nurcu

movement is now active throughout all the Turkic former Soviet Republics. Their presence in the CAC, however, is barely visible. They do not operate through official educational institutions, but through private and informal networks. For example, Nurcu reading circles are often organized by the many small and medium-sized businesses led by Turkish expatriates in the CAC. Importantly, the participants in these study groups do not even consider themselves to be part of a coherent or recognizable religious movement. Such is evident in the fact that they have never asked for official recognition as a religious community from the appropriate authorities in the countries where they operate. Today, their principal goals in the CAC are to convey the Islamic ideas of Sait Nursi through study. It is precisely on this issue that Fethullah Gülen's movement, the most influential in Central Asia, has distinguished itself from other Turkish movements.

The Fethullah Gülen Community

ALTHOUGH HE NEVER MET SAIT NURSI, FETHULLAH GÜLEN IS HIS MOST INFLUENTIAL DISCIPLE. Gülen has distanced himself and the movement he created from classical Nursi teachings, however. Born in 1938 to a conservative family in Eastern Turkey, Gülen followed Sait Nursi and devoted himself to educational reform. While his ideas are rooted in Sufi mysticism, Gülen's teachings have gradually come to focus on reforming civil society through Islamic spiritualism. The religious movement that he founded has sought to train a new "gold" generation (*Altın Nesil*) that is both faithful to Islamic Turkish traditions and modern in its political and economic outlook. Fethullah Gülen formed his first group of disciples in the 1960s when he worked as an imam for the State in Izmir.²⁸ By the following decade, the movement's ideas had spread to other regions in Turkey. When Turkey adopted a series of market-oriented reforms in 1980, a newly affluent middle class emerged that began to financially support the Hizmet movement's activities. Turkey's economic growth, coupled with the deep Islamic faith of its people, enhanced the popular appeal of the market-oriented religious movement.²⁹ The subsequent opening of the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia in 1989 allowed Gülen's followers to globalize their organization's economic and religious activities.

In Turkey and in the other countries, Gülen's followers have become especially influential in four areas of society. First the movement created an educational network that now includes thousands of private institutions. The movement's second priority has been on media outlets. The *Daily Zaman* (and its English version,

Today's Zaman) is one of the most reputable journals in Turkey and has an international audience.³⁰ STV and several other television channels affiliated with Hizmet also disseminate Fethullah Gülen's ideas. The third priority area of the Gülen movement is the intelligentsia. Its followers have sought to create forums dedicated to inter-religious dialogue both in Turkey and abroad. Finally, the movement has been particularly active in trade and business. Consequently, the movement is well financed and thus able to sustain its educational, media, and inter-faith activities. The businessmen who sympathize with Fethullah Gülen and donate their time and money to Hizmet operate hundreds of large companies and thousands of small- or medium-sized companies throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus

Initially, the Fethullahci defined themselves simply as a *cemaat* (community) of believers. Now they call themselves a *hareket*, or a more formally organized movement. In recent years, many Fethullahci have begun to call the movement *Hizmet* i.e. "the Service" as their activities have become more international. The movement's stated goal is to promote the ideals of dialogue, social peace and Civil Islam on a global scale. To support this claim, the Hizmet movement highlights the interreligious meetings it organizes regularly in all the countries where it operates. It also supports initiatives in non-Muslim sectors with Christians, Jews and people of other faiths.³¹

For the Islamist rivals of the Hizmet movement, Fethullah Gülen's initiatives are corrupt, if not evil. They have an apolitical agenda, they promote civil society, and they cooperate with secular Muslims and the West. Stated bluntly, they believe the movement enables the "enemies of Islam." They believe Gülen's moderate movement saps Islam of its fighting spirit and thus perpetuates the submission of the Muslim world to the West. The fundamentalist Turkish movement of Cemallettin Kaplan, for example, deems the Gülen movement insufficiently Islamic.

In Turkey, some secularist and Kemalist elements (including Army leaders, and the Republican People's Party—CHP), as well as some Western analysts,³² are convinced that Gülen and his followers actually have a hidden agenda to foster the emergence of a new Islamic political order. Such assertions are not entirely inaccurate. The Hizmet movement undoubtedly spreads a humanistic and civic-minded spirit that, unlike Islamists, hasn't demonstrated overt hostility to modern secular democracy *per se*. Some of the claims by secularists that the Fethullahci have a political agenda are still valid, however. The Hizmet movement is, in fact, much more than a strictly religious phenomenon insofar as it shows how Islam, engagement in international markets and secular civic life are compatible. Therefore, the movement's growing influence in the CAC poses a political challenge to

the current regional political order which is still deeply influenced by the Soviet legacy of authoritarianism and statist economics.

The Hizmet movement and the manner in which it functions has interesting parallels with the Jesuit congregation. Indeed, the structure and dispensation of the movement owes some of its inspiration to the Western missionary schools established in the latter days of the Ottoman Empire. Gülen ingeniously adopted the Jesuit practice of active proselytization for the purposes of educating a new generation of modern Turkish and other Muslims.³³ Much like the Jesuits before them, the Fethullahci have developed a program of “total” education, which included not just classroom study but also provided dormitory housing and weekend activities for many of its students.³⁴

Today, the Hizmet movement is active in 150 countries. Much like in Turkey, the movement’s educational and civil society initiatives in foreign countries are aimed at educating a new Muslim middle class that is faithful to Islam and modern in its economic-political outlook. The greater post-Soviet Turkish world had been the testing grounds for the movement’s initial international forays. Now, through its extensive networks in the CAC, the movement provides a secular education that is of an unmatched quality in all post-Soviet societies. From Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan, Hizmet has established schools and universities that provide a modern and secular education that appeals directly to the real needs and aspirations of entire populations. Given the poverty, social confusion and political chaos of the CAC following the Soviet Union’s collapse, it is not surprising that the people in the region initially responded very favorably to the Hizmet movement’s outreach. Undoubtedly, the good reputation of Hizmet schools has legitimized and facilitated its growing influence in these countries.

When they first began to establish themselves in the greater Turkish world, Hizmet representatives did not explicitly identify themselves or their schools as religious or, for that matter, as affiliated with Fethullah Gülen. The first Hizmet representatives to arrive in Central Asia in the 1990s were businessmen and entrepreneurs. The schools they built appeared to be a part of Turkey’s larger efforts to re-establish civil connections with the new Turkish republics of the CAC. At the time, Turkey’s Kemalist elites were suspicious of the Hizmet movement; however, the most powerful figure in Turkish politics, President Turgut Ozal, was a strong supporter of Fethullah Gülen. Moreover, the fledgling Central Asian and Caucasian governments were also very open to and supportive of Hizmet’s growing involvements in their own countries. These governments did not see the movement as religiously motivated, but simply as an outgrowth of the Pan Turkish movement. As a result, many populations were generally grateful for Hizmet’s

growing presence since they considered it to be assistance from Turkey, which they regard as the “Big Brother.”

The educational institutions that Hizmet founded in the CAC were mainly high schools and universities.³⁵ In Azerbaijan, there is still one Hizmet-affiliated university, Kafkas University, at least 12 high schools, and dozens of small tutoring centers that offer modern and secular education under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. In Kazakhstan, a country of 17 million, there are 28 high schools and one university: the University of Süleyman Demirel. A private company established and owned by members of the Hizmet movement, Katev, manages all of these educational institutions. Private Turkish businessmen and educators who follow Fethullah Gülen have also established fifteen high schools and one university, Ala Taoo, in Kyrgyzstan and six schools in Tajikistan.

In 2000, there were more than fifteen movement-affiliated high schools in Uzbekistan. In 2001, however, Uzbek authorities shut them all down because diplomatic relations between Tashkent and Ankara had deteriorated. Even in Uzbekistan, however, many in the government and in the general population had very positive attitudes towards the Hizmet schools when they had first arrived. Tashkent shut down all the schools because of its ongoing political feud with Turkey, not because Tashkent was suspicious about the *cemaat*'s activities.³⁶ In fact, the Uzbek government shut down public schools that had been sponsored by the Turkish state much earlier than the privately run Hizmet affiliated schools.

The September 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S. and subsequent NATO invasion of Afghanistan led the CAC governments to tighten their grip over religious affairs in their countries. Consequently, the reach of Islamist movements has contracted throughout the region.³⁷ Nevertheless, the good reputation of the Hizmet schools has largely remained intact. This is partly because Hizmet schools and businesses are still not widely regarded as religious in nature, but as “Turkish schools” simply. Moreover, in the post-9/11 era, the Hizmet movement has also adopted a new public relations strategy: it has emphasized interfaith dialogue and has become expressly anti-Islamist. Since 2001, Fethullah Gülen's followers have begun to openly display their commitment to their spiritual leader, but they have presented him more as an intellectual and civic leader than as a religious authority. Gülen's publications, which had largely been unseen before 2001, now appear in the movement's schools all over Central Asia. These publications highlight Gülen's assorted efforts to promote peace, to support dialogue between religions, and to foster tolerance and moderate religious beliefs among Muslims. Fethullah Gülen himself published a considerable number of books and articles after 9/11 that denounced all forms of violence perpetrated in the name of Islam.³⁸

His moderate speech and the movement's efforts to promote dialogue distinguished Hizmet from other Islamic movements in Central Asia. At the same time, the movement's schools in the greater Turkic world have all continued to downplay their religious underpinnings. In fact, as anti-religious sentiment among elites has visibly grown in the CAC region, and government control over religious affairs has often grown more repressive, the Hizmet movement has taken significant steps to make itself more transparent and to publically re-affirm its secular orientation. Indeed, the priority of the movement's schools continues to be the provision of a modern and secular education that satisfies not just the desires and aspirations of the region's populations, but also the demands of governmental authorities.

Growing Suspicions

THE HIZMET COMMUNITY HAS NEVER ADMITTED TO RELIGIOUS PROSELYTIZATION in Central Asian and Caucasian societies. Members of the movement in Central Asia did, however, spread Gülen's unique Islamic teachings through religious instruction and discipleship outside of their schools between 1990 and 1995. These missionary efforts were clearly aimed at enlarging the Gülen-inspired religious society, the *cemaat*, into the greater Turkic world. But they did not last for long, however, because Gülen's disciples realized early on that such religious out-reach would fuel the mistrust of local authorities and potentially jeopardize their educational and civic programs. The Hizmet representatives understood that the people of the post-Soviet Turkic world appreciated their pragmatic, secular orientation more than their spiritual teachings. In time, movement representatives adopted a new strategy. Rather than spread their religious ideas through *dawa* or *tabligh* (the conventional methods of preaching and spreading Islam), they sought to spread their teachings by *temsil*, that is, by their personal example. In practice, this method requires that the religious messenger lives Islam fully by becoming morally upright, honest, and well-educated, and by behaving toward others in a benevolent and virtuous way. The practice rests on the assumption that people will be spontaneously drawn toward religious faith through the superior moral and civic example of the *cemaat*, rather than through the forceful imposition of religion.

In this way, *temsil* works as a kind of soft power. As a strategy for religious proselytization, it has arguably been quite successful, as is evident in the rapid growth of the Hizmet movement's influence in the CAC region immediately after the

USSR's collapse. Fethullah Gülen's followers, however, have since largely abandoned this strategy of subtle proselytizing "by example." Across the post-Turkish world, the *cemaat* has largely avoided speaking about religion. Indeed, they only speak of their service to civil society, *hizmet*, and their commitments to education. Even if the followers of Gülen in Central Asia and the Caucasus have a conservative, Muslim way of life, their outreach is not publically regarded as religiously motivated. Indeed, there seems to be nothing in common between the Hizmet movement's civic activities and the expressly religious activities of the classical Nurcu missionary groups, Suleyman Tunahan or the *nakshibendis* of Osman Nuri Topbaş. While these latter groups devote their efforts to the construction of mosques, madrasas and the dissemination of Islamic literature, members of the Hizmet movement prefer to keep their Islamic faith discreet.

Despite the movement's non religious reputation and the good standing of its schools, growing fears over Islamism in the CAC region since 2001 have cast greater suspicion on the movement and generated concerns that it has a hidden Islamist agenda. Anti-Gülen incidents first took place in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, the predominately ethnically Turkish regions of Russia in the Caucasus. Russian authorities banned Hizmet schools claiming that they broadcast Islamism and pan-Turkism.³⁹ Moscow's actions have a tendency to reverberate throughout the post-Soviet world. As a result, most Central Asian countries have dramatically increased their surveillance of the movement's activities in recent years. This sudden rise in anti-Gülen sentiment begs the question: why are Eurasian leaders becoming skeptical now?

The rising anti-Hizmet sentiment in the CAC region appears to have less to do with the movement's activities in the region than they do with souring diplomatic relations between CAC countries and Turkey. In Uzbekistan, Hizmet schools have been banished since 2001 because of the ongoing political crisis between Tashkent and Ankara. In Turkmenistan, the government has only recently, in July of 2011, decided to close some Hizmet schools. In Azerbaijan, where the image of Turkey and the modern secularist "Turkish model" has been excellent for almost twenty years, the government has significantly strengthened its control over Hizmet activities and its schools over the past two years.⁴⁰

This sudden distrust of the Gülen movement in some CAC countries (this is less pronounced in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) has resulted from developments in Turkey, and principally, the rise to power of the Islam-oriented AK Party. The ruling elites in the CAC region are still deeply secularist in their orientation, and Soviet in their mindset. The political ascent of the AKP in 2002 shattered their image of the secular Turkish model, and they interpreted this as a sign that the

seemingly innocuous “Turkish schools” run by Gülen’s followers could surreptitiously be used to foster subversive Islamist ideas and political movements in the CAC region. It is excessive to describe the AKP as a strictly Islamist party; rather, it is more of a coalition that is comprised of Islamist elements and other religiously conservative groups, including a great number of the followers of Gülen. However, the post-Soviet political elites in the Turkish world deemed the AKP’s religious conservatism “too Muslim.” As such, critics in CAC countries have seen the rise of the AKP as a sign of the Hizmet movement’s gradual politicization in Turkey, and cited this as evidence that the movement’s foreign outreach is not devoid of political and ideological ambitions. Moreover, the Ergenekon scandal of 2007, in which the AKP government arrested hundreds of military officers and others on allegations of plotting to overthrow the government, was seen by many in the CAC region as a sign that the Islamist government, Gülen’s followers included, was settling accounts with the Kemalist “deep state” which had once bullied them.⁴¹ Many, in fact, regard the AKP-led crackdown as politically motivated, and as recent events have made clear, many innocent people have been punished on the basis of unsubstantiated accusations.

Despite the growing suspicions of the Hizmet movement because of its ties to the AKP in Turkey, it has continued to subtly exert Turkish influence in many parts of the CAC region. In important ways, this influence surpasses anything that the official outreach of the Turkish government has managed to achieve. Three things must be noted about the Hizmet movement’s regional influence. First, Gülen schools have allowed the Turkish language to be broadcast throughout Eurasia. In the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat, for example, Turkish has become the default language for many ethnic groups to communicate with one another. Indeed, it is almost as prevalent as Russian and more common than English. Second, in the economic sphere, entrepreneurs affiliated with the movement have created strong ties between Turkey and the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Perhaps most importantly, these business involvements have begun to contribute to the emergence of a new, market-oriented and entrepreneurial culture in post-Soviet societies. Third, as the Gülen movement has become transnational, it has allowed its members from Central Asia and the Caucasus to travel around the world and participate in school competitions and international business forums with people from other regions. This has exposed the CAC region to new economic and political ideas, and helped to deepen its connections to the wider world. The political fallout between the CAC and Turkey notwithstanding, the activities of the Gülen *cemaat* in the CAC region have contributed significantly to the opening of the region to the wider world after the collapse of the USSR.

Turkish Islam and the CAC's Future

TODAY, TURKEY'S INFLUENCE ACROSS THE GREATER TURKIC WORLD IS FAR LESS than what the proponents of pan-Turkism had once hoped for following the Soviet Union's collapse. Over the last two decades, Ankara's efforts to create a greater Turkic political union have generally faced resistance across the CAC region, and sometimes quite fiercely (as is the case with Uzbekistan.) But while Turkey hasn't gained much political influence, the country's religious and cultural influence in the CAC has grown significantly. The spread and appeal in the CAC of the pre-AKP era secular and modernizing "Turkish model" has been undeniable. Although we lack concrete indicators to measure the extent of this influence,⁴² Turkey's official religious outreach through the Diyanet has facilitated the shift in attitudes. Even in countries where these activities were stopped, such as Uzbekistan, Turkish secular republican ideas are today stronger in the CAC than they perhaps are in the AKP's Turkey.

Turkey's greatest influence in the CAC has come not from its official efforts, but through nongovernmental religious actors. The Hizmet movement's impact on the future of Central Asian society is not easy to define. For one thing, the movement's followers represent only a small portion of the population. Their educational networks, however, are extensive. Furthermore, their students largely come from the elite strata of society. Therefore, the Hizmet movement's impact on Central Asian society, and particularly on the rising generation of elites, is nonetheless noteworthy. For these reasons, the influence of the movement in the CAC region is likely to continue to grow in the future.

Islam as promoted by Gülen is a synthesis of mystical Islam, Turkish nationalism, modern humanism, and civic service. But it is not clear whether the movement's influence can even be characterized as "religious," or for that matter, as Islamist. Gülen schools have likely trained thousands of students in the CAC region. Some of these graduates have begun to occupy important positions in government, academia and the private sector. The first signs of their impact on the younger generation do not demonstrate a fundamentally Islamic influence. All of this begs the question: what kind of influence is the Hizmet movement having on the future of Central Asia? Such a question is especially difficult to answer because we do not yet have a sociological profile of a representative sample of

Hizmet graduates. Research into these subjects has only just begun; however, some tentative answers are worth considering.

First, the vast majority of Hizmet school graduates go to the best universities in their country and abroad. At the end of their studies they often get prestigious jobs in various fields of government, academia and the private sector. They are found in varying degrees of administration, and as diplomatic representatives of their countries abroad. Second, many graduates of these schools are distinguished by their secular outlooks. In most cases, they are socially conservative, but religion is not fundamental to their everyday concerns and does not affect their professional lives. In other words, students who graduated from these programs can be religiously conservative but also very secular and modern in their outlooks.

Through discussions with dozens of graduates of Gülen schools in Central Asia, Europe, the United States, Japan and India, I have observed that they have tended to demonstrate a uniform set of characteristics. As a group, these people are well-educated and well-integrated in their society; they have good jobs and they are generally cosmopolitan in their outlook. Their religious attitudes and practices, however, are considerably diverse. Some of them pray regularly, while others never pray. Some of them drink alcohol. In this way, the movement's resemblance to the Jesuit movement really is striking. In both cases, a network of educational institutions has been put in place by a religious order; however, the future of the educational system does not depend on the religiosity of its graduates.⁴³ Both movements strive to be holistic and to create a new religious community that emphasizes fellowship without destroying the individuality of its participants.

Outside of education, the Hizmet movement has also had a substantial economic impact in the post-Soviet CAC region. The many Hizmet-affiliated small- and medium-sized Turkish companies in the CAC are both a driver and a product of Turkish capitalism. Today, Turkey's economic influence in the region is greater than its political influence, and the regional spread of Hizmet schools and enterprises has actually contributed to the ongoing reform of the post-Soviet economic order. In the future, these civic and business associations will likely continue to counteract statist economic policies, not least because the Hizmet movement depends on the survival of these private enterprises. Over the longer term, therefore, it is possible that the movement's activities in business, media, education and various other civic initiatives could contribute to the development of civil society in the CAC. Religious movements played an indispensable role in the evolution of civil society and, by extension, to secular democracy in the West: Islamic movements like Hizmet could plausibly do the same in the CAC.

Despite the prestige of Hizmet schools in the CAC, the movement has also aroused suspicion in the region that they are harboring a political agenda. In recent years, distrust of the movement has grown substantially, and these perceptions are likely fueled by the persistence of an anti-Islamic “Soviet mentality.” More importantly, regional suspicions of Turkish religious outreach have probably had less to do with the Hizmet movement’s actual activities than with political developments in Turkey and what many regard as the country’s steady turn toward Islamism. The rise to power of the Islamist-oriented AKP since 2002 would not have been possible without the Hizmet movement. Consequently, many in the CAC have begun to worry that the movement is pursuing an Islamist agenda in their own countries.

The eruption at the end of 2013 of a still ongoing political feud inside the AKP between elements aligned with Erdoğan and others aligned with Gülen has reinforced suspicions in the Caucasus and Central Asia that the movement does, in fact, have a political agenda. It is likely, moreover, that this “open war” inside the AKP will continue; Erdoğan’s faction does not want to share its power, and Gülen knows that if Erdoğan succeeds in establishing the state’s control over his movement’s private schools in Turkey that his movement will face an existential threat. Insofar as the struggle inside Turkey persists, it will likely not remain confined to Turkey. The rise of the AKP marked the start of a “Golden Age” for the spread of the Hizmet movement internationally, and the movement had benefited from the support of the friendly government in Ankara. But it now appears that the movement and Erdoğan are on different trajectories. As divisions within the AKP worsen, Erdoğan may also seek to punish the Hizmet movement in other countries. If, however, the Hizmet movement continues to emerge as allies of Turkey’s secular and democratic political opposition to Erdoğan, then governments in the CAC will likely become less fearful that the movement has an Islamist agenda.

When Turkish leaders decided in 1991 to utilize religion in their outreach to the greater Turkish world, their core intentions were to expand their geopolitical influence. After twenty years of multi-leveled cooperation between Turkey and the Central Asian and Caucasian republics, Turkish outreach has been most successful in the religious and cultural sphere. The new middle classes of the CAC that have been educated by the Diyanet and especially through Hizmet schools “à la Turque” represent a clear success in the implementation of Turkish soft power. These new middle classes have already played an important role in facilitating greater connections between Turkey and the CAC in the realms of business, language, and civil society. It is safe to assume these connections formed by this religious outreach will be critical to the future development of the concept of

a greater “Turkish world.” It is, moreover, ironic when we consider that Turkey’s religious outreach has helped to promote a more open economic order and cosmopolitan outlook in the CAC, all while Turkey under the AKP government has become more internationally isolated because of its own ideological agendas.

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terms. Perceived as evidence of democratic progress by some and as ‘just getting even’ by others, the trial marked the end of the omnipotence of the military. It was alleged that the Gülen movement helped these trials through its networks of judicial influence. They settled their accounts with the military and Kemalist circles where they had long been bullied.

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The Fractured Jihadi Movement in the Sahara

By Jean-Pierre Filiu

THE RISE OF AL-QAEDA IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB (AQIM) WAS NOT the result of a grand strategic design. Instead, jihadi networks based in the Sahara began cooperating with local criminal gangs to seize the opportunity and exploit weakness in local states. This blend of common gangsterism and jihadism is one of a kind, and the AQIM splinter group Movement of Jihad and Unity in Western Africa (MUJAO) has effectively made it the basis of its operations. The French-led intervention in Northern Mali at the beginning of 2013 dealt a devastating blow to the AQIM jihadi coalition. The surviving commandos, however, now appear to have regrouped in Southern Libya. Meanwhile, groups who chose the generic denomination of Ansar al-Sharia (AS) continue to present a significant threat for the post-revolutionary transition in Tunisia even more than in Libya.

Jihadi activism in North Africa has followed two major trends since the turn of the century. In Algeria, the Islamic Armed Group (GIA, standing for *Groupe islamique armé*) escalated the frequency and severity of its violent activities throughout the nineties. Initially, they targeted the security forces and Algerian “unbelievers,” i.e. secularist or French-speaking individuals. In time, the GIA added competing Islamist groups and whole populations who had demonstrated loyalty to those rival groups to their list of enemies. By 1997, a wave of jihadi mass killings precipitated a crisis within the GIA: the escalating scope and intensity of

the group's violence exacerbated its latent internal tensions resulting in purges and bloody feuds. The GIA's subsequent downfall produced the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC, standing for *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat*) that pledged in 1998 to topple the "Infidel" regime in Algeria.

As the GIA tore itself apart in Algeria, the Qaddafi regime in Libya was crushing the Islamic Libyan Fighting Group (ILFG) in the Eastern province of Cyrenaica. The ILFG conceded defeat in 1995 following a drawn out guerilla campaign. Many survivors fled to Afghanistan in the course of 1996–97 and joined Al-Qaeda-sponsored "training camps" in the Taliban-controlled part of the country. Libyan nationals such as Abu Faraj al-Libi and Abu Yahya al-Libi subsequently advanced to commanding positions in the Al-Qaeda hierarchy. In the meantime, Osama bin Laden's organization began absorbing two other regional militant groups—the Tunisian Islamic Fighting Group (GICT, following the French acronym), and the Moroccan counterpart, GICM. Both groups had stemmed from Tunisian and Moroccan guesthouses (*madhafa*) for jihadi volunteers in Afghanistan. Notably, the first major terror attack that Al-Qaeda managed to launch after 9/11 was against a Tunisian synagogue, on the Djerba Island, on April 11, 2002.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003 boosted the cooperation between the various jihadi networks. Notably, one out of five suicide attacks in Iraq in 2005 were attributed to Algerian "volunteers."¹ Abdelmalek Droukdal, who became the GSPC leader in 2004, broadened the scope of his organization's activities far beyond Algeria and stressed the importance of recruiting and training fighters to be sent to the Iraqi battlefield. On September 11, 2006, Droukdal marked the fifth anniversary of the terror attacks in New York and Washington by pledging allegiance to bin Laden. Four months later, the GSPC officially changed its name to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

AQIM's Failure

OSAMA BIN LADEN AND HIS EGYPTIAN DEPUTY, AYMÁN AL-ZAWAHIRI, HAD TWO main ambitions for the nascent AQIM. First, North Africa was to become the launching pad for renewed terror attacks on European soil. Second, the Algerian-base of the jihadi network was to abandon their predominantly nationalistic approach and focus its terror activities more broadly on the "Islamic Maghreb." AQIM, however, proved unable to fulfill either of these roles.

AQIM launched murderous terror attacks in Algiers, on April 11 and December 11, 2007; they were limited, however to Algerian territory. AQIM failed to infiltrate France, Spain or Italy. In Europe, the organization did not succeed in recruiting either operatives or undercover agents. Moreover, the top- and mid-level cadres in AQIM remained Algerian, and their nationalistic focus on revolution in Algeria remained strong and prevailed over al-Qaeda's vision of creating an Islamic Maghreb. At the same time, the Algerian domination of the AQIM network antagonized the Moroccan GICM and the Tunisian GICT. The Libyan militants of ILFG became increasingly divided into two groups: a minority that established itself in Afghanistan and Pakistan and gradually merged with AQC (Al Qaeda Central), and a majority faction who chose to return to Libya despite threats of imprisonment. This Libyan faction eventually publicly condemned Al-Qaeda's violence² and struck a deal in 2010 with Qaddafi's regime.

Having failed to gain a foothold in Europe, Droukdal was resigned to strike the "global" targets within his operational environment. This second-best option relied heavily on the Saharan *katibas*,³ or jihadist brigades who were initially established in the nineties for logistical and support missions than actual acts of terrorism. Mokhtar Belmokhtar was the veteran of this jihadi blend of smuggling, where he gained his nickname as "Mister Marlboro." His *katiba* mostly targeted foreigners in Mauritania, killing four French tourists in December 2007. Abdelhamid Abu Zeid, also a smuggler by trade, came later to prominence, but his own *katiba* benefitted from the exceptional mobility of its commandos, who managed in 2008 to kidnap Western hostages in Southern Tunisia as well as in the countryside surrounding Niamey, the capital city of Niger.

Warlord Rivalry in the Sahara

THE SOUTHWARD MOVEMENT OF JIHADI ACTIVITIES UNDERMINED DROUKDAL'S actual authority over Belmokhtar and Abu Zeid, his two commanders in the Sahara. The fact that AQIM was becoming financially dependent on the support of the various smuggling operations in the Sahara (including the ransoms paid to secure the release of Western hostages) further complicated matters. The competition for war bounties fueled a rivalry between Belmokhtar and Abu Zeid. This rivalry, in turn, stimulated a new bout in jihadi inspired activity all over the Sahel

region. In time, Mali's government ceased its efforts to establish law and order where AQIM had taken root. In June 2009, Abu Zeid ordered the mafia-style execution of a senior intelligence officer in Timbuktu. When the Malian army responded with force, AQIM succeeded in orchestrating a devastating ambush. Consequently, Bamako relinquished control of the immense Sahara region in the north of the country where the jihadist *katibas* could then begin to operate freely.

In the summer of 2009, northern Mali became, with the exception of its main cities (Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal), a safe haven for AQIM. Belmokhtar's and Abu Zeid's *katibas* launched dramatic raids into the neighboring countries. Mauritania managed to progressively roll back the jihadist networks in its territory. Its army even pursued militants into Malian territory thereby highlighting Bamako's passivity towards the jihadi presence. Niger, having suffered a bold attack against an expatriate compound in Arlit in September 2010, beefed up its military presence in the northern provinces as well as in the border regions with Mali. Even Algeria was not spared from the violence of MUJAO, which recruited mainly sub-Saharan African militants who had become dissatisfied with the Algerian-focused AQIM.

Belmokhtar and Abu Zeid's rivalry inside AQIM intensified as AQIM and the MUJAO competed for influence and resources. An aggressive campaign to kidnap Western hostages resulted. Meanwhile AQIM propaganda mainly targeted France, especially through the videos disseminated on the Internet by the jihadi media wing, Al-Andalus (a term designating the whole of former Muslim Spain, not only the modern province of Andalusia.) When American forces killed Osama bin Laden in May 2011, Droukdal refused to pledge allegiance to his successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri. Consequently AQIM, while still an Al-Qaeda "franchise group," became autonomous from the "global" jihadi matrix.

The Rise and Fall of the Sahelistan

THOUSANDS OF MALIANS WHO HAD JOINED QADDAFI'S MERCENARY FORCE, KNOWN as the "Islamic legion," disbanded after the collapse of the Libyan dictatorship in the fall of 2011. Most were ethnically Tuareg, and thus the ranks of the supporters of a former Tuareg guerilla leader, Iyad Ag Ghali, swelled after the legion's dispersal. Having been exiled as the consular representative of Mali in Saudi Arabia, Ag Ghali had returned to become the main intermediary in the complex

dealings to secure the release of Western hostages held by Abu Zeid. Ag Ghali soon became strong enough to establish his own Islamist militia, Ansar Eddine, or the Defenders of Religion. He could then play simultaneously on the jihadi cooperation with AQIM, and on the ethnic solidarity with the separatist MNLA, which stands for National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (the Tuareg denomination of northern Mali).

In January 2012, an unstable coalition of jihadi and separatist groups progressively overwhelmed the last military outposts in northern Mali. In March of that year, an army coup in Bamako catalyzed the government's collapse in the northern part of the country. By April, AQIM, the MUJAO and Ansar Eddine had turned against their former allies, the MNLA, and expelled them from the area. A jihadist regime assumed power, and began enforcing Sharia law complete with a full ban on alcohol, music, tobacco and barbaric punishments for "criminals." Each component of the jihadist coalition had its own fiefdom, with AQIM based in Timbuktu, Ansar Eddine in Kidal, and the MUJAO in Gao.

Observers warned against the danger of the emergence of a "Sahelistan" that could prove as perilous for the region and beyond as was Afghanistan under Taliban rule. In November 2012, Abu Zeid successfully expelled Belmokhtar from AQIM after years of intrigue and rivalry between them. The leadership of the jihadist network accused Belmokhtar of "being linked to the organization only by slogan," of failing to strike the "crusader alliance," and, more prosaically, of keeping most of the ransoms to himself.⁴ A humiliated but undeterred Belmokhtar transformed his *katiba* into a new group: "Those who sign with their own blood." In a defiant gesture towards Abu Zeid and AQIM, he strengthened his relationship with the MUJAO.

Francois Hollande, the newly elected President of France in May 2012, beat the drums of the "Sahelistan" peril and French diplomats moved steadily to convince the Economic Community of the West African States (ECWAS), the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and the United States, of the need for military action in northern Mali. But the constitutional collapse in Bamako aggravated the complexity of the equation. Furthermore, Algeria, the main regional power, was fully committed to supporting negotiations between the Malian junta and Ansar Eddine, with talks mostly held in Burkina Faso.

In January 2013, thousands of jihadis seized the southern strategic city of Konna. The Malian president requested France's immediate action to stop an advance that could have very well developed into a full-fledged offensive against Bamako. Algeria, furious at having been outplayed by Ansar Eddine, discretely opened its airspace to the French air force. Subsequent air operations contained

the jihadi offensive, and then rolled it back into the far northern regions of Mali. French ground troops then liberated Gao and Timbuktu, before moving up to Kidal with the critical help of Chadian forces.

In the second half of February 2013, French and Chadian troops launched a devastating operation against the jihadi stronghold of the Amettetai valley, in the extreme northeast of Mali.⁵ French forces successfully killed Abu Zeid as he was trying to escape. According to French military sources, 700 out of an estimated 2,000 jihadis were killed, while another 200 were captured.⁶ The operation successfully dismantled “Sahelistan:” its forces were defeated, its arsenal was destroyed and its documentation was seized. This devastating blow, however, did not prove to be fatal for the jihadist movement.

The Challenges Ahead

THE FRENCH INTERVENTION HAS UNDOUBTEDLY BROKEN A TREND OF “Talibanization” of the Tuareg. The peace, however, has yet to be fully won. The negotiating process was held once again in Burkina Faso (President Compaoré is the official mediator on behalf of ECWAS). However, this time the government did not face the outlawed and crippled Ansar Eddine, but the MNLA whose fighters patrol the streets of Kidal. Meanwhile, Algeria, the traditional mediator in Northern Mali, has been unable to secure the release of three consular agents that MUJAO abducted in Gao in April 2012. Furthermore, Algeria suffered an unprecedented attack against the In Amenas oil and gas production facility in mid-January 2013 on its own soil (37 Hostages and 29 terrorists killed.) Belmokhtar claimed responsibility for the attack on behalf of the “authentic Al-Qaeda.”⁷

Such a statement by an excluded leader of AQIM is yet another extraordinary indication of how the jihadist trend has come to be split in the region. Belmokhtar is pretending to speak on behalf of Al-Qaeda Central, which has never endorsed him officially. However, since Droukdal has never pledged allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri, he is unable to ask him to ostracize the dissidents from AQIM, now an autonomous franchise that functions independently of Al-Qaeda. This centrifugal trend is most probably irreversible.

Following his death, Abou Zeid’s authority and power have been transferred to his former deputy, the Reghaia-born Jamel Okacha, better known by his moniker Yahya Abou al-Hammam. Drukda, still holed out in Northern Algeria,

stays conspicuously silent, leaving a new character on the media frontline, Abou Obeida al-Annabi (from the Algerian coastal town of Annaba). The AQIM leadership thus remains overwhelmingly Algerian and stays at odds with the “African-centered” MUJAO, led by the Mauritanian Hamada Ould Mohammed Kheirou (a.k.a. Abou Ghoum-Ghoum).

The key to the long-term stability of Mali is political. For this reason France has pushed for Malian general elections as early as possible. It is also the reason why Paris has insisted on transferring the main burden of the military restructuring to the EU, while the regional African contingent will be the core of the MINUSMA, or integrated UN mission to stabilize Mali. The international donors responded by pledging more than 4 billion dollars to help Mali’s recovery.

The agreement on Northern Mali signed between the government and former separatists in June 2013 paved the way for a nationwide presidential election the following month. Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, nicknamed IBK, was voted in with more than 80 percent of the ballots. Such a vibrant legitimacy has been crucial in the arduous process of institution building, or re-building. Significantly, some Malian reformed jihadis have been lured back into the political game, with even two previous Ansar Eddine leaders running for the presidential party during the November 2013 parliamentary elections.

The success of the anti-AQIM campaign in Mali certainly aggravated the disintegration and the fragmentation of the jihadi networks in the Sahel. But the attack against the French embassy in Libya, on April 23, 2013, fueled the fear of a blowback, with retreating jihadis moving northwards to the Mediterranean. The authorities in Niamey point at Southern Libya as the new jihadi safe haven, from which suicide-commandos moved to simultaneously strike Agadez and Arlit on May 23, 2013 killing 20 soldiers. Belmokhtar claimed to have helped the MUJAO in that murderous attack.

In August 2013, the longstanding cooperation between the MUJAO and Belmokhtar’s supporters materialized in the founding of a new unified outfit, the Mourabitoun (in reference to the Islamic fighters who spread Islam in the Sahara in the eleventh century). This new group seems to be now the main jihadi player in the region, even though AQIM retains a threatening terrorist capacity and a strong propaganda machine (with a strident video attack in September 2013 against Morocco). Meanwhile, following the demise of the repressive regimes in Tunisia and Libya, both countries have seen the rise of a new kind of militancy, both salafi and jihadi, under the generic denomination of Ansar al-Sharia.

Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia

THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF THE COMPLEX ANSAR AL-SHARIA TREND IN NORTH Africa is the historical cadre of the “global” jihadist movement Seifallah Ben Hassine, better known by his moniker Abu Iyad al-Tounissi (the Tunisian). He was one of the key leaders of the Islamic Tunisian Fighting Group (GICT), since he managed in Peshawar the *madhafa* of the Tunisian jihadis. He worked in that capacity with Al-Qaeda Central on a regular basis. Turkish intelligence captured him in 2003 during one of his liaison missions, and discreetly extradited him to Tunisia. There he faced charges, for which he was tried and sentenced to 63 years in prison. His crimes included masterminding the assassination of Ahmed Shah Massoud, the anti-Taliban resistance commander, in September 2001.

Abu Iyad was, therefore, not a prisoner of conscience. After all, the Tunisian justice system had rightfully condemned his terrorist activities. Following President Ben Ali’s flight on January 14, 2011, however, Tunisia gave general amnesty to the former regime’s political prisoners. Abu Iyad enjoyed a certain prestige among jihadists due to his status as a “veteran” from the Afghan battlefields and from the dictator’s jails. He quickly organized “supporters of the Sharia” (Ansar al-Sharia/AS). He rejected the legalist path chosen by the Ennahda Islamist party, which, under the leadership of Shaykh Rashid al-Ghannouchi, won the elections for the Constituent Assembly on October 23, 2011 and promoted its secretary-general, Hamadi Jebali, to the head of the government.

The Ennahda leadership has stressed the need for democratic procedures in post-revolutionary Tunisia. Ansar al-Sharia, by contrast, portrays itself as a radical alternative to the country’s ongoing democratic transition, and advocates the absolute supremacy of the divine law. In post-2011 Tunisia, there have been no Salafist groups equivalent to the popular ones in Egypt that have abandoned their traditional rejection of the electoral process. What might be broadly described as the Salafi current in Tunisia is divided between, on the one side, the most intolerant part of ennahda militants, and on the other, a wide range of extra-parliamentary and fiercely rejectionist groups. Ansar al-Sharia is now the most powerful and violent of these latter anti-democratic groups. The deep fissures within the Salafist trend helps to explain why other Islamists, including the ones in government, have been so divided themselves over what policy toward extra-parliamentary Salafist groups should be. Shaykh Ghannouchi has called for the appeasement of

the Salafis, while the Islamist Minister of Interior, Ali Laarayedh, has favored a more aggressive approach towards them.⁸

While Ennahda was obviously divided on this issue, Ansar al-Sharia never gave any indication of toning down its rhetoric and even intensified its public provocations. In May 2012, its “conference” in Kairouan gathered thousands of militants carrying black banners,⁹ while a hardline phalanx cheered in front of Abu Iyad, “Obama, Obama, we are all Osama.”¹⁰ This extremist bravado set the stage for the adoption by this “conference” of a roadmap to an “Islamic state.” The realization of this would involve, among other projects, the development of “Islamic tourism” (which would break away with West-oriented beach tourism, so vital for the economy of the coastal zones).

This Tunisian precedent has also inspired a coalition of *katibas* fighting in the Eastern province of Cyrenaica in neighboring Libya. They coalesced after Qaddafi’s fall into their local brand of Ansar al-Sharia. Their leader, Muhammad al-Zahawi had a similar experience under Qaddafi as did Abou Iyad under Ben Ali: they are roughly the same age, and spent a formative time in prison for political crimes. Zahawi is distinguished from Abou Iyad, however, in that he did not fight in Afghanistan, but in Libya proper, which increased his group’s prestige in defiant Benghazi. Such is evident in a request from the largest hospital in Benghazi to Ansar al-Sharia for protection against rival armed groups.

The Sequels to 9/11

THE DISSEMINATION ON THE INTERNET OF “THE INNOCENCE OF MUSLIMS,” a video slander against the Prophet Mohammed, produced in California by a Coptic extremist (previously tried for various swindles), played directly into the propagandizing of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia and in Libya. They used it to mark with blood the eleventh anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks, in another dramatic instance of jihadi opportunism. In Benghazi on September 11, 2012, Ansar al-Sharia targeted the U.S. consulate with a full-fledged military assault, murdering Chris Stevens, the American ambassador, and several others. The population of Benghazi, appreciative of the active solidarity Stevens had displayed during the long months of the war against Qaddafi, was incensed. After the embassy attacks, popular protests against Ansar al-Sharia forced the militia to evacuate Benghazi.

In Tunisia, Abou Iyad’s followers attacked the U.S. Embassy on September 14,

2012. The rioters quickly overwhelmed the Tunisian security forces, and the Presidential Guard was forced to take control of the mission. The government managed to contain the crowd, but the damage done to the diplomatic premises was substantial. Abu Iyad appeared one last time at the Fath mosque in Tunis to galvanize his supporters before going underground on September 18. The police dragnet has, as yet, not managed to catch him. The Jebali government, however, has since stood firm against the terrorists, letting two Ansar al-Sharia hunger strikers die in jail without budging. Jebali's replacement by Laarayedh as the prime minister in March 2013 could only solidify this tough line against Ansar al-Sharia.

Egypt also saw violent protests at the U.S. Embassy on the eleventh anniversary of 9/11. Muhammad al-Zawahiri, the very brother of Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader in charge of Al-Qaeda since Bin Laden's death, played a key role in the unrest. An Afghan veteran, Ahmed Ashush was also a prominent leader in the attacks. Ashush, having been released after Mubarak's demise in February 2011, is eager to promote his jihadi credo against the legalist and political approach that is now proffered by the Egyptian Salafis. In November 2012, Ashush established officially the Egyptian branch of Ansar al-Sharia and his jihadist rhetoric clearly echoes the propaganda of his sister organizations in Tunisia and Libya. He vilified the Muslim Brotherhood elected president, Mohammed Morsi, as "illegitimate" for failing to impose full-fledged Islamic law, and he scorned with nearly the same violence the mainstream Salafi attempt to play a central role on the political scene.

The Syrian Magnet

THE REVOLUTION IN SYRIA AGAINST BASHAR AL-ASSAD'S DICTATORSHIP HAS generated deep emotions in Libya. Not only did the two despotic regimes share many attributes, but both populations suffered at the hands of their security forces. The "Green Square," in the capital's center, next to Tripoli's old town, was renamed "Martyrs' Square" after Qaddafi's fall. A permanent tent stands there, where gifts and support for the Syrian revolution are welcome, but also where volunteers can enlist for "jihad" against the Assad regime.¹¹ The "New Libya" has severed all relationships with the Damascus dictatorship and has granted its full diplomatic recognition to the revolutionary leadership.¹²

Libya's recent history has made the country fertile ground for those who aspire

to wage “jihad” in Syria. A Libyan national heads the “Oumma brigade” in Idlib Province despite the fact that it recruits overwhelmingly among Syrians.¹³ This brigade stays out of the realm of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), the military arm of the revolutionary coalition.

In Egypt, former jihadi activists along with self-proclaimed Salafis and even some Muslim Brothers pay their debts and write their final wills before leaving to Syria. In contrast to Libya, however, there is little consensus on the Syrian issue in Egypt where the Nasserist, unionist or liberal opposition often denounces a mythical American or Zionist “plot” against Assad.

The Syrian War is even more polarizing in Tunisia. Wild estimates circulate about the number of Tunisian volunteers in Syria, despite the government’s official figure of approximately eight hundred. Consequently, the Syrian conflict is breeding anxiety about the eventual return of war-savvy and radicalized fighters. Ansar al-Sharia aggravates the climate by paying tribute to its “martyrs” who have fallen in Syria and by praising Jabhat al-Nusra, the jihadi rival of the nationalist FSA. The mufti of the Tunisian Republic, Shaykh Othman Battikh, found this trend so disturbing that, on April 19, 2013, he publicly condemned a jihad waged in Syria against other Muslims as illegitimate.¹⁴

A public showdown between the Tunisian government and the country’s Islamist militants occurred on May 19, 2013, when Tunis banned the third conference that Ansar al-Sharia planned to stage in the central city of Kairouan. The police set checkpoints around the town and it patrolled its streets. The ensuing struggle between police and militants resulted in at least one death. The Laarayedh government, however, held fast and the tough line prevailed inside the Ennahda party. A vast majority of the Tunisian population, fearful of the rising tide of jihadi violence, backed the Islamist prime minister.

The Jebel Chambi, a mountainous range close to the Algerian border, became a safe haven for AQIM-linked commandos, where two Tunisian soldiers were killed by an IED on June 6, 2013. The southern border with Libya is also a nexus for intertwined jihadi and smuggling activities. The bumpy political transition is therefore vulnerable to terrorist outbreaks. Such is evident in the two suicide attacks, which fortunately failed, on the second anniversary of the first free elections in Tunisia.

The revolutionary process in Tunisia, Egypt and in Libya has deeply impacted the jihadi movement in North Africa, but in a far more complicated way than anyone initially envisioned. In Egypt as well as in Libya, reformed jihadis have run for elections under their own banner, the Building and Development Party for the Egyptian Gamaa Islamiyya, and the Al-Watan (Nation) party in Libya, led

by Abdelhakim Belhadj, one of the founders of the ILFG. In Tunisia, by contrast, Ansar al-Sharia draws heavily on its radical opposition to the ongoing democratic transition, bets on the failure of this transition and attempts to exploit any crisis in the meantime.

The military takeover in Egypt against the Muslim Brotherhood in the summer of 2013 has created a radically new situation. Much like Saudi Arabia actively supported the deposition of President Morsi, the Salafis eventually rallied to the new rulers, with Adly Mansour as interim head of state and General Sissi as Minister of Defense (and the country's real strong man). So far, the Muslim Brotherhood apparatus has been effectively dismantled with a relatively low level of violent response.

The Egyptian armed forces are publicly waging a campaign against "terrorism" that strikes a deep chord in a population plagued by an unprecedented level of insecurity. It would nevertheless be highly dangerous for the top brass to bet on a limited terrorist response to what they believe will be the final blow to the Brotherhood. Instead, the main locus of jihadi violence remains the Sinai Peninsula and has little to do with the three-generation conflict between the Egyptian military and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The most worrying development in the Sinai is indeed the growing identification of the local tribes with jihadist activists, while the armed forces are increasingly perceived as an illegitimate, or worse, an occupying force. This "Talibanization" process of the Sinai Bedouins could still be reversed, the same way the French intervention in Northern Mali could halt the "Talibanization" of the Tuareg population. But Mali proved that dismantling the jihadist networks is only one part of the equation, and that even after a successful military campaign, the terrorist threat looms on the political horizon.

Each of these evolutions depends heavily on their national context, despite their obvious connections. But there are no "connecting vessels" between AQIM and the Mourabitoun, on one side, and the various branches of Ansar al-Sharia, on the other.

The real challenge that the weak post-dictatorship regimes are facing is how to avoid the trap of an all-encompassing repression that the jihadists will try to trigger by their provocations. It is too early to assess the potential impact of the jihadist returnees from the Syrian battlefield, since this will depend on the actual outcome of the Syrian revolution as well as on the possibilities to rein in the "veterans" when they eventually come back home. However, Tunisians and Libyans are already, along with Saudis, among the top "contingents" of foreign fighters in Syria, and the return of these battle-hardened fighters to their

homelands will undoubtedly reshape the now fractured jihadist landscape across North Africa.

NOTES

1. *Jane's Intelligence review*, June 2006.
2. ILFG, *Al-Murajaat* (The Revisions), Cairo, Madbouli, 2010.
3. *Katiba* (plural *kataeb*) literally means battalions, but has often been translated as “brigades.” This term was already applied to the Algerian guerilla units fighting the French occupation during the “Liberation war” (1954–62).
4. These expressions are extracted from a lengthy letter sent by AQIM top leadership to Belmokhtar in October 2012, and retrieved by the Associated Press in Timbuktu a few months later.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/al-qaeda/10087573/Mokhtar-Belmokhtar-taken-to-task-by-al-Qaeda-extracts.html>.
5. *Le Monde*, March 8, 2013.
6. *Le Monde*, April 27, 2013.
7. AFP, Nouakchott, January 20, 2013.
8. *Le Monde*, March 21, 2012.
9. Those black banners, with the Islamic *shahada* in white letters (There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his prophet), have been mistakenly described as “Al-Qaeda flags,” while a wide range of Islamic activists display them, far beyond the *jihadi* hardliners.
10. *Le Monde*, November 14, 2012.
11. Author’s visit on Tripoli’s “Martyrs’ square,” on June 10, 2012.
12. Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Le Nouveau Moyen-Orient*, Paris, Fayard, 2013, p. 276.
13. *Ibid.*, p.248.
14. AFP, Tunis, April 19, 2013.

Nigerian al-Qaedaism

By Jacob Zenn

ABUBAKAR SHEKAU DECLARED THAT THE “JIHAD HAS BEGUN” IN JULY, 2010. His Nigeria-based movement, known to outsiders as “Boko Haram” but among its members as “*Jama’atu Ahlisunnah Lida’awati Wal-Jihad*,” subsequently emerged as Africa’s most violent insurgent group. Since Boko Haram’s first attack in September 2010, the group has murdered more than 4,000 Christians, government officials, Muslim leaders, and civilians in Nigeria. In 2013, for the first time, Boko Haram gained control over more than ten municipalities in northeastern Nigeria.¹ Their alarming expansion prompted President Goodluck Jonathan to declare a State of Emergency resulting in military operations against Boko Haram’s safe havens in Nigeria’s borderlands with Niger, Chad and Cameroon. The army’s efforts succeeded only temporarily: Boko Haram reemerged at the end of 2013 and has carried out massacres of civilians on a greater scale than any time since the start of the insurgency.

In 2011, a faction of al-Qaeda-trained Boko Haram members formed *Jama’atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan* (Supporters of the Muslims in the Land of Black Africans), more commonly known as “Ansaru.” Ansaru’s *amir* declared that Shekau was “inhumane” for murdering defectors from Boko Haram to Ansaru and unfit to lead his own organization. On an operational level, the creation of Ansaru was part of former Al Qaeda commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar’s strategy to leave al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb’s (AQIM) North African zone of operations and “spread throughout the entire Sahara.”² Like Belmokhtar, Ansaru has stated that

it would target foreigners and foreign interests and the Nigerian government, but not Nigerian Muslims and Christians save for instances of “self-defense.”

Since 2011, both Boko Haram and Ansaru have risen to prominence among international jihadi groups with alarming speed. Western analysis of the two groups and their ideologies, however, is still lacking. The U.S. State Department and the British Home Office designated both groups terrorist organizations years after Boko Haram’s first attack and Ansaru’s first kidnapping. Few Western journalists and national security professionals are familiar with these two movements’ origins and ideologies. Consequently, the Western media frequently confuses the two groups. Such was evident in March of 2013 when the press misleadingly reported that Boko Haram kidnapped and murdered seven foreign engineers in Bauchi in March 2013, when it was actually Ansaru. Similarly, the Western media reported that Boko Haram was behind the UN Headquarters bombing in August, 2011, but the network of militants who carried out the attack were more closely tied to Ansaru and AQIM. Such misrepresentations cause confusion as to the identity of different Islamist players, what their ideological objectives are, and what to expect from them in the future.

Three questions concerning the groups’ rise remain unanswered: why did Muhammad Yusuf’s brand of Salafism gain such wide traction in northeastern Nigeria from 2002 to 2009? How was Abubakar Shekau able to transform Yusuf’s ideology into the basis for a jihadist insurgency in northern Nigeria after Yusuf’s death in 2009? Under what circumstances did Ansaru develop its pan-West African ideology and opposition to Shekau when it formed in 2011? This article finds answers to these questions in the ideologies of Yusuf, Shekau and Mamman Nur. The article emphasizes the influence of Saudi Arabia’s brand of Salafism, known as *wahabbism*, on Boko Haram’s ideology and the role Algerian jihadists played in influencing Boko Haram’s understanding of jihad itself.

Who Was Yusuf?

BOKO HARAM FOUNDER MUHAMMAD YUSUF WAS BORN IN NORTHEASTERN Nigeria’s Yobe State in 1970. As a youth, he experimented with the leading Islamist currents of the day. Among them was Ibrahim al-Zakzaky’s Iranian-funded Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN).³ The IMN drew ideological inspiration from the thought of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, particularly Hassan al-Banna and Said Qutb, who revived the concept of an Islamic State governed by Sharia

Law in the first half of the twentieth century.⁴ Al-Zakzaky, however, incorporated Khomeinist doctrine into the IMN's ideology. His organization imitated Iran's anti-American rhetoric and trained a paramilitary wing for "providing security to members of the movement" modeled after Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah.⁵ Muhammad Yusuf, however, broke away from al-Zakzaky in the 1980s after he and other Nigerian Sunni Muslims began to believe the IMN had a "Shi'a agenda" that included the veneration of Iranian leaders and the observance of Shi'a religious rights.

Yusuf and other Nigerian Sunnis began to oppose the IMN in part because Saudi Arabia began funding Salafist groups in Africa in the 1980s to counter Iran's growing influence on the continent.⁶ Years after Yusuf's departure from the IMN, he stated that Nigeria had "Sunni groups that started as Muslim Brothers, but ended up turning into a Shi'a sect."⁷ He added that one of the causes for division among Muslims in Nigeria was that "some fight as Shi'a, others as Sufi and others as a mixture of everything."⁸ Yusuf would later come to believe that only Muslims should follow "true Salafists" and all others were infidels.⁹

Two of the Salafist groups that emerged in northern Nigeria in the 1980s that Yusuf joined included *Jama'atul Tajdid Islam* (Movement for the Revival of Islam), or "JTI," and *Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'a wa Ikamatu Sunna* (Movement for the Removal of Innovation and Reestablishment of Sunni Islam), or "Izala." In 1994, Yusuf became the Borno State *amir* of JTI, which had been formed in Kano.¹⁰ That same year, JTI activists reportedly beheaded a Christian trader who allegedly used a page of the Koran as tissue paper. JTI partisans responded to the offense by parading the impaled head on the streets of Kano, resulting in a wave of animosity between Muslims and Christians that has persisted until the present day.¹¹ JTI was comprised of radicalized IMN members and, like al-Zakzaky's movement, rejected the secular Nigerian government as well as the northern Nigerian Hausa Muslim leaders who worked with the government. Unlike the IMN, however, the JTI followed Saudi-Arabian Salafist doctrine, not Shiism or the pan-Islamic ideology of the Iranian Revolution.

Later, in the 1990s and 2000s, Yusuf became affiliated with the Izala movement, which subsumed JTI in 1999. He also studied under the prominent Saudi-trained imam Sheikh Jafa'ar Adam.¹² By 2002, however, Yusuf himself had grown in prominence and openly challenged Jafa'ar Adam in sermons about Salafist doctrine. In 2002 Yusuf also became the Borno representative on Sheikh Ibrahim Datti Ahmed's Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria that supported Yusuf and his expanding followership. Datti Ahmed's organization sought to Islamize Northern Nigeria. In 2000, Ahmed stated that Muslims were "ready to go to war" if his

version of Sharia Law was not followed.¹³ In time, however Yusuf and others in the Supreme Council became dissatisfied with the implementation of Sharia law in Nigeria. Consequently, Yusuf and other members formed a new movement called *Ahl-Sunna wal Jamma* (Companions of the Prophet). Locally, the new group took on the title of the “Nigerian Taliban” or “Yusufiya” (Followers of Yusuf).¹⁴

In 2004, Yusuf’s disagreements with Jafa’ar Adam over Salafist doctrine also began to surface. In a series of sermons delivered in Mosques in northern Nigeria, both men debated Salafi doctrine.¹⁵ The most contentious issues were Yusuf’s bans on Western education and employment in Nigeria’s secular government. Yusuf argued that *boko*, or the Western education that British colonial administrators brought to northern Nigeria, including agriculture, biology, chemistry, engineering, geography, medicine, physics, and English language, were *haram*, or prohibited for Muslims. Yusuf also contended that the Nigerian educational system was itself *haram* because it mixed men and women in the same classrooms.¹⁶

Jafa’ar Adam argued that if Nigerian Muslims followed Yusuf’s bans and rejected Western education and refused to serve in the government, then “Pagan [Christian] policemen would kill and injure Muslims, and when taken to hospitals pagan doctors and nurses would attend to them.”¹⁷ The disagreement became personal, as Adam disparagingly labeled Yusuf a “so-called Islamic scholar.” In Yusuf’s sermons, however, he argued that Western institutions were corrupting unto themselves stating:

Anyone who reads history, except a fool, knows that the Europeans handed over secular education to the missionaries. The missionaries incorporated into the curriculum of Western education the belief systems and values of Christianity. But we have said again and again that every Christian teaching regarding God and the universe is completely and fundamentally different from Islamic revelation. In fact it is not Islam and has nothing to do with Islam.¹⁸

In his arguments against Western education, Yusuf cited the work of a prominent Saudi Wahabbist scholar: *Global, Foreign and Colonialist Schools: Their History and Dangers* by Bakr bin Abdullah Abu Zayd.¹⁹ According to Abu Zayd, European colonialists introduced secular education into Islamic societies as a “camouflaged conspiracy” in order to maintain hegemony over Muslim societies. The aim of such hegemony was to corrupt Islamic morals with Western liberal norms, replace gender roles with permissive sexual mores, and undermine communal identities

built on Salafist notions of piety and righteousness. Abu Zayd's influence on Yusuf's thinking is undeniable. Yusuf stated in his sermons:

European Scholars came and completely changed the history of Islam, claiming that even the Prophet of God came not to establish Islam or a political State, but to fight a tribal war. As such, they abolished the Caliphate and confused the unintelligent and unfaithful....When Europeans were withdrawing from most Muslim countries and handing over power to the citizens, they separated religion from politics, arguing that religion has no role in the administration of political power. This became the faith of those who took power from the colonialists. They insisted on the secular nature of the contemporary state and established democracy and human rights of all sorts in different places. Islamic flags and symbols were replaced with national flags and symbols. The Shari'a, Qur'an and Sunna were replaced with secular law.²⁰

Yusuf believed that as a result of "the Europeans destroying Islam and its values ... the Europeans created the situation in which we [Nigerian Muslims] find ourselves in today." Yusuf described that situation as one where a formerly prosperous northern Nigeria that "betrayed God" was "visited upon by poverty, jealousy, fear, and Muslim chiefs who are also wicked politicians."²¹

Borno State, the home of Boko Haram's "Ibn Tamiyya Headquarters" and Yobe State, Yusuf's birthplace, formed part of what was once an ethnic Kanuri-led Islamic Caliphate that existed from around 1,000 A.D. until the end of the 19th century. The Caliphate, known as the Kanem Empire and, its successor, the Borno Empire, spanned from present-day Nigeria to Libya and had diplomatic and trade relations with other states as distant as Ottoman Turkey.²² The social, political and economic fabric of the former Caliphate in Borno, however, was fundamentally transformed following the French colonization of present-day northern Cameroon, southern Niger, western Chad, and the British colonization of Nigeria. Modern changes in the society became cemented with the amalgamation of southern and northern Nigeria at the beginning of the 21st Century.

Boko Haram has maintained that all of these developments were for the worse. Among their grievances against the legacies of Western imperialism are the economic rise of southern Nigeria through its trade relations with the United Kingdom and the West; the economic decline of northern Nigeria that resulted from the obsolescence of overland Saharan trade and pilgrimage routes due to maritime

and air travel; the arrival of Christianity in northern Nigeria in the 20th century that “diluted” the Muslim identity of Borno and northern Nigeria; the growing prominence of the English language that superseded Arabic language learning and marginalized the traditional Arabic-speaking Muslim religious intellectuals of northern Nigeria; and the emergence of a Nigerian government that has “embezzled money” and had security forces who “brought to [Borno] not just HIV and AIDs, but corruption, extortion and torture.”²³

The appeal of Yusuf’s message has an ethnic dimension as well. His followers in the Borno and Yobe States and his fellow ethnic Kanuris are particularly receptive to his grievances against the West’s legacy in Nigeria. Kanuris not only believe that they were the inheritors of the Caliphate in Borno, but also that they were the first ethnic group in the country to fully embrace Islam. As a result, they regard themselves as the standard bearers of the Muslim faith in Nigeria. According to Yusuf, Shekau and Nur, the ethnic Fulani and Hausa Muslim leadership of northern Nigeria, who were closely tied to the Nigerian government, sold out Nigeria’s Muslims for secularism and democracy. Yusuf argued that the traditional leader of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim religious establishment in Nigeria, the sultan of Sokoto, should be called only the “sarkin” of Sokoto, meaning “chief” in Hausa, and not the “sarkin” of Muslims, since the sultan accepted the legitimacy of Nigeria’s non-Islamic form of government.²⁴ Yusuf believed that the Nigerian government and the Muslim ruling class needed to be replaced with a new government of Salafists:

We follow the ideology of the Salafists and any *fatwa* issued by a Salafist scholar. No matter how important an Islamic scholar is, we need to know if he is guided by Salafist principles before we accept such a scholar. As a group, we will not accept personal interpretations, opinions and judgments. Every teaching of a scholar must be supported by the writings and teachings of Salafist scholars.²⁵

Yusuf’s teachings captivated a wide audience in northern Nigeria most of all because he reinforced the perception that Western education corrupted Islamic morals, secularized Muslim leaders and perpetuated Western hegemony over Muslims. He furthermore spoke to simmering resentments towards the Nigerian government in claiming that it was a present-day embodiment of the old colonial order. Yusuf was therefore able to pin all of the economic, social and political troubles that people in northeastern Nigeria faced on the Nigerian government. Yusuf also took this ideology a step further by sending dozens of his followers to

Algeria and Mauritania in the early 2000s to “gain the strength to succeed” in jihad in Nigeria through training with AQIM.²⁶

From Yusuf to Shekau: The Transition to Jihad

IN 2007, YUSUF’S IDEOLOGICAL RIVAL, JAJA’AR ADAM, WAS ASSASSINATED OUTSIDE of his mosque in Kano. Though the perpetrators were never caught, some journalists suspected that Yusuf or his followers were behind the murder.²⁷ Yusuf’s accountability for the crime notwithstanding, he consequently became even more prominent among young Islamic clerics in northern Nigeria.

Toward the end of the 2000s, Yusuf supplemented his two main prohibitions with others modeled after the Taliban in Afghanistan. He forbade participation in sports because it violated the Salafist principle that Muslims should not develop affection for non-Muslims, such as exceptional athletes. Yusuf also banned watching movies, which he claimed cast Muslims in the role of hateful villains and non-Muslims in the role of the lovable hero.²⁸ Yusuf also began to identify with the leading jihadists of the post-2001 era—making him one of the first Salafist-Jihadist ideologues in northern Nigeria. Whereas previous generations of Islamist leaders in northern Nigeria, like al-Zakzaky, looked to Muslim Brotherhood leaders or the Iranian Islamic Revolution’s leaders as models to emulate, Yusuf looked towards al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden and the Taliban. Yusuf stated in 2009 that, “All Islamic scholars who undermine Ibn Taymiyya, Sayyid Qutb, Hassan al-Banna and Osama Bin Laden are not authentic Islamic scholars.” Yusuf had a particularly potent admiration for Algerian Islamists. In the same speech he stated that:

We are yet to establish a pure Sunni Islamic sect that will be ready to take on ignorance and secularism. The few we have that are functioning are al-Qaeda and the Taliban, whose ideology and theological foundations are purely Sunni in nature. Finally, we have other groups emerging in Algeria, all of them have missions committed to the spread of Islam and I hope you understand all these.²⁹

The influence of Algerian Islamism on Yusuf’s thinking cannot be understated. According to the prominent imam, Muhammad Auwal al-Bani of Zaria, Kaduna:

Yusuf had listened to some leaders of the Algerian Islamist insurgency pronounce a *fatwa* that prohibited the militants from attending schools and working for the government. Besides having been rejected by the vast majority of Algerian scholars, the *fatwa* was rooted in the specific experience of the Algerian civil war of the 1990s between the military government and armed Islamist cells operating from the mountains. Yusuf blindly absorbed it and applied it to Nigeria.³⁰

Despite ongoing insurgencies in Somalia with al-Shabaab and Iraq with al-Qaeda, Yusuf primarily discussed the Algerian experience in his sermons. Yusuf would refer, for example, to the Algerian military's cancellation of democratic elections that the Islamists won in 1991 and to the amnesty that members of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), accepted in the mid-2000s. Both developments divided the country's main Islamist group and effectively ended the insurgency in Algeria.³¹ As a result, Yusuf, and later Shekau, have stated that no reconciliation could be reached with the Nigerian government unless the country is ruled by a Salafist and Sharia is the law of the land. Citing the Algerian example, Yusuf said in 2009 that:

In Algeria, they tried to introduce democracy. But when they realized democracy was anti-Islam and anti-God, they came back to the way of Shari'a. They formed an Islamic Jihadist group that was initially made up of more than 50,000 people. But when the group refused to follow the way of Shari'a, the way of Allah, their numbers declined drastically.³²

His admiration for the Algerian Islamist model notwithstanding, Yusuf did not instruct his followers to engage in a "jihad" against the Nigerian government or security forces. While Yusuf and his followers held extreme views, their attacks on the Nigerian security forces were sporadic and were never part of a broader insurgency. Yusuf went so far as to claim that "an Islamic system of government should be established in Nigeria, and if possible all over the world, but through preaching the faith (*dawa'a*)."³³ In preparation for an inevitable conflict with the government, Yusuf told his followers: "If there is not enough strength to ensure that a Muslim becomes the leader, then two things must be done: Muslims should proceed on a *hijra* or search for the strength to succeed."³⁴

The former is precisely what several hundred of his followers did in 2003, when

they left mainstream society and established a community called “Afghanistan” in Kanamma, Yobe State. The community refused to follow local ordinances and frequently clashed with the local police. In the final clash in late 2003, Yusuf’s followers raided several police stations, but the police responded with sufficient force to put down the rebellion, destroy the encampment and prevent the community from forming again. The incident compelled Sheikh Datti Ahmed to praise Yusuf’s followers: the “Nigerian Taliban” moniker was born.³⁵

Yusuf nonetheless believed violent jihad—as opposed the concept of jihad as a form of self-discipline—was ultimately the solution for Nigeria’s Muslims. He told his followers:

The only thing that can stop the killing of Muslims and the insults against their Prophet is Jihad. However, the group must exercise patience until there is the strength to carry out the jihad. We are for jihad, and our jihad is to put an end to democracy, to western education and western civilization. The Jihad is intended to make Muslims return to our basics and the original state of Islam.

Yusuf urged followers not to fall in the “trap” that “the Europeans conspired to hide from Muslims about the true meaning of Jihad.” He said the Europeans had

separated religion from politics, limited religion to the private sphere and argued that religion should be excluded from the public domain because religion is about a private affair between the adherent and his God. European-educated Muslims returned home only to confuse other Muslims, claiming that democracy is compatible with Islam and Jihad should only be for self-control.³⁶

Yusuf’s death at the hands of the security forces in an extrajudicial killing during clashes between the government and Yusuf’s followers in Borno State in July 2009 led to a transition in which Yusuf’s notoriously more militant—and feared—deputy, Abubakar Shekau, assumed leadership of the movement. Moreover, dozens of Yusuf’s followers fled Nigeria to train with AQIM in the Sahel to avenge Yusuf’s death. Some of Yusuf’s followers believed that Shekau, against Yusuf’s better instincts, ordered the very attack that resulted in Yusuf’s death. The violence backfired and led to scores of Boko Haram deaths, and hundreds of arrests.³⁷ These AQIM-trained followers, who questioned Shekau’s judgment, would later be inclined to join Ansaru as an alternative to following Shekau.

Shekau nonetheless played on the anger of Yusuf's followers who remained in Borno State and their desire for revenge against the government for killing Yusuf.³⁸ Shekau sought to ignite the Jihad that Yusuf only spoke of in ideological terms. Whereas Yusuf praised Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda and followed the history of Algerian jihadists, Shekau overtly reached out to al-Qaeda and implemented its model of Jihad for Yusuf's former followers.³⁹ In his first video statement released in July 2010, Shekau said that as Yusuf's deputy he would now become a leader in Yusuf's place and addressed his message to "leaders of al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups in Algeria, Iraq, Somalia and Yemen." He offered his

condolences on behalf of the mujahideen in Nigeria to the mujahideen in general, in particular to those in the Islamic State of Iraq, Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Yahya Al-Libi, Abu Abdullah Al-Muhajir, the Emir of the Islamic State in Somalia, the Emir of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the Emir of the Mujahideen in Pakistan, in Chechnya, Kashmir, Yemen, the Arabian Peninsula, and our religious clerics whom I did not mention.

Shekau also extended Yusuf's previous anti-Western position to a particular hatred of the United States stating: "Do not think jihad is over. Rather jihad has just begun. Oh America, die with your fury."⁴⁰

Shekau also diverged from Yusuf's teachings in his belief that Christians are an enemy in Boko Haram's Jihad and should be eliminated from Nigeria. Shekau's sermons with Yusuf before July 2009 equated Western civilization with atheism and identified the three fundamental pillars of Western civilization: education, the Judeo-Christian tradition, and democracy. The collaboration of these three pillars led to what Shekau calls "globalization and the modern world order." Shekau, like Yusuf and the Saudi cleric Abu Zayd, argued that the West used education to "infiltrate Muslim minds and destroy Islam." Western education, according to Shekau, is the foundation of evil in the world and must not only be rejected but also replaced by religious education.

Shekau claimed that the Judeo-Christian tradition encouraged the more liberal textual interpretations that have become predominant in the practice of most modern religions, and has therefore had a corrupting influence on Islam. Thus, in Shekau's thinking, secular systems attribute to God what God has not instructed. As a result, Shekau completely rejected the use of the Judeo-Christian calendar and holidays that were recognized in Nigeria and adopted by secular governments all over the world. He has called Christians "polytheists" and

“infidels” and said that “true Muslims” should have no personal associations with them.

Finally, Shekau described democracy as the rejection of God’s supreme leadership over his creations. Such is evident in Shekau’s claims that Nigeria’s return to multiparty democracy and the Constitutional affirmation of its secular identity affirmed this rejection of God’s supreme leadership. He argued that the rejection of God’s law in Nigeria was evident in the use of national symbols like the national anthem, national pledge and the national flag. Shekau believed the concepts of honor, unity and glory that accompany these symbols should only be ascribed to God and no other entity; to Shekau, the nation-state is a human construct that denigrates God. Moreover, Western education, the Judeo-Christian tradition and democracy are the elements of a conspiracy meant to destroy Islam. Thus Muslims must fight them everywhere, at all times and by all means.⁴¹

Shekau, like Yusuf, was a charismatic and persuasive speaker in classical Arabic, Hausa, Kanuri and even in heavily accented English. He is also like Yusuf in that he distinguished himself from all other Islamist schools of thought in Nigeria, including the Salafists in Izala, the Maitatsine, and the Shi’a. Furthermore, Shekau, like Yusuf, has had success in manipulating the memory and political history of the Borno State in order to rally his followers to embrace jihad.

The first Boko Haram attack under Shekau took place on September 7, 2010. Fighters attacked the Bauchi prison and freed over 100 members who had been detained in the July 2009 clashes in which Yusuf was killed. Soon after, Boko Haram carried out a string of assassinations against religious and political leaders who opposed their agenda or who were participating in the 2011 presidential elections. Over the course of 2012 and 2013, Boko Haram burned down dozens of schools and churches, especially in Borno State, thereby indicating that Boko Haram was carrying out Shekau’s call to Jihad.

Even after Shekau was forced into hiding from 2010 onwards, he continued to advocate the same ideology he preached prior to July 2009. However, after July 2009, his sermons were only released through videos on YouTube, sent to international media outlets or posted on online jihadi forums. Shekau’s messages to civilians, which often warned them that anyone who cooperated with the security forces would be killed, have been distributed through leaflet drops in communities.

In a January 10, 2012 video, Shekau stated that the “concept of democracy and constitution are pagan.” Two weeks later, on January 26, 2012, Shekau said that “democracy is neither God’s ideology nor the Prophet’s” and that “Muslims know well that democracy is incompatible with Islam.” Shekau called on Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan and Christians to “embrace Islam and be saved”

and reminded them that secular education, sports, and music are part of a Jewish conspiracy to distract Muslims from studying the Quran. In an August 4, 2012 video, Shekau similarly said that “democracy and constitution” are forbidden themes under Islam and that Boko Haram wants to “change the system by introducing God’s law, the Sharia.” In 2013, Shekau also consistently threatened U.S. President Obama, French President Hollande, Queen Elizabeth, and former U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, mocked the U.S. designation of Shekau as a terrorist, and promised that Boko Haram would attack the U.S. “tomorrow.”

The candid sermons of Shekau prior to 2009 and after becoming the leader of Boko Haram in 2010 demonstrate that his ideology has largely remained intact; since 2010, however, he has made his ideology operational. The ideology he preached before 2010 is now manifesting itself in Boko Haram’s attacks against Christians, Nigerian government officials, and English language schools. Moreover, he has appealed directly to al-Qaeda.

Mamman Nur and the Rise of Ansaru

SHEKAU’S RHETORIC AGAINST THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT, CHRISTIANS AND religious and political opponents since the start of Boko Haram’s violent insurgency in 2010 has accompanied his tolerance for civilian deaths. Shekau proclaimed a “war on Christians” and, according to his spokesman, Shekau sought to extend Boko Haram operations to Sokoto in order to “reduce the powers of the sultan to traditional rulership functions, while all religious authority would be vested in a Boko Haram leader [Shekau] to be based in Yobe.” The spokesman warned that “any ruler who would obstruct Boko Haram’s plans would regret his action.”⁴² Boko Haram was able to strike a Sokoto police station with a suicide attack in July 2012 and assassinate more than 30 religious leaders who were close to the sultan that year, but Boko Haram ultimately failed to extend its influence outside of the ethnic Kanuri areas of northeast Nigeria.

One of the main reasons for Boko Haram’s failure to expand its influence into majority Hausa states in Nigeria was that its large-scale attacks alienated the population. In one particular instance, the group staged an attack on government buildings and churches in Kano, on January 20, 2012 that resulted in the death of nearly 200 people, most of whom were civilians.⁴³ Ansaru’s announcement of

its “public formation” in flyers distributed in Kano, which stated that Boko Haram was “inhumane” for killing innocent Muslims as well as for targeting defectors, followed a week after the attacks.⁴⁴ Shekau was evidently compelled to comment on the Kano attack and justify them in his January 26 video, in which he said that Boko Haram undertook the attack in Kano “in retaliation for the arrest and detention of several group members, including women and children, and that Boko Haram is responding to injustices.”⁴⁵

Despite Shekau’s efforts to reach out to al-Qaeda with the praise for “soldiers of God in the Islamic State of Mali” when AQIM controlled territory in northern Mali in 2012, no other al-Qaeda affiliate has recognized Shekau or Boko Haram as one of their own. Boko Haram’s unapologetic murder of civilians proved burdensome for al-Qaeda’s public image. One of AQIM’s spiritual leaders, Abu Mundhir al-Shniqiti, even issued a *fatwa* in 2013, which appeared to be in reference to Boko Haram’s murder of students in a dormitory:

Targeting schools to kill young students is impermissible, since they have not joined the ranks of the apostate military yet... This will give the enemies of the religion and Western media the opportunity to exploit these scenes to prove to Muslims that the mujahideen are far from Islam... These schools can be combated by warning people against enrolling in them, punishing the families who send their sons to them, and by destroying them when they are empty of the students.⁴⁶

AQIM was much closer ideologically and operationally with Ansaru in Nigeria. Ansaru’s first operation in Nigeria was in May 2011, when a cell kidnapped a British and Italian hostage in Kebbi State and killed them during a rescue operation in Sokoto in March 2012.⁴⁷ Unlike Boko Haram, Ansaru almost exclusively targets foreigners for kidnapping.⁴⁸ Indeed, Ansaru is suspected of playing a role in kidnapping a French priest who had been assisting refugees fleeing from Boko Haram’s violence, and a French family in February and December of 2013 in northern Cameroon.⁴⁹

Ansaru has also obtained notoriety for its members’ participation with Mokhtar Belmokhtar in his attacks against an energy plant in the town of In Amenas in Algeria in January 2013 and French mining facilities in Niger in June 2013.⁵⁰ While devoting most of its efforts to targeting foreigners and foreign owned targets, Ansaru has also attacked Nigerians as well. In January 2013, Ansaru militants ambushed a convoy of three buses carrying 180 Nigerian soldiers through

Okene, Kogi State, en route to Mali, killing two soldiers. Ansaru claimed the troops “were aiming to demolish the Islamic Empire of Mali” and warned African countries to “stop helping Western countries fight Muslims.”⁵¹

Ansaru’s operations are distinguished from Boko Haram’s in that they kill few local civilians, and principally target foreigners and foreign interests. Furthermore, most of Ansaru’s operations took place in northwestern Nigeria, where Boko Haram under Shekau had minimal influence. One explanation for Ansaru’s departure from Shekau’s focus on targets in northeastern Nigeria, such as churches, government offices and schools, is that former Yusuf deputy, Mamman Nur, inspired Ansaru’s internationalist agenda. Nur, like Shekau, was a deputy of Yusuf’s before July 2009. However, Nur, a native Cameroonian, may have had a personal interest in detaching Boko Haram’s aims from Nigeria alone by regionalizing the group such that he could solidify his legitimacy as a leader. When Yusuf was killed in July 2009, for example, Shekau won a power struggle over Nur and took over the leadership of Yusuf’s followers in part because Shekau was seen as the “local” while Nur was considered an “outsider.”⁵²

Nur also was known as an “internationalist” because he connected with al-Shabaab in East Africa and AQIM between 2009 and his return to Nigeria in 2011.⁵³ Upon his return, AQIM coordinated attacks with Nur, including a suicide bombing on the UN Headquarters in Abuja that killed 22 people in August 2011. Nur’s international experience and more extensive theological background compared to Shekau is one reason why Nur was well-prepared to lead the followers of Yusuf who rejected Shekau’s methods and wanted to launch attacks on foreign targets. Before July 2009, Nur’s sermons focused on the history of Jihad in West Africa and northern Nigeria and on the legacy of Usman dan Fodio: the founder of the northwestern Nigeria-based Sokoto Caliphate.

Nur, like Yusuf, blamed “poverty” in northern Nigeria on the Muslim leaders who rejected Dan Fodio’s Jihad and accepted instead the secular constitution from the Europeans. Nur stated that:

It was Shari’a law that was practiced in this country. Dan Fodio and other Islamic scholars carried out the jihad and ensured that Quranic law was implemented. God did not interfere with this situation until our Muslim leaders accepted from the Europeans the secular constitution. Since that time, Allah took away the comfort and peace Muslims used to enjoy, and replaced it with suffering and poverty.⁵⁴

He also argued that:

Our ancestors fought against western education and yet, some of you take your children to western schools. You think by doing this you are civilized, full of wisdom and smart? Our ancestors were killed because they opposed democracy, they opposed western education and they fought the jihad.⁵⁵

It is not likely that Nur leads Ansaru's kidnappings operations;⁵⁶ however, Nur's ideology is prevalent in the group and will remain an alternative to Shekau's preoccupation with Nigeria and willingness to murder civilians.

Since February of 2013, Ansaru has become operationally silent in Nigeria, attacking only French mining facilities in Niger with Belmokhtar in June 2013 and kidnapping a French priest in Northern Cameroon in December 2013. Indeed, several of Ansaru's commanders have reverted back to Shekau, likely including al-Barnawi, who Nigeria listed in November 2012 as the top-ranking member on Shekau's Shura. Ansaru is therefore left with its "propaganda" wing that issues statements in line with AQIM that include criticisms of Boko Haram for killing Muslim civilians and of the Egyptian military for removing Mohammed Morsi from power.⁵⁷ It furthermore sustains AQIM's hostility towards Nigerian Christians, with threats against Christian militias in the Middle Belt and MEND in the Niger Delta.⁵⁸ Granted that Nur is the only known former Boko Haram member connected to AQIM Ansaru's first operations, it is likely that he remains part of Ansaru's ideological core.

Conclusion

BOKO HARAM IS AN OUTGROWTH OF THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL troubles in northern Nigeria. The group gained a following under Muhammed Yusuf because he provided a satisfactory explanation for the failures in their society: the cultural corruption that European colonialism brought to undermine their faith in Islam. Yusuf absorbed al-Qaeda's ideology as well as Saudi Arabia's brand of Salafism. In turn, Shekau operationalized Yusuf's thinking into a jihadist insurgency that continues to the present day.

Yusuf's death was the trigger that enabled Shekau to mobilize his mentor's followers to wage an insurgency. While Nur and Ansaru's ideology is an outgrowth

of Yusuf's preaching, it is more reflective of the influence of other actors such as AQIM. Consequently, Shekau and Nur have sought to expand the reach of Yusuf's ideological influence and focus on those whom Boko Haram believed were directly responsible for northern Nigeria's "poverty and suffering" i.e. the Nigerian government, Westerners and Christians in the Middle Belt.

Moreover, Nur, like many of Yusuf's followers, came to see that Shekau's brutality may be effective on the battlefield, but that it has been politically counter-productive. Indeed, most northern Nigerians now reject Boko Haram's ideology, whereas Yusuf's ideology was widely popular in northeast Nigeria.

Nigeria has yet to effectively counter the ideology that underscored the growth of the Boko Haram movement before 2009. Even if the Nigerian government succeeds in defeating the group on the battlefield, another incarnation of Yusuf's ideology will likely challenge the existence of the Nigerian State once again. Nigeria would be wise to address the frustrations of Nigerians throughout the country, especially in Borno State, in order to prevent the manifestation of such an ideology in the future. The country and its Muslim religious leaders would be all the wiser if they promoted other more traditionally accepted brands of Islamism to challenge the influence of Saudi *wahabbism*, and AQIM's interpretation of jihad. The political defeat of the Islamist ideas of Boko Haram would contribute to curbing the influence of Islamism in Africa, and indeed the entire world.

NOTES

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