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Islamist vs. Islamist: The Theologico- Political Questions

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*December 2014
Research Report*



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Acknowledgments

This project was funded by a grant from the Smith Richardson Foundation. I would like to express my gratitude to Nadia Schadlow for her continuous support for this project since it was first proposed and throughout the last two years.

I could not have wished for a better place to conduct this research than the Hudson Institute. The Hudson Institute's dedication to innovative research that challenges conventional wisdom has provided me with the working environment and intellectual freedom necessary to complete this study. This research would not have been completed without the support of the Hudson Institute's management team: Kenneth Weinstein, John Walters, Lewis Libby, David Tell, Daniel McKivergan, Thereza Austria, Kevin Searcy, Kim Bowling, Carolyn Stewart, Rebecca Baker, and Rob Cole. I would like to thank my colleagues at the Center for Religious Freedom, Paul Marshall and Lela Gilbert, for their support and Nina Shea for her wisdom and guidance. Working at Hudson, I am fortunate to benefit from the scholarship and professional support of several scholars with deep knowledge of Islamism and national security. In countless conversations, I have learned from the thoughts and opinions of Hillel Fradkin, Eric Brown, Abram Shulsky, Lewis Libby and Hussein Haqqani. At Hudson, I have had the pleasure of working with three excellent interns: Shiyun Lu, Dominique Canape, and Danielle Thompson. They conducted research for this project in its final phase.

I would like to thank Joseph Braude for introducing me to Al Mesbar Studies and Research Center and its important scholarly work in analyzing Islamism. The Center's Executive Director Mansour Alnogaidan allowed me to take many of the center's valuable books home, greatly aiding my research. I am grateful for his flexibility and generosity.

Amr Bargisi's deep knowledge of Egyptian Islamism has been a source of inspiration and a valuable asset in researching this project. Throughout the past two years, I have enjoyed numerous conversations with Amr that have helped me develop my arguments. During those two years, I was also fortunate to know Mokhtar Awad, who generously shared his wisdom in hundreds of conversations. I profited greatly from his insights. Both of them read the chapters as I wrote them, and provided me with valuable comments.

Finally, I would like to thank Stan Crock and Peter Rough for their superb editing of the manuscript.

Introduction

This monograph is the second part of a two-year study on Egyptian Islamism funded by the Smith Richardson Foundation. The study is divided into two parts. The first maps the various currents, groups, and individuals that form the complex Egyptian Islamist scene. The second examines the internal dynamics of Islamism in terms of the interrelationship between its various constituent currents and their disagreements on key theological political questions. The study aims to fill two significant gaps in our knowledge of the Egyptian Islamist scene.

While the study of Islamism goes back for at least several decades, it was only after the 9/11 attacks that the world's attention fixated on the threat and challenge that Islamism posed to international security and world order. Ever since, hundreds of scholars have devoted their time and energy to analyzing the phenomenon, advancing our knowledge of its complexity. It is no surprise that Egyptian Islamism would be at the center of this scholarly pursuit, considering the role Egyptians play in shaping the very meaning of Islamism and leading some of its most important organizations. The focus of the attention has been, rather understandably, on two components of Islamism: Jihadis of various stripes and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its offspring in the Muslim world. As a result, a blind spot emerged between those waging Jihad and the mass organizations contesting elections, one that remarkably involves the largest pool of Islamists: Salafis.

That is not to say that Salafism is a completely unstudied phenomenon. On the contrary, a number of scholars have done serious work on historical figures such as Al Shawkani,* contemporary developments such as the Awakening in Saudi Arabia,† and works that approached Salafism in a global framework.‡ Unfortunately, while foundational in the global phenomenon, Egyptian Salafism has received little if any attention. Egyptian Salafis continued to be an enigma well after the Egyptian revolution, until the Nour Party's performance in the parliamentary elections forced Egypt watchers to scramble to understand the unknown and now awakened giant. The surge of interest has not, however, resulted in an advancement of our knowledge of the Egyptian Islamist scenes.

But the weakness of scholarship on Egyptian Salafism is not the only deficiency we encounter. More problematic is the very way in which Islamism has been approached and studied. When approaching Islamism and its leaders, especially Brotherhood leaders, researchers and journalists too often focus on a set of questions relating to their views on democracy, terrorist attacks, peace with Israel, women's rights, and the status of religious minorities. All of these are important questions, and Islamists certainly need to be scrutinized over these issues, but these questions hardly scratch the surface of Islamism. For such litmus tests, Brotherhood-like parties over time have mastered the art of providing meaningless answers in English to satisfy Western interlocutors. To

* Bernard Haykal, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Mohamed Al Shawkani*.

† Stephane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*.

‡ Roel Meijer, *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*.

understand the Islamist phenomenon better, however, we must ask questions that probe those internal issues that matter to—and divide—Islamists most.

To draw a map of the Egyptian Islamist scene, we must start like any good cartographer by setting the boundaries of Islamism itself and the divisions within it. It is thus natural to begin the first part of this study by defining what Islamism is and what it is not, tracing its history in Egypt and its interrelationship with other Islamist currents outside of Egypt. A much harder challenge is to draw the borders between various Islamist currents, especially if we are seeking to go beyond the conventional division of Brotherhood, Jihadis, and Salafis and map the various sub-currents, groups, and individuals who form Egyptian Islamism, including Madkhalis, Scholarly Salafis, the three Activist Salafi currents, Revolutionary Salafis, Jihadi Salafis, the Brotherhood, Brotherhood breakaway parties, independent Islamist thinkers, and new preachers. On what basis are we to define each of these entities and draw the borders between them?

A story from the first century of Islam may provide us with the clue. As narrators inform us, a question was posed to Hassan Al Basri as he sat teaching and surrounded by his students and disciples: Is the person who commits a grave sin a believer or an unbeliever? Al Basri answered that such a person was still a believer. His answer did not satisfy one of his students, Wasil Ibn 'Ataa. Wasil's argument was that such a man was neither a believer nor an unbeliever but instead was in a state between the two conditions. As the story goes, Wasil stood up, withdrew from the study circle, and sat at another corner of the mosque. Others followed him and formed a new circle around him. Al Basri is said to have remarked, "Wasil has separated himself from us." Thus were born the Mu'tazila, their name coming from the Arabic word for "to separate oneself."

Nearly 1,300 years have passed since Wasil stood up and separated himself as a result of his disagreement with his teacher on a key theological-political question. The Mu'tazila have long disappeared from history, their beliefs until recently traceable only through the works of their adversaries from Ahl Al Hadith and Ash'aris. But the basic formula for the emergence of a new current or sect within Islam has remained the same and has been transferred to Islamism. Simply put, a division within an existing current of Islamism and the emergence of a new one takes place only once a theological-political question is answered differently. Without a theological-political question, there are no borders in our map.

Thus, if we seek to understand Egyptian Islamism, or for that matter Islamism in general, we must begin by setting aside the usual set of questions and instead approach Islamism on its own turf, the theological-political questions on which its followers fight. But before discussing the questions chosen and why they were chosen, we must discuss why, despite sharing a commitment to the Islamist project, no convergence of views has taken place between them and why these theological-political questions have resulted in fierce disagreements and divisions among Islamists.

Islamism was born out of and as a response to the crisis of modernity in the world of Islam in its twin manifestations. First, this crisis was encountered, in the Egyptian case,

with the discovery of Western technological, material, and military superiority as the armies of Napoleon Bonaparte crushed their Mamluk adversaries in the Battle of the Pyramids in 1798 and occupied Egypt. That discovery naturally led to Bernard Lewis's famous question "What Went Wrong?" and more importantly how can we catch up? As time passed, the encounter with the West became not only intellectual, with the West held as a model for emulation, but also increasingly one with the West as an occupier. Secondly, the crisis of modernity challenged the very foundation of the political order in the Islamic world. Modernization efforts by rulers or foreign occupiers led to a growing gap between on the one hand the Islamic worldview and concepts of politics, law, and economics, and on the other the reality in which Muslims lived. Islamism, born as a response to this discovery and gap, is preoccupied with finding a solution to this question and closing the gap.

Yet despite its long history spanning more than a century, none of Islamism's currents has managed to defeat its competitors and more importantly to achieve the desired outcome: a state that connects earth with heaven, as one Islamist described it, making Islamism an endless work in progress. Each new Islamist current is a refutation of previous ones and an exclusive claim to authenticity and representation of not merely the ideology but more importantly the true nature of the religion, at least in its political form. What Islamism is, remains heavily contested internally among Islamists of all stripes, with Islamists devoting most of their time and energy not to fighting secularists or other ideologies, but to answering adversaries within the Islamist universe as they battle over the Islamist banner and space.

Even so, the failure of Islamism to solve the crisis of modernity is but one reason Egyptian Islamism continues to be in a perpetual state of flux, with the pace of the emergence of new currents within Islamism accelerating. The fierce divisions are partly a result of a lack of organization. With the exception of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi Call, and a few smaller entities, when speaking of Egyptian Islamism, one is speaking of individuals. The lack of organization is aggravated by the similar lack of centralization of knowledge and religious authority. The very founding of the Islamist revival at the hands of young, self-educated university students in the 1970's has also had its lasting impact as the young students of the 70's became today's Sheikhs. Their individual pursuit of religious knowledge enabled them not only to find different answers to the same questions, but also to be influenced in varying degrees by existing currents within Egypt and abroad. Each Salafi Sheikh in Egypt thus occupies a unique space formed by his individual pursuit of knowledge and the outside influences he encountered. The endless process of fragmentation was also a side effect of Islamism's success in acquiring millions of followers. The implosion in the number of students with religious knowledge increased the divisions.

Most important, at the heart of Islamism's predicament is the solution that it offers to the crisis of modernity, namely a return to a glorious past during the time of the Salaf, when Islam and Muslims were triumphant. Not only is setting the exact boundaries of that historical period and its essence a matter of contention among Islamists, but more profoundly, the pious Salaf held up as a model for imitation were no less divided than

today's Islamists in their interpretations and positions on theological-political questions.

This monograph is divided into nine chapters that focus on specific theological-political questions and a conclusion. Throughout these chapters, I highlight the major and minor differences among many diverse groups and individuals. I based the choice of the questions covered on their importance to the Islamists themselves and their political implications. I have set aside purely theological questions such as whether a man who does not pray is an unbeliever, whether God established himself or sat on the throne, and where God is. I have done so not because they are not important (they certainly are for Islamists) and not because they do not result in divisions (they do), but because they are purely theological questions that have no political ramifications.

The first chapter examines the first problem that Islamism aims to address, the methodology of change by which the state of Islam may be established. It covers the methodologies of various currents and sub-currents within Islamism. The second chapter moves to the equally foundational crisis of the lack of implementation of shari'a, or as Islamists term it, ruling by other than what God has revealed. I look at the various positions that Islamists adopt on the question. The next three chapters return to the question of the methodology for change, examining the criticism and defense that each main component of Islamism's methodology is subjected to. Hence chapter three is devoted to the Salafi methodology for change and its detractors, chapter four examines the criticisms that other Islamists level on the Jihadi methodology and its adherents' counter arguments, while chapter five deals with the Brotherhood's chosen methodology, political participation. Chapter six moves to the question of the permissibility of collective action and organization, tracing the battle lines between its supporters and opponents. Given its centrality in the Islamist world, Chapter seven analyzes the positions of other Islamists toward the Muslim Brotherhood. Chapter eight is devoted to the Egyptian revolution and how Islamists reacted to it as they were forced to apply their theories and arguments on the question of rebellion to the revolution. Chapter nine examines a number of key questions that emerged in the aftermath of the revolution that involved Islamists sticking to or reexamining their positions on key theological-political questions as a result of developments in Egypt. It covers the story of the March 2011 referendum, the broader question of political participation and forming political parties, the position toward the military as Egypt's rulers during the transitional period, the presidential elections, and the 2012 constitution, ending with an overview of President Morsi's short tenure in power. Finally the conclusion looks at developments after the military coup as Islamists confronted enormous challenges and attempts to peek into the future and contemplate the future direction of Egyptian Islamism.

The Methodology of Change

At the center of the inter-Islamist warfare over authenticity and representation is the question of the methodology adopted to change the miserable state of the Muslim nation. The question is born out of the crisis of modernity in the world of Islam, in its twin manifestations: the discovery of Western technological, material and military superiority, and the emerging gap between the Islamic worldview and concepts of politics, law and economics on the one hand and on the other, the reality that Muslims lived as a result of attempts at modernization initiated by their rulers or by Western occupying powers. Born as a response to that discovery and gap, Islamism is preoccupied with that question, with divisions among Islamists resulting from their diverging answers to the crisis. As Egyptian Salafi author Ahmed Salem notes in his masterful book on the disagreements among Egyptian Islamists, “The most important manifestation of the struggle over interpreting religion is the disagreement over the reform methodology and road for change to return society and the state to Islam.”¹

The question is thus not only a theoretical one but more importantly creates the very boundaries among various Islamist currents. As Yusuf El Qaradawi notes, the disagreements over the methodology of reform and change are numerous: a top-down versus bottom-up approach, radical change through revolution and reform versus slow change, military coups or political struggle or education and upbringing, working with the masses or forming a vanguard.² Every new current that emerges within Islamism is therefore by its very nature a rejection of the previously dominant methodology of change and reform and an attempt to offer an alternative one. Gamal Al Din Al Afghani’s emphasis on unity, Mohamed Abduh’s reform of education, Rashid Reda’s salafization of Abduh’s reform discourse, Mohamed Hamed El Fiqi’s efforts in fighting heresies, Hassan El Banna’s creation of a *Gama’a*, and Sayed Qutb’s revisions on Banna’s methodology are all historical manifestations of this struggle to find an answer to the crisis of modernity. This pattern of disagreements and divisions over the methodology for change only intensified in the last few decades with the emergence of the Jihadi discourse, disagreements among Jihadis over fighting the near or the faraway enemy, the rise of Activist Salafism and Sorouriya, the Madkhali emergence after the Gulf war, and finally the beginning of a revolutionary Salafi discourse. This pattern and the competing methodologies of change and reform is also one that will continue in the future due to the very nature of Islamism as an ideology, the failure of each of its currents to defeat its competitors and more importantly to achieve the desired outcome: an Islamist state uniting heaven and earth. This ensures that Islamism remains in a perpetual state of flux. What is at stake for each competing Islamist methodology is not only success in confronting the challenge from the outside world, but perhaps more importantly the claim to authenticity and representation of Islam itself, a claim that allows no duality or pluralism. As Khairat Al Shater argues, “Therefore, my brothers, the Muslim Brotherhood’s method is that of the Prophet, and thus we say that the Muslim who is connected to the *Gama’a* and the method must believe and realize that he is on the right path and that he must not be on a path other than this one.”³

“The Muslim Brotherhood is a Salafi da’wah,^{*} a Sunni order, a Sufi truth, a political association, a sports group, a scientific and cultural bond, an economic company, and a social idea.”⁴

The quote by Hassan El Banna is perhaps the clearest statement on how the Muslim Brotherhood’s founder and the *Gama’a*[†] he created view themselves. In its claim to be *the* political manifestation of Islam and *the* answer to the crisis facing the world of Islam, the Brotherhood presents itself as an all-encompassing movement that offers a coherent worldview and a comprehensive methodology for change. As El Banna states: “Some people do not view Islam as anything except rituals that they perform. Some do not view Islam as anything except good manners and spirituality ... We believe that the rulings of Islam and its total teachings organize the lives of people in life and afterlife ... Islam is a doctrine and a ritual, a country and a nationality, a religion and a state, spirituality and action, a Quran, and a sword.”⁵

The goal and mission of the Muslim Brotherhood as prescribed by its founder and reiterated by Khairat Al Shater is “restoring Islam in its all-encompassing conception; subjugating people to God; instituting the religion of God; the Islamization of life, empowering of God’s religion; establishing the *Nahda*[‡] of the *Ummah*[§] on the basis of Islam. All of these synonymous phrases give the same meaning, intention or definition, and that is the overall mission which we are seeking to accomplish as Ikhwan.”⁶ While other Islamists may have their various disagreements with the terminology used and in the case of Salafis would add an emphasis on a particular understanding of the Islam which they wish to restore—that of the devout Salaf—few would offer a radical departure from the overall mission. However, as always, the Devil lies in the details or in this case on how to achieve this overall mission.

Al Shater clarifies: “We were also taught in the method of the Muslim Brotherhood that with regard to this overall mission: Imam Al-Banna, through his understanding of the Prophet’s method and his way of instituting religion, outlined for us a number of stages or secondary objectives which, after their completion, eventually lead to the achievement of this overall mission. Thus we’ve learned [to start with] building the Muslim individual, the Muslim family, the Muslim society, the Islamic government, the global Islamic State and reaching the status of *Ustathiya*^{**} with that State. If all of these secondary objectives are completed, the overall mission is achieved, that is the Empowerment of God’s Religion.” He adds: “This is the same idea as that expressed by Umar Ibn Al Khattab, which some scholars attribute to the Prophet himself, stating that ‘there is no religion without a *Gama’a*, no *Gama’a* without an Imam, and no Imam without obedience.’ The *Gama’a* is thus an instrument and not a long-term goal. It is an instrument or means to Islamize life in its entirety and institute religion as Umar said, and as such, this is part of the constants which we believe in as Ikhwan. The primary instrument for implementing this project is the *Gama’a*, not the Party or any other

* Preaching and proselytizing of Islam

† Society or community

‡ Renaissance

§ Nation

** A state of eminence among nations

means, because whoever studies the jurisprudence of instituting religion as established by our master the Prophet will find that the instrument which he used was the *Gama'a*.”⁷

Al Shater’s concise summary of Banna’s vision articulates the two distinct features of the Brotherhood’s methodology. The overall mission is divided into six stages, and it can only be achieved through a *Gama'a*. The latter emphasis has led Brotherhood detractors to accuse it of simply being a self-serving organization that seeks to empower itself. While often warranted, such criticism misses the importance of the concept of the *Gama'a* to the methodology and the very vision of the Brotherhood. The *Gama'a* is not simply an organization, but as Al Shater describes it, the chosen methodology of the Prophet himself to establish Islam. “When Imam El Banna told us that these are the fundamentals of the Muslim Brotherhood method, he did not come up with them, nor was it he who invented them. Rather when he examined the method of the Prophet and how he instituted the religion of God Almighty in the first stage after receiving the revelation, he found this framework. The Prophet strove to achieve this mission and these objectives; he formed this *Gama'a* with these characteristics and attributes, and during the time of the Prophet, this *Gama'a* proceeded along the lines of definition, formation, and execution.”⁸ It is thus both a practical instrument and a religious conception. * To create this *Gama'a*, Banna first created and his successors later developed the Brotherhood’s rigid structure, membership ranks and divisions that have become a key feature of the group and a source of both its strength and weakness. †

The Brotherhood maintains, as its current Deputy General Guide and strongman, Mahmoud Ezzat insists, that it “is not a political group with an Islamic background. It is an Islamic group of which politics is part.”⁹ Such claims are rejected by its Islamist detractors who accuse the group of simply having one goal in mind: power.¹⁰ A former Brotherhood member states: “Another issue is the role of power in implementing the *da’wah* through the power of ruling, for many believe, Brothers and non-Brothers, that taking over power is enough to reach the desired goal. The government would issue orders and decree laws and everything will be as best as it can. This belief is utterly wrong for the government cannot issue a law for love or chastity or honesty in doing the job. The government can declare that the rule is Islamic and people are in one place and Islam is in another People have to be in a state of Islam for us to expect that the laws of Islam would succeed in them.”¹¹ This criticism points to an inherent feature of the Brotherhood despite its claims to the contrary: its methodology is ultimately dependent on using state power to enforce its vision. Hence, despite the early stages indicating a bottom-up approach of focusing on the individual, the family and society, those stages are merely necessary to reach power.

* For a detailed analysis of what the concept of *Gama'a* means for the Muslim Brotherhood: Tadros, Samuel, “Victory or Death: The Muslim Brotherhood in the Trenches”, *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Volume 15, August 2013, available at: <http://www.hudson.org/research/9687-victory-or-death-the-muslim-brotherhood-in-the-trenches#footNote26>

† For a detailed analysis of the Brotherhood’s structure and membership levels: Trager, Eric. “The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 5 (September/October 2011).

This Brotherhood's occupation with reaching power results in two key features that have distinguished it from other Islamist currents: its focus on the larger problems facing the Muslim nation¹² and its attempt to create the largest common ground among Muslims and hence setting aside theological disputes that create divisions and undermine unity and collective action.¹³ The first feature is often presented by the Brotherhood as its key distinction from Salafis, whom it accuses of focusing on small and petty issues such as dress codes. As Mohamed El Ghazli notes, "the Brotherhood discourse is more oriented to the defense of Islam against secular attacks."¹⁴ On the second feature, the Brotherhood is guided by the words of its founder: "Every issue that has no action ramifications, engaging in it is forbidden by *shari'a* as excessive. Of this are side judgments about issues that never took place, delving into the meaning of Quranic science that science has not reached yet, and talk of who is better among the Companions of the Prophet and the disagreements that grew between them."¹⁵ This focus on finding the common ground and ignoring what Salafis view as fundamental differences in religion has as its natural outcome the weakness of Brotherhood members in theological debates. This forms the basis of the most important criticism leveled on the Brotherhood by Salafis.

Banna's worldview underwent its most important revision at the hands of Sayed Qutb during his prison years. While it is fashionable for some to attribute Qutb's revisions to torture that he endured at the hands of Nasser's regime, his reexamination of the methodology and basic premises of the Brotherhood was more likely due to the crisis that this methodology faced than any torture that he and his fellow prisoners endured. The larger pain was caused not by the whips of a jailer but by the utter humiliation caused by the ease with which the government crushed a movement that claimed half a million members. Qutb's initial reaction to this humiliation was pure anger. By 1959, according to his cellmates, he began to organize his thoughts. Abul 'Ala Maududi's books played an instrumental role in that transformation and both concepts of *jahiliyyah** and *hakimiyya*† find their roots there. As Qutb wrote, "This religion is not a theory that people learn in a book for intellectual luxury or increasing knowledge. It is also not a negative doctrine that people live by in their relationship with their God only. It is also not ritual practices that people perform between them and their God. This religion is a general announcement for the liberation of man."¹⁶

Qutb's revisions, while revolutionizing the Islamist discourse and providing the intellectual underpinning for the growth of the Jihadi current, have had little impact on the Brotherhood's methodology though it did leave its imprint on the group's thought. While revolutionizing the grand vision of Islamism, Qutb had little to offer in terms of an actual plan or methodology.

In the last decade, however, the Brotherhood's methodology for change faced an internal disagreement that was often billed by observers as between a moderate versus a conservative wing. While the existence of those wings inside the Brotherhood is a matter of debate and while the disagreements between various Brotherhood individuals

* The state of ignorance. Historical term used to describe the Arabian Peninsula at the time of Mohamed's revelation. Term reinvented by Qutb to describe contemporary Muslim societies.

† Sovereignty of God. The concept that God is the sole legislator for mankind.

involved a variety of issues, at the center of that debate was the question of methodology. The disagreement came to the open after the Egyptian revolution as Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh offered an alternative vision in which the Brotherhood would remain a *da'wah* organization and not establish a political party. Instead Brotherhood members would be free to establish numerous political parties.¹⁷ Other “reformers” suggested that the Brotherhood would dissolve itself and compete in the political process as a political party. Answering such criticism, Khairat Al Shater said, “The party, my brothers, as an instrument, means, or vessel, is not born of the Islamic idea, or of the Islamic experience, or of the Islamic model. Rather, it is one of the various products of Western civilization, the Western model, or the Western *Nahda*. It is an instrument or a vessel for the deliberation of power in the political space, an instrument for [engaging in] the conflict for the sake of obtaining power. The *Gama'a*, on the other hand, is not an instrument of conflict or competition. The *Gama'a* is an instrument of integration and rallying of the entire *Ummah* in order to build its *Nahda* on the basis of Islam.”¹⁸

“Islam is not merely a doctrine so it is satisfied with informing people with its doctrine. It is a methodology represented in a kinetic collective organization that marches to liberate all people. The other collectives do not allow (Islam) to organize the life of its subjects according to (Islam’s) methodology, hence Islam must remove all those regimes as obstacles to overall liberation. This cannot happen without the existence of a group of believers with a Activist approach under a leadership that believes in this overall framework, implements it in reality, and fights every tyrant.”¹⁹

Sayed Qutb’s words paved the way for a revolution within Islamist thought. While Shabab Mohamed’s break with Hassan El Banna in the 40’s was a precursor to those ideas, Qutb gave the Jihadi discourse its overall framework and theory. The Jihadi methodology for change begins from the premise that contemporary society is as far away from true Islam as can be. As Sayed Qutb argues, “We are today in a *jahiliyyah* similar to that contemporaneous to Islam or worse. Everything around us is *jahiliyyah*: people’s perceptions and beliefs, habits and customs, the source of their culture, arts and literature, and their laws and legislation. Even much of what we think of as being Islamic culture, Islamic sources, or Islamic philosophy and thought is in fact the making of this *jahiliyyah*.”²⁰ While not all Jihadis engage in wholesale declarations of unbelief for contemporary Muslim societies, Jihadis with their various stripes and groups agree that the current state of Muslim societies does not allow for partial slow reform but instead requires the complete overhaul of the system.²¹ This fundamental and complete change is not only necessary but inevitable to establish Islam. Unlike slow reform, which allows for changing the system through political work, or individual and collective *da'wah* and education, a complete revolution requires violence. For Jihadis, that requirement is also necessitated by the understanding that the current order will not stand by idly and allow itself to be eradicated without defending itself. In his foundational tract, the Neglected Duty, Abdel Salam Farag laid down the basic argument. Man-made laws that are applied today in Muslim societies are a clear act of unbelief and hence rulers that apply them are apostates. Reform cannot change the status quo and strength is the only means to reestablish Islam.²²

Despite the fact that the necessity of violence is an agreed-upon principle among Jihadis, this has not resulted in a common methodology. On the contrary, similar to other Islamist currents, the Jihadi current has witnessed since its emergence hundreds of disagreements and divisions over the question of the methodology of violence.

The two most important groups that espoused violence in Egypt in the 1970's and onward were the Gama'a Islamiya and the Islamic Jihad. Despite their temporary alliance and merger, which led to the assassination of President Sadat in 1981, the two groups were radically different in their historical development and basic conceptions and hence the methodology they adopted. Gama'a Islamiya had its roots in the Islamist revival in Egyptian universities in the early 1970's. Centered in Egypt's south, its leaders enjoyed a mass following and a hospitable environment. That allowed their discourse and methodology to incorporate various levels and means of violence as a methodology for creating the Islamic society, from *da'wah* to *al amr bil ma'ruf wal nahy'an el monkar** and finally Jihad. From its conception, Gama'a Islamiya was much more Salafi in its focus than its Jihadi counterpart. It attempted with various degrees of success to enforce its vision on its surrounding environment. Its violent efforts included enforcing the segregation of the sexes in public space, attacking music concerts and dance parties, attacking video rental shops, banning alcohol consumption, attacking cinemas and theaters, and attacking Christians deemed to have forgotten their second-class status.²³ On the other hand, Islamic Jihad since its inception comprised various cells that often found themselves in strong disagreement over the methodology of change, with breakaways a frequent feature. In addition, Islamic Jihad enjoyed neither the mass following nor the geographical base to engage in such practices. Hence violence was limited to shootings and bombings.

The desired end result for Islamic Jihad was clear: establishing an Islamic government and a powerful army to fight unbelievers. Left unclear was how to reach that goal outside of a general agreement on Jihad. Abdel Salam Farag had argued that fighting rulers was preferable to fighting imperialism.²⁴ This emphasis on fighting the near enemy would be challenged in the future by Ayman El Zawahiri and Al Qaeda. This was hardly the first disagreement within Jihadism. A few years after the beginnings of Jihadi cells in Egypt, an attempt at unifying the Saleh Sareya group with the first Jihadi group founded by Ismail Tantawi failed over the question of maintaining Salafi appearances. The latter insisted on it, while the former argued that theological disagreements should be delayed until the Islamic state was established.²⁵

Appearances were not the only disagreement in those early days. The question of *takfir*† became a contentious issue among Jihadis. Shukri Mustafa argued for a very lax interpretation of unbelief that included anyone who sinned. His group, which became known in the media as Excommunication and Emigration, argued that isolation from society and emigration to the desert was a religious duty and declared anyone who refused to join them an unbeliever. After Shukri's death at the hands of the police, they moved closer to the Shi'a belief in the Mahdi and were preparing for the return of the

* There are various translations of the term: Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong, Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil, Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

† Declaring someone an unbeliever

redeemer. The Stopping and Determining group, as their name indicates, argued that we should stop and make sure whether Muslims in Egypt were in fact Muslims or not by checking their beliefs and asking them to join the group and obey its leader. Magdy El Safaty in the mid 1980's attempted to amalgamate this idea with that of Jihad, creating the Saved from Hell group, which conducted a wave of assassination attempts on Egyptian officials. Shawki El Sheikh created another amalgam, the Shawkies, which argued that there was no need for stopping and declared everyone who did not join their ranks an unbeliever. This group engaged in a wave of terrorism in the early 1990's, specializing in attacking Christian jewelry shops.²⁶

These disagreements and splits over the question of *takfir* were further augmented with disagreements over the preferred methodology of violence. The first Jihadi cell in Egypt, founded in 1964, split after the 1968 demonstrations over the question of the best means to overthrow the Egyptian regime and establish an Islamic one. The original methodology of Jihad had been based on infiltrating the military through encouraging its members to join military academies and conducting a military coup. But Yehia Hesham, one of its early members, was smitten by the massive demonstration in 1968, triggered by the lenient sentences given Air force commanders blamed for the 1967 Arab humiliation in the Six Day War against Israel. As a result, Yehia Hesham and Rifa'i Sorour broke with the group and formed an independent organization that advocated for working with the masses and conducting a popular revolution as the superior methodology.²⁷

After Sadat's assassination, Rifa'i Sorour devoted his life to creating a theoretical framework for Jihad.²⁸ His revolutionary theorization, successfully merging Salafi tenets, Jihadi discourse, and revolutionary methodology, would later become the foundation for revolutionary Salafism after the Egyptian revolution. To overcome the disagreements within the Jihadi discourse, Sorour tried to formulate an overall theory. Sorour argued that, "The basic methods of the Islamist movement is informing through the word, using strength, and establishing authority" and that "emigration and isolation are conducts of necessity in situations of despair." His approach was flexible, suggesting that, "The political practice may force (the Islamist movement) to discontinue the use of force and it may necessitate using it" and that "Islamist political conception has to deal with reality, benefiting from geography, benefiting from own historical experience." Jihad nonetheless remained a cornerstone of his thought. "The goal is to bring people to God, the best means to achieve this is power, the final outcome of power is the Caliphate, power as a minimum with the Caliphate as the ultimate end requires force, and force requires martyrdom." The state continued to be the unavoidable means to achieving the final goal. "The state is to empower God's religion on earth; the state is the main means to establish religion."²⁹

Perhaps the most peculiar of the methodologies that sprung as a result of Qutb's theorization is the one that bears his name in Egypt. The Qutbists, as they are described by others, or Ahl Al Sunna wal Gama'a, as they call themselves, are a small group in Alexandria led until his death in 2013 by Abdel Meguid El Shazly. El Shazly is perhaps the truest continuation of Sayed Qutb's methodology. He preferred a long term strategy,

recruiting people to a secret vanguard that would become the core group, which will ultimately achieve empowerment.³⁰

Divisions continue to plague the Jihadi current today as they have in the past. Those divisions are often the result of organizational imperatives and theological disagreements, but they also often center on the question of the methodology and strategy adopted to achieve the agreed-upon objective. Often those divisions emerged in prison, which allowed various Jihadi groups to mix together and develop new ideas and strategies. In recent years, Jihadis have emphasized reframing their methodology as not only a Salafi one, but the only truly Salafi one. Such efforts have given rise to the term Jihadi Salafism, a term Ahmed 'Ashoush claims to have invented in his attempt to create an amalgam between the scholarship focus of Alexandrian Salafis and the Jihadi occupation with the question of change.³¹ The Jihadi methodology has also faced a great challenge in the form of revisions conducted by historical Jihadi leaders, whether those of the Gama'a Islamiya or of Sayed Imam Al Sharif. Those revisions however have not created an alternative methodology for change through peaceful means.³²

The first articulation of the Salafi methodology for change took place after the 1882 British invasion of Egypt, when Mohamed Abduh parted ways with his mentor and friend, Gamal Al Din Al Afghani. Realizing the limitations of his previous methodology, which focused on political agitation, Abduh began focusing on educational and cultural reform as a means to bring Muslims out of their miserable state. Abduh's educational reforms were bitterly fought by traditionalists who controlled the official religious establishment. While his reforms had some impact, they failed to result in the outcome he desired. Abduh's efforts were followed by those of his close associate and protégé Rashid Reda and by Mohamed Hamed El Fiqi. Both men realized that working within the official religious establishment would yield limited results and hence chose to create alternative venues and organizations to enact reform. While Reda is remembered today for his establishment of Al Manar magazine in 1898 and the impact it had on a whole generation across the Muslim world, an equally important part of his legacy was his establishment of a school in 1912 to prepare qualified preachers. The school was soon forced to close, but among its students would be the future stars of Salafism: Mohamed Abdel Zaher Aboul Samah, Mohamed Abdel Razek Hamza, Moheb El Din El Khatib, and the future Mufti of Jerusalem, the notorious Haj Amin Al Husseini.

"The Salafi Methodology is Islam in a pure form ... the Salafi methodology in that understanding does not allow for evolution or change. It transcends time, place, individuals and groups."³³

Yasser Burhami's words point to why the Salafi methodology, despite not having the glamour of the Brotherhood's electoral success or the Jihadi adventures, remains the dominant methodology among the majority of Islamists in Egypt and beyond. As the very name, Salafi, indicates, the methodology is set above any competing ones by its claim of authenticity and belonging to the nation's Salaf. Since the very premise of Islamism is that a return to the purified Islam as it was practiced in the early generations of Muslims is obligatory for Muslims to overcome their current predicament and the challenge that modernity poses to them, it is no surprise that the methodology

claiming to represent those very generations would have such widespread appeal. Mustafa Helmi sums up the Salafi appeal by writing, “If Muslims seek today a road for advancement, they have no route but the unity of their group, and the unity of the group has no route except true Islam, and true Islam’s source is the Quran and the *Sunna**. This is the summary of the Salafi trend; a return of Islam to its pure origin from God’s book and the *Sunna* of his Prophet.”³⁴ As a quote attributed to the early Muslim scholar and founder of one of the schools of jurisprudence, Malik ibn Anas, states, “This nation’s last part will not become good except with that which made its early part good”³⁵ Following the Salafi methodology is thus for Burhami not a luxury or a choice but mandatory. “Following the methodology of Ahl El Sunna is the duty of every Muslim. We have no doubt that the true Salafi methodology is the one who represents Ahl El Sunna’s methodology. The Salafi methodology is Islam in its pure form as the Prophet brought it.”³⁶

The fundamentals of the Salafi methodology have been articulated by a number of Salafi thinkers, most notably the Egyptian-born, Kuwait-based Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek in his seminal 1975 book, *The Scientific Basis of the Salafi Da’wah*. Abdel Khalek lists three main bases of the Salafi methodology for change: monotheism, following, and purification. Monotheism for Salafis is not merely declaring that there is no God but God.³⁷ It is a complex concept that is based on three forms of monotheism: monotheism of Lordship, monotheism of Divinity, and monotheism of the Names and Attributes. While the first concept of monotheism, that God is the only and perfect creator, unites all Muslims, the Salafi emphasis is on the other two. Monotheism of Divinity means that acts of worship are solely to God. Hence, according to the Salafi understanding, Sufi practices of praying at graves and seeking miracles from Saints violates this belief. Monotheism of the Names and Attributes means that no human can share an attribute of God. This forms the cornerstone of the Salafi Ash’ari historical feud that continues today.³⁸ Monotheism is the center of the Salafi worldview and the goal of its methodology. As Salafi Call founder Ahmed Farid emphasizes, “Any *da’wah* that does not care about the issue of monotheism and does not make monotheism its sole target is a *da’wah* that is not on the path of prophets.”³⁹

Following for Salafis means following the first three generations of Muslims. While most Muslims would claim that they follow the Quran and the *Sunna* of the Prophet, such a statement is not enough for Salafis. A specific commitment to the Companion’s understanding of religion is required.⁴⁰ The Salafi methodology’s differentiation from other Islamic movements that call for a return to the Quran and *Sunna* is that it adds the understanding of the Salaf.⁴¹ The famous slogan raised by Egyptian Salafis is, “The Quran and the *Sunna* with the understanding of the *Ummah’s* Salaf.”⁴² Following also means liberation from the shackles of tradition represented in the four schools of jurisprudence⁴³ and a rejection of innovations in religion⁴⁴. Salafis stress that there is no distinction between the Quran and the *Sunna* and consider both revealed by God and equal sources in their validity and importance.⁴⁵ The Salafi methodology is hence based on a rejection of human reason, which for them is trumped by the literary meaning of the text.⁴⁶ This includes a rejection of rational philosophical and linguistic

* Prophet’s way of life.

interpretations⁴⁷ that have been a key feature of their historical Islamic nemeses, the Mu'tazila and Ash'aris sects. Salafis understand purification, which forms the foundation of Al Albani's methodology, as purification of the soul from heresies.⁴⁸

Heresies for Salafis are not just historical phenomena associated with past Islamic sects, but instead constitute an ongoing threat. As Mustafa Helmi argues, "while the historical sects have disappeared, some of their doctrines and tenets are still inherited in the minds of men."⁴⁹ As a result, fighting heresies is the major occupation of Salafis, for only by purifying Islam from the heresies and innovations that are widespread among Muslims can Islam be returned to its original pure monotheism. This fight and return is not a luxury, for "the establishment of Islamic state will only take place through pure monotheism."⁵⁰ Yasser Burhami sums up the basis of the Salafi methodology by saying it includes: "Calling people to religion, to Islam and belief and kindness with its meanings, and all its cornerstones from knowing God with his names and attributes and worshiping Him with them, monotheism of Lordship and Divinity, unbelief in the tyrant, fighting idolatry in all its forms old and new from the idolatry of graves and myths, idolatry of ruling and loyalty and others, Following the *Sunna* of the Prophet and fighting innovations ... raising God's word in the world."⁵¹

The ultimate goal of the Salafi methodology is creating the true Muslim individual and society. For Salafis, this true Muslim society does not currently exist. "Those who are attributed to Islam while performing idolatry in word and belief and change the verses of God and seek other than His *shari'a* and are hostile to His Prophet's *Sunna* and make fun of it, all these it is not permissible to declare any of them Muslims."⁵² Hence as Yasser Burhami notes, "One of the most important priorities is founding the believing group that is committed to Islam, working with it and working for it."⁵³

The question however is how to reach such a society. A number of common means are shared across the Salafi spectrum. Given that "society is not sufficiently Islamic, political activity will only lead to corruption." Salafis "are against overt political action, and they choose to reform society at the individual level by calling on Muslims to emulate the prophet and reform the self by embracing the Salafi creed of fighting polytheism, human reason, and human desire."⁵⁴ Changing the state of the Muslim nation today will thus only happen through individual change. As the Quran itself states: "God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves"⁵⁵ (13:11). This Salafi focus on personal salvation naturally results in a focus on personal behavior and appearance,⁵⁶ with "moral purity emphasized as the fundamental purpose of the human condition."⁵⁷ While the Salafi methodology at its essence is preoccupied with changing the base of society, rejecting the top-down methodologies of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jihadis⁵⁸, it should not be confused with attempts at creating a mass movement. Salafis are inherently suspicious of the masses whom Salafis view as soaked in deviant practices and hence focus on spreading the Salafi creed to them.⁵⁹ As Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem notes "real and beneficial change is what takes place in mosques. This is our principle. This is the methodology of our *da'wah*, education and upbringing. The Salafi Call does not put its hopes on the masses and their actions."⁶⁰ Mustafa Helmi thus clarifies the Salafi focus as "starting with the individual and correcting his doctrines is the first step in diverting him to his right path so that the doctrine would ignite in the

souls and hearts what it has done in the periods of our history and continued to do in the key moments of the history of our nation.”⁶¹

The Salafi focus on the promotion of *da'wah* and opposition to un-Islamic practices⁶² renders scholarship the most important occupation for them⁶³. Only through the individual acquiring religious knowledge can he be on the right path.⁶⁴ As Yasser Burhami notes “Scholarship has a special and very important state in our *da'wah*, for on it, it is founded and without it, it loses its identity and belonging to the Salaf.”⁶⁵ This focus on scholarship is given a theoretical reasoning. As Mustafa Helmi argues, “we should not be sucked into reaction to Western action, but take the initiative by returning to our religion.”⁶⁶ Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek thus maintains that “the Salafi *da'wah* is Jihad with all the meanings of Jihad in order to restore what is right and making religion for God alone and liberating the nation from this grave idolatry and clear unbelief.”⁶⁷ This focus on scholarship and the resulting mastery by Salafis of the basic sources and books of Islamic knowledge provides them with a clear advantage in their competition with other Islamist currents, whose focus on politics and violence leaves them with little room for such rigorous study and in the case of the Brotherhood has allowed Salafi ideas and practices to infiltrate its ranks.

While Salafis share the same doctrine and agree on the general framework of the methodology, significant disagreements exist among various Salafi currents, groups, and individuals on the emphasis they put and the importance they assign to specific aspects of that methodology.⁶⁸

Nasir al Din Al Albani's importance in the Salafi universe cannot be overstated. For Salafis of all stripes, with the notable exception of Jihadi Salafis, Al Albani ranks among such towering figures as Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah and Mohamed Ibn Abdel Wahab. Even for his Salafi detractors, Al Albani's works are impossible to ignore given his superb knowledge of Islamic texts (especially the Prophet's *hadith**), his rigorous scholarship, and the commanding position he takes in articulating what Salafism actually is. In fact, the very term Salafis is a term Albani popularized in face of traditionalists who preferred being called Muslims or the more historical terms, *Ahl El Sunna wal Gama'a* and *Ahl Al Hadith*. Al Albani argued that “belonging to Salafism means belonging to infallibility,” and that Salafism distinguished itself from other sects and indicated a transcendence of the schools of jurisprudence. “What distinguishes Al Albani from other Salafi figures is that he has a comprehensive discourse and a complete view.”⁶⁹ His importance is further amplified in the case of Egypt, given his towering influence on the country's various Salafi currents. Egyptian Salafism, while influenced by other Salafi worldviews such as that of Ibn Taymiyyah and Wahabism, is largely shaped by Al Albani's discourse on purification and upbringing.⁷⁰

Al Albani begins by asking the fundamental question: “Why are Muslims in such a miserable condition and what is the cure to save them?” His answer is simple: “The only cure is to return to religion.” But this answer and cure remains unclear, for “which

* Prophet's tradition including sayings and deeds. Compiled from oral tradition 200 years after the Prophet's death.

religion is that? There are many disagreements among Islamic sects on what that religion is.”⁷¹ The answer thus entails a specific understanding of religion. “The treatment is the same treatment and the cure is the same cure. Just as the Prophet treated the first *Jahiliyyah*, the preachers of Islam today, all of them, have to treat the misunderstanding of the meaning of there is no God but God and treat their painful reality with the same treatment and cure.”⁷² And what did the Prophet start with? Monotheism of course, calling people to the one God. The methodology of change for Mohamed Nasir Al Din Al Albani is thus purification and upbringing.⁷³ “We have to purify people’s beliefs from all heresies and wrong traditions they inherited and raise them on the correct knowledge.”⁷⁴ In other words, the first priority is to purify Islam from all the accumulated historical fungi that has made it hard for Muslims to know their true religion, and then to educate a new generation of Muslims on that purified religion.⁷⁵ “This upbringing is what will bring us the pure Islamic society and hence establish the state of Islam.”⁷⁶

This methodology is of vital importance to Al Albani. “Without those two introductions--right knowledge and right upbringing on this right knowledge--it is impossible in my view to establish Islam, its rule or state.”⁷⁷ Why? Because, although change for Al Albani takes place by working on the popular base, any attempt to bring that base into action before it is educated first on purified Islam will have negative consequences. Hence his famous slogan: “Educate then create blocks.”⁷⁸ For “political action in any Islamic society that does not implement *shari’a* will have negative consequences if it is conducted before achieving those two important issues: purification and upbringing.”⁷⁹ “The duty is to work on the most important then the important. The most important thing now is to reform the doctrines of Muslims, purifying the soul through purification from heresies and upbringing on monotheism.”⁸⁰ In that light is Al Albani’s famous saying “Of politics (wisdom) is to leave politics”⁸¹ to be understood. For Al Albani, this is the natural order of things. “We believe in the rational development, we start with the doctrine, followed by the ritual, followed by the behavior,”⁸² and hence “establish the State of Islam in your hearts, and it will be established for you on your land.”⁸³ Though Al Albani is careful to warn that “there is no mandatory connection between establishing correct monotheism and the correct rituals and between establishing the Islamic state in the countries that rule with other than what God revealed.”⁸⁴

Madkhali Salafis are often accused of lacking a change methodology. For their detractors, Madkhali do not even aim at changing the current state of the Muslim world but have as their objective keeping things as they are⁸⁵, making them the conservatives of Islam par-excellence. The reason for such accusations is that besides sharing with other Salafis the focus on monotheism and on following the Quran and *Sunna* with the understanding of the Salaf, they emphasize obedience to rulers, whom they consider legitimate despite the fact that they rule by other than what God revealed. Insead, Madkhali Salafis zealously devote their energies (at obsessive levels) to fighting those Islamist groups they view as partisan and accuse all other Islamists of being heretics and innovators.⁸⁶

In reality however, the Madkhalis follow Al Albani’s methodology of change through purification and upbringing. As Ahmed Salem notes, while “this methodology exists on

various levels within all Islamist currents, for Madkhalis it is the sole possible approach.”⁸⁷ As the prominent Madkhali preacher, Mohamed Sa’id Raslan, argues, “Many things from doctrines, rituals, ethics, practices, history, *hadith*, jurisprudence were added to religion although it is not from it,” and hence, “The road to reaching the truth of religion by shedding other things from it is through a simple matter: purifying religion from what was added to it. As to how to return to it, this is summed up in a small sentence, which is upbringing the nation on the purified religion.” He further notes that, “The Prophet spent his life purifying his companion’s doctrine and bringing them up on the right doctrine.”⁸⁸ Another Egyptian Madkhali preacher, Hesham El Beialy takes it a step further. Not only was that the approach of Prophet Mohamed, but “all prophets have focused on educating and upbringing the nation on monotheism and purifying the nation from the signs of idolatry.”⁸⁹ It is thus understandable that Madkhalis would reject any other suggested methodology of change and find its advocates deviators from the path of God.

Given such a Madkhali understanding of society as not sufficiently Islamic in its doctrine and lacking in its understanding of the basic tenets of Islam, it is no surprise that they would consider any political action as inevitably leading to corruption.⁹⁰ Raslan even argues that “collective organized work is based on unbelief,” and “you cannot call people to God through the means of idolatry and unbelief from demonstrations, sit-ins, civil disobedience, elections, partisanship, acting, dancing, plays, singing, and the like which people innovated in this era. All of these are rejected methods.”⁹¹

Similarly the Scholarly Salafi current within Islamism does not engage in political collective action and is generally distrusting of it. Hence its main methodology for change is through individual change as Scholarly Salafis believe that the state of the Muslim world will not change until each Muslim changes. This individual change would then lead, it is thought, to the individual changing the surrounding environments, families and colleagues.⁹² As its name indicates, Scholarly Salafism is the most focused on scholarship among the Salafi currents. In fact scholarship is nearly its only occupation. Following historical practices, Scholarly Salafism takes shape in a group of students and disciples gathering around a Sheikh⁹³ from whom they acquire knowledge and emulate, making it similar to Shi’a practices or Sufi orders, though Salafis would vehemently reject the comparison. Though Scholarly Salafis, unlike Madkhalis, do not consider contemporary rulers who do not implement *shari’a* as legitimate and sometimes emphasize the question of *hakimiyya*, they reject rebellion against those rulers. As an Egyptian Scholarly Salafi, Atef Abd El Moez El Fayoumi argues “our methodology and belief as *Ahl El Sunna* is quite clear because we believe that our methodology is obeying rulers as long as they obey God ... as to unjust rulers we advise them and guide them with the legitimate means ascribed by *shari’a* as long as they do not show clear disbelief ... we acknowledge that many of today’s rulers do not institute Islam in their countries and people and that they have become traitors to their religion and nation But despite this bad condition, we do not agree with rebelling against them and fighting them over rule and power to institute *shari’a* and the whole of religion. We do not agree with coups and revolutions and rebelling and crying in demonstrations and gatherings but instead believe in being patient with them and

advising them.”⁹⁴ Patience however does not mean complete submission to the status quo, but instead means “it is necessary to prepare the nation for the period of the Caliphate and empowerment because the Caliphate’s establishment is a reality no matter what.”⁹⁵ How to reach that end goal however is an open question, as Scholarly Salafism lacks a practical framework and procedural mechanisms whereby that goal may be achieved.⁹⁶

The individualistic nature of Scholarly Salafism and the lack of an organization have produced some fine disagreements within the current over the methodology of change. El Gam’eya El Shar’eya originally was closer to the Ash’ari school than to Salafis. But after its short merger with Ansar El Sunna in 1967, El Gam’eya El Shar’eya has been largely salafized and has adopted the basic framework of the Salafi methodology for change. In its founding principles, El Gam’eya El Shar’eya sought to spread correct religious beliefs, fight innovations and heresies, open Quran memorization centers, establish mosques, produce a religious magazine, publish useful books, help those in distress, build a hospital, pay for burial of poor Muslims, and lastly stated that the group does not engage in political issues which are the domain of the ruler.⁹⁷ As its principles make clear, social work is a major emphasis of the organization, thus permitting non-political collective action.

On the other hand, Ansar El Sunna from its inception adopted a much more rigidly Salafi methodology than its older counterpart. The goals of Ansar El Sunna include calling people to pure monotheism, guiding people to the Quran and the *Sunna*, loving the Prophet by taking him as a model, fighting superstitions and heresies, rejecting grave worshipping, believing all the names and attributes of God without interpretation, ending the state of stagnation resulting from the fanaticism of the schools of jurisprudence, and rejecting the inciting of people against their rulers.⁹⁸ Later, newer goals were added, including the adoption of Albani’s methodology on purification and upbringing.⁹⁹ While generally avoiding politics, the organization has taken a clear stand historically on various political questions such as democracy. It declared democracy as unbelief for giving man the power to legislate, while allowing voting in elections. Ansar El Sunna’s loose theological framework has allowed various Salafi currents to operate within its ranks,¹⁰⁰ making it a mishmash of all Salafi currents and their various methodologies.

Tabligh and Da’wah, though a non-Salafi movement in its inception, emerging from a Sufi framework, and in its overall features worldwide, has taken a Salafi framework in Egypt since its establishment at the hands of Ibrahim Ezzat. Tabligh’s methodology of change is solely based on calling people to God, a task to which it devotes all its energies and resources. Though it does not engage in politics at all nor in any theological debates, in the 1970’s it served as a recruitment pool for Jihadi cells. Besides its overall Sufi framework worldwide, it is distinguished in Egypt from other movements by its complete lack of pursuit of religious scholarship.¹⁰¹

Individual Sheikhs who belong to the Scholarly Salafi current emphasize various aspects in their methodology. Osama Abdel ‘Azeem’s educational program for his thousands of students focuses on Quran memorization and reforming and purifying hearts, arguing

that the “reason for the nation’s miserable state is corruption of the hearts and its numerous sins.” Madyan Ibrahim argues that, “The first duty and the last duty on people is to make Allah one and worshipping Him alone without partners and not the establishment of a state, an entity or a party for all of these come after and they are means and not a goal. They have made the means a goal and the goal a means, thus Allah punished them and most of them joined the idolaters’ councils known as parliaments, sitting with them and giving them loyalty and becoming like them.” Ahmed El Naqeeb takes a very critical approach to his former colleagues in the Activist Salafi current. He claims that Salafis have a comprehensive reform program. “If Salafis continued on their methodology in a short period they will be able to make the people enter once again to the spaciousness of Islam, its guidance and ethics ... we do not want to rule, we want the benefit of the nation, the nation’s rise is with Islam, even if they fight us, or jail us or behead us, we will be patient in our *da’wah* and continue in our *da’wah* until Allah’s promise of empowerment is achieved and this is the methodology of prophets: *da’wah*, patience in the face of injustice and then empowerment.”¹⁰²

Activist Salafism in Egypt is unique among non-Jihadi Salafi currents in its heavy politicization. While Activist Salafis in each country usually belong with few exceptions to one main Activist organization and framework, Egypt is unique in having three distinct Activist currents: the Salafi Call, Cairo Activist Salafis, and Sorouriya¹⁰³, with a fourth one emerging, revolutionary Salafis.

As the largest and most organized Activist Salafi current in Egypt, the Salafi Call bases its approach on Al Albani’s famous principle: purification and upbringing, purifying the Muslims’ doctrines from falsehoods, and educating Muslims on the right beliefs based on the understanding of the Salaf.¹⁰⁴ As Abdel Monem El Shahat states, “The Salafi Call is a *da’wah* reform group that adopt Salafism as a methodology and collective organized work as a technique.”¹⁰⁵ This emphasis on collective action is what distinguishes the Salafi Call from other Salafi currents, and though its adoption was more an outcome of necessity as a result of clashes with the Muslim Brotherhood in Alexandria, it has now acquired a theological reasoning. As Yasser Burhami argues, cooperation is necessary to engage in important tasks such as education, *hisba**, and helping the poor.¹⁰⁶ This broad agenda is at the center of the Salafi Call’s mission. As Abdel Monem El Shahat states, “The Salafi Call is interested in pursuing knowledge and teaching it, solving disputes between people and serving the rights of the poor and humble through an organizational council for each governorate.”¹⁰⁷ Before the Egyptian revolution, the Salafi Call proclaimed that “we are concerned/engaged with politics but do not work in it.”¹⁰⁸

The Salafi Call’s methodology for change is divided into three steps: *da’wah* to monotheism and following the Salaf, establishing the believing community on the methodology of *Ahl El Sunna*, and the final stage of empowerment.¹⁰⁹ How will this final stage take place and the state of Islam get established? The Salafi Call’s answer is not that we don’t know, but that asking the question is wrong. As Yasser Burhami argues, “As to the final point and how the Islamic state is established after this, we do not force a particular way on God.”¹¹⁰ He added, “We do not abide Allah by a certain thing that we

* Islamic Doctrine and government practice of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong.

believe in its inevitability and necessity.”¹¹¹ Abdel Monem El Shahat argues for this approach by using the example of the heart of Europe, which for centuries Muslims could never invade, but is today converting to Islam.¹¹² Scholarship occupies an important place in the Salafi Call’s methodology. As they argue, “Scholarship has a special place and a great importance in our *da’wah*, for on it, it stands and without it, it loses its identity and belonging to the Salaf.” This concern with scholarship is necessary given that “people are now waiting for *shari’a* to be implemented on them thinking it is just about punishing thieves. No, people need to be mentored and educated on *shari’a*.”¹¹³

The Sorouri current in Egypt follows the footsteps of its larger current as founded by Mohamed Sorour during his work in Saudi Arabia. It deviates only in its lack of hostility to the Muslim Brotherhood, which in the case of Mohamed Sorour was a legacy of his bitter quarrels as a Brotherhood member in Syria. Mohamed Sorour was able to fill a serious gap in Saudi Arabia where the Brotherhood methodology had no resonance due to its theological weakness and the Salafi religious establishment lacked a coherent action plan to suit enthusiastic young members looking for ways to change the state of the world of Islam. He thus brilliantly mixed Salafi tenets with Brotherhood activism, realizing that each was in desperate need of the other. But it was not any Brotherhood discourse that Sorour incorporated into Salafism. It was the Qutbist one, as he belonged to the Damascus branch of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood which was more Salafized and Qutbist than the overall organization.¹¹⁴ As Ahmed Salem notes, Sorouriya is “a mixture of Ibn Taymiyyah with the Qutb brothers.”¹¹⁵ The desired Sorouri goal is Islam as a religion and a state, but given its Salafi methodology, it seeks religion first. As noted Egyptian Sorouri, Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim, notes, “Islam is a religion and a state. If religion is established the state becomes right.”¹¹⁶ The Qutbist influence becomes clear with the emphasis Sorouris place on the question of *hakimiyya*.

The Sorouri methodology is distinct from other Salafi methodologies in three areas. First it places great emphasis on addressing contemporary challenges facing the Muslim world and not merely historical heresies. As one of the earliest thinkers of Egyptian Sorouris, Salah El Sawy, argues, “By Salafism we do not mean stopping at the concepts and doctrinal issues that our Salaf confronted the deviations of their time with and ignoring or giving up on the battles that *Jahiliyyah* is conducting in the contemporary societies to remove the signs of Islam and obliteration of Muslims ... True Salafism does not accept for the *da’wah* to target the liberation of doctrines from the idolatry of the dead and idols while ignoring the idolatry of the living and contemporary conditions It does not accept to declare war on metaphors or postponement in some attributes and not declaring it on not implementing *shari’a* and ruling with manmade laws and separation of religion and state.” In that light, it prioritizes unbelief over heresies. “The all-encompassing reform movements mobilize the nation with all its factions to stand in front of a danger that targets the very essence of its existence and aims to eradicate it. The circle of its loyalty and disavowal is commitment to Islam and willingness to participate in Jihad or just belonging in its camp.” Secondly it accepts differences within the Islamist camp. As Salah El Sawy states, “We should be gentle with those seeking salvation who fall into wrongs or partial heresies be they intellectual or practical from among the contemporary factions of Islamist work.” This acceptance of disagreements

and the plurality of Islamist groups is one that should be a first step toward unifying their work. “If we accept pluralism in the components of Islamist activism, and each group is allowed to organize its internal issues related to *da’wah* and education, anything that is related to the confrontation with the enemies whether peacefully or violently has to be left to the decision makers and the Islamist activism deals with them with one strategy in that framework. No Islamist group should be allowed to independently decide on the whole future of Islamist activism or to drag it to a total confrontation based on their calculations alone, especially when the effects of this will not be felt by them alone but will naturally have ramifications on all the groups of Islamist activism.” Thirdly, Sorouris emphasize the importance of organized collective work as “it is an effective means to achieve the largest success for the Islamist cause and provides clear evidence of the truthfulness of the Islamist experiment ... and will be a practical field to train on the lost Islamic terms to the nation today such as *shura*, justice and impartiality.”¹¹⁷

Ruling by Other Than What God Has Revealed

The lack of implementation of *shari'a*, or as Islamists term it, ruling by other than what God has revealed, presents the most evident challenge of the crisis of modernity in the Muslim world today. While throughout history Muslims have faced numerous material and theological challenges, this question strikes at the very foundation of Islamic political thought and world order. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the question occupies a central position in the Islamist discourse and in the intra-Islamist warfare. The question is not one only of legal rulings for the individual but also has profound political ramifications. While all Islamists agree that ruling by anything other than *shari'a* is prohibited, a debate ensues over whether that constitutes an act of unbelief or not, whether unbelief can be declared on an individual ruler or not, whether unbelief can be declared on his assistants and society at large, the legitimacy of modern rulers, and whether rebellion against them is permissible.

For Madkhali Salafis, simply ruling by other than what God has revealed is not in itself enough cause to declare the ruler an unbeliever.¹¹⁸ The ruler has to publicly declare his apostasy and unbelief for him to be considered an unbeliever and hence his legitimacy questioned.¹¹⁹ The ruler is only declared an unbeliever if he questions the religious edicts, claims that man-made laws are God's *shari'a*, or prefers man-made laws to *shari'a*. The last category does not mean simply ruling by them, but preferring them by declaring them superior to God's law.¹²⁰ In his book on the nullifiers of Islam, Egyptian Madkhali scholar Mohamed Sa'id Raslan describes what constitutes unbelief: "believing that the guidance or ruling of anyone is better than God's guidance and ruling (He who believes that regimes and laws made by men are better than the shari'a of Islam or equal to it, or that it is permitted to follow its rulings, or that Islam's system is not suitable for the 20th century, or that Islam limits the relationship between man and his God in the mosque only without religion interfering in all aspects of life)."¹²¹ He adds, however, an important condition: that these positions are taken out of actual conviction and not out of a desire for material advancement, in which case it is merely a sin and not a nullifier of Islam.¹²² Only in the case of clear unbelief that leaves no room for interpretation is rebellion against the ruler permissible.¹²³ Otherwise any form of opposition to the Muslim ruler is not permissible. This also applies to giving the ruler public advice.¹²⁴ In fact, advice to rulers must be given privately.¹²⁵ Madkhalis sum up the correct relationship toward rulers as: "To advise them and to pray that they be good, to offer them advice, show them what right is and what deficiencies they fall in, all of this with a style that is not alienating. It is not from advice to speak to them in a harsh manner, because rulers no matter how bad their condition is are not in the state of the Pharaoh. What did God tell Moses and Aaron: 'And speak to him with gentle speech (Taha: 44)'. Claiming that some rulers do not rule by *shari'a*, so one has to be harsh and violent with them and try to overthrow them, all of these are methods of *Jahiliyyah* and Islam has nothing to do with them."¹²⁶ Rebellion for Madkhalis is twofold, verbal and physical, with the latter the result of the former.¹²⁷ Madkhalis are unique among Salafis in this regard as they not only consider public advice a form of rebellion but also consider their position on this matter a cornerstone of Salafism.¹²⁸

The rejection of rebellion against the ruler is absolute for Madkhalis except if the ruler declares clear unbelief. Therefore, even an unjust ruler can be legitimate. As Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali states, "He who is unjust as long as he is within the circle of belief, and we have not seen from him outright disbelief, obeying him is a must."¹²⁹ The rationale for this position stems from the simple intonation, "an unjust Imam is better than lasting strife."¹³⁰ Citing the example of the rebellion against Islam's third Caliph, Uthman, Madkhalis argue that rebellion against rulers is the cause of all strife and misery in the Muslim world.¹³¹ Even a ruler who has assumed power in an illegitimate manner through force is to be obeyed, regardless of whether he is ruling by *shari'a* or not.¹³² Mohamed Aman Al Jami argues, "As to the noisemakers for revolting against rulers everywhere, this is a call for perversion in earth, a call for instability in the entire world. People like these are not preachers but they are vandals and corruptors. A preacher is known by true advice, gentle speech and loving goodness for people and loving quietness and the spreading of security among Muslims. Those are the true advisors."¹³³ Those who engage in rebellion against Muslim rulers are Kharijites* who have departed from the saved sect of *Ahl El Sunna*.¹³⁴ This position led Madkhalis to attack other Salafis for refusing to recognize Hosni Mubarak as the legitimate ruler of Egypt.¹³⁵ Mahmoud Lutfi Amer took this position to its utmost extreme by issuing a fatwa spilling the blood of Mohamed El Baradei in 2010, and of anyone who runs against the ruler in elections, even if the ruler himself allows competitive elections.¹³⁶

But recognizing and obeying the ruler is not enough for Madkhalis. Muslims also have to recognize other state institutions such as the official religious establishment.¹³⁷ No Muslim is allowed to disagree or reject an official fatwa, even if that fatwa permitted bank interest rates, considered a form of usury.¹³⁸ For Al Jami, the Imams of Muslim are not just the rulers but also the religious establishment.¹³⁹ Lastly a key attribute of Madkhali Salafis that distinguishes them from other Salafi currents is that they consider the state and ruler as the only Islamic *Gama'a*.¹⁴⁰ Mahmoud Lutfi Amer in his famous letter to other Salafis in 2010 asked them to take a public position on whether they "acknowledge that there is a community of Muslims in Egypt and that Hosni Mubarak is their Imam?"¹⁴¹ Because the Muslim community is the state, forming any Islamic group or collective action is an infringement upon the rights of rulers, an act of rebellion against them and an innovation in religion.¹⁴² Jihad is *fard kifaya*†, whose obligation falls if conducted by others and is currently the responsibility of armies.¹⁴³

The Madkhali positions in rejecting declaring rulers by other than what God has revealed unbelievers considering it a minor issue¹⁴⁴, considering them legitimate, stressing obedience to them, rejecting any rebellion against them both verbal and physical, considering any form of collective action an act of rebellion, and more importantly their attacks on anyone who disagrees with them on these issues which they

* Literary those who went out. Early Islamic sect which emerged during Islam's first civil war. Adopted extreme theological views on declaring unbelief. Largely disappeared from the main centers of the Islamic world during the Middle Ages. Remain today in small pockets in North Africa and most notably in Oman where the majority ofn the population belongs to the Ibadi sect which emerged from Kharijites.

† Fard is a religious duty. Fard is divided into two parts: Fard 'ayn which is an obligation that every Muslim has to perform such as prayers and Fard kifaya which is an obligation imposed Muslims as a community and thus an individual is not obliged to perform it if enough people fulfill it.

consider as the basis of belonging to the saved sect,¹⁴⁵ has led their opponents to accuse them of being Murji'ah* by separating belief from acts of belief.¹⁴⁶ The Madkhali position is better understood by looking at the society in which their current emerged, Saudi Arabia. The question of *hakimiyya* is less relevant in Saudi Arabia given its lack of a constitution and implementation of *shari'a*.¹⁴⁷

Given their lack of organization, Egyptian Scholarly Salafis do not take a common position on the question of ruling by other than what God has revealed. Salafi scholar Ahmed Salem divides their position into three categories: those who do not declare a ruler an unbeliever except in the specific case of the ruler who declares ruling by other than what God has revealed permissible, the ruler who prefers man-made law to God's *shari'a*, and the ruler who considers man-made law equal to *shari'a*. This is the position of former Saudi Mufti, Abdel Aziz Ibn Baz and Al Albani and is endorsed in Egypt by Ansar El Sunna and Mustafa El 'Adawy. The second group declares the unbelief of the genus but not the particular, which means that they declare the abstract ruler who rules by other than what God has revealed an unbeliever, but do not similarly label the particular ruler; Hosni Mubarak for example, an unbeliever until certain conditions are met. This position was adopted historically by the Saudi religious establishment especially, previous Mufti Mohamed Ibn Ibrahim Al El Sheikh and the eminent Egyptian Salafi Ahmed Shaker. Today it is adopted by Ahmed El Naqeeb, Madyan Ibrahim, and Mohamed Hassan in his earlier works. Lastly there are those who use the same methodology of the last group regarding the unbelief of the genus but not the particular, but do not declare a public position on the matter such as, Abu Ishaq El Howeiny.¹⁴⁸

Al Albani is adamant that committing a grave sin is not in itself an act that makes one a non-Muslim. A person is not an unbeliever until he in fact believes in the unbelief acts no matter how many unbelief acts he commits. This has led his detractors to accuse him of being a modern Murji'ah, who separates between belief and acts of belief.¹⁴⁹ This was especially due to his anomalous position, shared only by the Salafi Call in Alexandria, of not declaring a man who does not pray an unbeliever.¹⁵⁰ Al Albani argues that "ruling is for God alone and following man-made laws and using them to solve today's problems is contradictory to rule belonging to God." However, he is careful in stating that this has nothing to do with declaring one an unbeliever and is simply a sin.¹⁵¹ He argues that legislating with other than what God legislated does not in itself make one an unbeliever, unless one regards it as permissible.¹⁵² Al Albani further asks the rhetorical question "so what if you learned that they are unbelievers, what can you do? Leave this alone and focus on building the base on which the Muslim government can be established by following the *Sunna* of the Prophet."¹⁵³ Ibn Baz's position is made easier by the fact that "the Saudi state implements *shari'a*." He notes that "It is not permissible to rebel against the ruler unless four conditions are met:" that the ruler shows clear unbelief, that defeating him is possible, that rebelling against him will not result in great strife and corruption, and finally that what will replace him will be a good state. Rulers

* Literary postponers. A historical Islamic sect that is now extinct, which in its rejection of the Kharijite declaration of Muslims who commit a grave sin as unbelievers, took the issue to the other extreme by advocating that only God can judge whether a person is a true Muslim or not, and hence created a separation, rejected by Salafis, between faith and acts that show that faith.

are to be obeyed in all things that are not prohibited by God. Finally, Ibn Baz warns against leaving the community by rebelling, declaring that “he who leaves the community dies a *jahiliyyah* death.”¹⁵⁴ Ansar El Sunna takes the position that “ruling by other than God’s *shari’a* is demise on earth and torture in the afterlife.”¹⁵⁵ However, it views contemporary rulers as legitimate while not defending their policies and calling on them to implement *shari’a*. Criticizing the ruler is also not permitted,¹⁵⁶ and it declares that rebellion is not permissible even if the ruler is unjust and transgresses, unless he shows clear unbelief.¹⁵⁷ The last position was shared by Mazen El Sersawy before the revolution.¹⁵⁸ One Scholarly Salafi author sums up this position by writing, “Our methodology and belief as *Ahl El Sunna* is quite clear because we believe that our methodology is obeying rulers as long as they obey God ... as to unjust rulers we advise them and guide them with the legitimate means ascribed by *shari’a* as long as they do not show clear disbelief ... we acknowledge that many of today’s rulers do not institute Islam in their countries and people and that they have become traitors to their religion and nation But despite this bad condition we do not agree with rebelling against them and fighting them over rule and power to institute *shari’a* and the whole of religion. We do not agree with coups and revolutions and rebelling and crying in demonstrations and gatherings but instead believe in being patient with them and advising them.”¹⁵⁹

Those declaring the unbelief of the genus and not the particular base their arguments on the writings of former Saudi Mufti Mohamed Ibn Ibrahim Al El Sheikh and Ahmed Shaker. Mohamed Ibn Ibrahim described ruling by other than what God has revealed as “of grave unbelief that is apparent: putting the damned law in the same status as what was revealed in ruling between people and as a reference in cases of conflict between people.” He adds that “appealing to rule by other than what was revealed and belief cannot coexist in the heart of man. One of them contradicts the other.” He describes four cases of unbelief in ruling by other than what God has revealed:; denying God’s law, preferring man-made law to God’s law, believing man-made law to be equal to God’s law, and believing it permissible to rule with man-made laws. “These four forms are clear unbelief that makes one no longer a Muslim.” Mohamed Ibn Ibrahim answers those who argue that ruling by other than what God has revealed is unbelief below unbelief, meaning that it is an act of unbelief but it does not make one a non-Muslim, by arguing, “What unbelief is above this unbelief? And what could be more contrarian with the declaration that Mohamed is God’s Prophet after this act of contradiction?” For him there is only one exception for not declaring these rulers unbelievers “as to unbelief that is below unbelief and which does not make one outside of Islam that is he whose desires make him rule in a case with not what God had revealed, while believing that God’s law is right and his acknowledging that he is wrong and not doing the right thing. In this case it is a major sin.”¹⁶⁰ In an official fatwa, the Saudi Permanent Committee for Scientific Research and Ifta made a distinction between completely replacing God’s *shari’a* with man-made laws and ruling in one instance with other than what God has revealed, declaring the former an act of unbelief that makes the ruler no longer Muslim.¹⁶¹

For a generation of young Salafis emerging in the 1970’s with great enthusiasm but without an intellectual foundation, the works of Ahmed Shaker offered them a pool of

scholarship and a claim to an Egyptian Salafi tradition. Shaker's writings became the basis for the Salafi discourse both during his time and for later generations of Islamists because while maintaining a complete commitment to the Salafi methodology, he was occupied with modern questions such as women's equality, having women serve as judges, Westernization, the mixing of sexes in education, wearing Western cloths, building statues, and usury.¹⁶²

For Shaker, "Islam is religion and politics, legislation, ruling and authority. It does not accept from its followers except to take it completely, submit to all its rulings. He who does not accept part of the rulings has not accepted all of it."¹⁶³ Shaker, like other Islamists, sought a historical precedent for confronting the new reality facing Muslims with the abandonment of *shari'a* and application of manmade laws. He found his inspiration in the works of Ibn Taymiyyah, who confronted a similar challenge in the form of Mongol rulers converting to Islam yet maintaining the Mongol legal code, Yassa. In his disdain for politics, Shaker goes so far as to trace the linguistic the very word politics "*seyasa*" in Arabic to the word Yassa. Unsurprisingly, he takes a strong position on man-made laws. "The ruling on these man-made laws is clear as the sun. It is clear unbelief and there is no excuse for anyone who claims belonging to Islam no matter who he is in working with it or submission to it and acknowledging it." Those laws are imposed upon Muslims by their unbeliever enemies. "Oh look all Muslims in all Islamic countries, or countries that claim Islam in the whole world to what your enemies from the missionaries and occupiers have done to you. They have put upon you evil laws that destroy ethics, manners and religions; Frankish pagan laws that are not based on a shari'a or a religion. They are instead based on regulations put by a pagan unbeliever*, who refused to believe in the prophet of his time, Jesus, and insisted on his paganism." This manmade law is a new religion for Shaker, who asks the rhetorical question: "Is it permitted for any Muslim to believe in this new religion? I mean this new legislation? Is a Muslim man allowed to become a Judge under this modern Yassa and work with it and leave his shari'a?" He answers the question in the negative. "Whoever did this amongst them is an unbeliever that must be fought until he returns to God's rule."¹⁶⁴

Shaker answers those arguing that *shari'a* is not suitable for modern times. "They claim that God's law does not suit our times. This issue for us is from the core of belief. If God is the creator of this world and is all knowing, then his *shari'a* is suitable for all times and places." To Salafis who base their arguments on not declaring the unbelief of ruling by other than what God has revealed on the concept of unbelief below unbelief, he argues, "The argument of Salaf on the belief below unbelief is limited to those who don't implement one rule in a specific case; it is not about those who replaced *shari'a* completely with manmade laws." For him the choice is clear: "The nation has to choose one of the two roads, either to heaven or to hell." The rejection of ruling by other than what God has revealed also extends to ruling among Christians and Jews. "A Muslim who rules among the people of the Book with other than what God revealed is an unbeliever both if he ruled with what is called the legislation of the People of the Book or man-made legislation. It is all unbelief and leaving Islam."¹⁶⁵

* Shaker is confused here believing that the Justinian Code of Emperor Justinian I (482-569) was made by Julian the Apostate (332-363).

Shaker asks the foundational question “is there a religious government in Egypt, does the current government implement *shari’a*, and do Egyptians live in a *shari’a* based society where the rulings of religion are implemented?” His answer is no. For him, “following man-made laws even those that are not contradictory to God’s *shari’a* is not permissible because he who wrote them did not look while writing it whether it was in accordance or contrary to Islam,” and “he who does so is an apostate.” Obeying rulers, therefore, is only permitted in what is not sinful.¹⁶⁶

Even so, Shaker is careful in declaring that he is not calling people to take up arms. “I am not a fanciful man and I do not call for a revolution on the laws, and I believe that the harm of using violence now exceeds its benefit. I have stood amongst you calling you to productive quiet work according to the mode of natural progression until we reach what we want.”¹⁶⁷ His careful approach however was muddled within his forceful renunciation of ruling by other than what God has revealed and opened the door for others to take up the banner in a more forceful manner. It is no surprise that his works would be hugely influential on Ayman El Zawahiri and other young Islamists frustrated with the un-Islamic nature of their societies and that they would claim his legacy as their own.

Among Activist Salafis two positions are taken on the question of the unbelief of the ruler who rules by other than what God has revealed. For the Salafi Call in Alexandria, legislation is the complete domain of God, man-made laws are contradictory to *shari’a*, and ruling by other than what God has revealed is a cause for God’s anger.¹⁶⁸ The Salafi Call follows the position of the second current among Scholarly Salafis in declaring the unbelief of the genus but not the particular.¹⁶⁹ Ahmed Farid stresses this point in his book on declaring people unbelievers.¹⁷⁰ Yasser Burhami puts the issue in clear terms. “Ruling what other than what God revealed in general legislation is unbelief that makes one outside of religion, but we differentiate between the genus and the particular. This is for the genus; whoever did this is an unbeliever. XYZ is an unbeliever or not, if the conditions are met and the hurdles do not exist he becomes an unbeliever. Who decides this? Scholars, there must be a *shari’a* court or a council of scholars that debates this particular person and presents the proof to him. We do not declare a particular Muslim an unbeliever until we meet the conditions and preventions.”¹⁷¹ But the Salafi Call adds an important point to the question by declaring those rulers not legitimate in the first place. As Burhami states, “Unfortunately this is the belief of some of the sons of the revival. They consider those callers for hell as legitimate rulers and not just forced upon Muslims as a reality through power and not right. There is no doubt that we need to differentiate between facts on the ground and between what is legitimate through *shari’a* which is the only right” adding, “This issue, not considering them legitimate rulers, is not based on declaring the particular an unbeliever ... It is not a must that not declaring the particular unbelievers by excusing ignorance or explanation or being forced to, that we consider their rule legitimate because the contract was not based upon it, nor are the legitimate intentions present so that we consider them right by virtue of force.”¹⁷² Hence, for Yasser Burhami “Egypt is not an Islamic state”¹⁷³ and obedience to rulers is limited. “We believe that the obedience that a Muslim must adhere to is obedience to the Caliph that rules in the name of religion to rule the world

with religion even if he does not have the stipulations of the Caliphate. As to other than that, obedience is where the interests of Muslims are. There may not be a practical difference sometimes but the theoretical difference is very important.”¹⁷⁴ This position led the Salafi Call to engage in a theological fight over the unbelief of the ruler with Adel El Sayed, a Madkhali sheikh who is part of Ansar El Sunna.¹⁷⁵

The Salafi Call stresses the need for clear unbelief to declare someone an unbeliever.¹⁷⁶ As Ahmed Farid writes, “Declaring people unbelievers is not permissible unless there is absolute clear proof.”¹⁷⁷ Sa’id Abdel ‘Azeem rejects declaring Muslims unbelievers, accusing those who do so (Jihadis) of rationalizing their killing through theology.¹⁷⁸ Ahmed Farid wrote a book on excusing ignorance, answering both Abdel Meguid El Shazly’s book *The Boundary of Islam and the Truth of Belief* and Tarek Abdel Halim’s *The Useful Answer in the Unbelief of the Ignorant of Monotheism*. He argued that ignorance suffices as an excuse to exempt someone from being declared an unbeliever, although that person is still guilty of sinning. However, he stresses that by excusing ignorance in “declaring someone a Muslim because of his apparent belief, we are not ruling that he will enter heaven.” Farid argues that a man might incorporate both belief and unbelief, monotheism and idolatry, adding that unbelief is of two kinds: unbelief by conviction (major unbelief) and unbelief by acts (minor unbelief). Since belief is many branches, a man who has one branch of faith is not because of it a believer and a man who has one branch of unbelief is not due to that an unbeliever. For that reason, the Salafi Call is unique among Egyptian Islamists in agreeing with Al Albani that he who does not pray out of laziness is not declared an unbeliever.¹⁷⁹ Because unbelief and belief can coexist, Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem rejects the comparison between contemporary society and the society of Mecca at the time of the Prophet. For Mokadem, “contemporary society is not like the Mecca society at the time of the Prophet. Then it was pure *Jahiliyyah*. Our current society is a mixture of Islam and *Jahiliyyah*.” Mokadem argues that even Sayed Qutb did not declare the particular contemporary Muslims unbelievers. While “Qutb described the society that accepts things that are contrary to *shari’a* such as adultery, usury, alcohol, and gambling is an unbelief society, he did not declare particular Muslims who lived in that society unbelievers.”¹⁸⁰ Because of this lack of clarity, Sa’id Abdel ‘Azeem rejects Jihad. “Jihad requires clarity in the two camps, which is not our case today where believers and unbelievers are mixed and impossible to separate.”¹⁸¹

The second position on the unbelief of the ruler who rule by other than what God has revealed is declaring both the genus and the particular rulers outright unbelievers. This position is adopted by Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek, Cairo Activist Salafi Sheikhs and Sorouris. For Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek, “God has not revealed to us His *shari’a* for us to have the choice of implementing it or cancelling it. Implementing *shari’a* is a duty.”¹⁸² In particular, “a Muslim becomes an unbeliever if he asked people for consultations on whether retribution is just or not and in cutting the hand of the thief whether it is just or not, and in alcohol, should we prohibit it or not.”¹⁸³ Indeed, Khalek maintains that “denying *shari’a* or claiming it is not suitable to our time or it is too harsh is an act of unbelief.”¹⁸⁴ He lists the cases in which a person is declared an unbeliever: “objecting to the wisdom of God’s legislation, ruling with other than what God revealed. If a person rules with other than what God legislated thinking it is better

or equal to what God revealed then he is an unbeliever, if he does so out of temptation or corruption it is unbelief below unbelief, making fun of a Muslim for his Islam is unbelief, loyalty to the enemies of God, gratification with the spread of evil.” He however differentiates between these actions and committing a grave sin, which “no matter how grave does not make a person an unbeliever.”¹⁸⁵ In declaring the unbelief of the particular he argues that refusing to do so is itself an act of unbelief “claiming that those rulers are believers is an aggression against faith and an act of unbelief in God.”¹⁸⁶ Obedience to man-made laws is not permitted except in dire circumstances. “It is not permitted to obey anyone except God in legislation except forced.”¹⁸⁷

Cairo Activist Salafi Sheikhs disagree with the Salafi Call in that they declare the unbelief of the particular and not just the genus and in publicly declaring it.¹⁸⁸ This led to a huge debate between them while imprisoned in the early 2000’s, though the relationship between them remained cordial until the Egyptian revolution,¹⁸⁹ with each group praising the other¹⁹⁰. The very notion that these rulers who rule by other than what God has revealed can be considered believers is rejected by Cairo Activist Salafis. “Their slander of God by claiming that this butcher criminal, who made fun of God’s *shari’a*, glorified every unbelief, protector of every sin, murderer of monotheistic youth, responsible for the corruption of the believer’s women by calling for decay and unveiling, loyal to the occupier Jews, making the lives of God’s worshipers surrounded in Gaza harder, stealer of his people’s money is a legitimate ruler for Muslims, and that we have an oath of allegiance to him,” adding “The legitimacy of the ruler is derived from his implementation of *shari’a* and protection of Muslims.”¹⁹¹ They cite Ibn Taymiyyah’s declaration rendering the Mongols unbelievers because they ruled with other than what God revealed. Moreover, obedience is limited to what is not against God’s legislation, citing the first Caliph Abu Bakr’s speech upon assuming the Caliphate: “obey me as long as I obey God and the Prophet. If I disobey God and his Prophet you owe me no obeying.”¹⁹² Mohamed Abdel Maksoud put it clearly, stating, “Thank God I declare my disavowal to God from these man-made laws and from those who made them and those who adhere to them, I hate them in God, and I declare them unbelievers when they changed God’s *shari’a*. I disavow them to God, and their laws and those who followed them or were loyal to them on this issue.”¹⁹³ What’s more, there is a consensus that “rebellion against a Muslim ruler if he becomes an apostate is an obligation, and that permitting what there is a consensus on prohibiting such as adultery or drunkenness, and legislating what God has not permitted is an act of unbelief and apostasy, and that if in the world there is a just government that implements *shari’a* and an unjust government that does not implement it, a Muslim is obligated to support the first as much as he can.” For them there are “four kinds of rulers; a just ruler, an unjust ruler whose injustice does not harm the foundations of religion (for example if he privately drinks), an unjust ruler whose injustice is against the foundations of religion (for example he does not implement *shari’a* or allows public drinking), and the unbelieving ruler.”¹⁹⁴ However, Cairo’s Activist Salafis stress two practical conditions that distinguish them from that of Jihadi Salafis: ability and outcome. Indeed, Cairo’s Activist Salafis insist that the result of rebellion must be a superior condition to that which currently exists. They argue that “the first and fourth category is not debatable, the debate is on what constitutes the second and when does it become the third.”¹⁹⁵

For Sorouris “a Muslim is not permitted to seek judgment from other than God’s book. If he did so willingly he is no longer a Muslim.” The lack of implementation of *shari’a* is not only an infringement upon God’s religion and an act of unbelief but also results in political failure and defeat.¹⁹⁶ Salah El Sawy argues that “those regimes that proclaim the supremacy of the people are illegitimate, no obedience is required towards them and they are considered with all their laws null and void.” The natural result is that “there is no alternative to Jihad to return things to their natural state and raise the words of God.” However Sorouris stress that circumstances may make this position unrealistic, so “the lack of obedience does not contradict not engaging in action in the period of weakness and not declaring opposition in this phase.”¹⁹⁷

The concept of *hakimiyya* is at the center of the Jihadi worldview. As Sayed Qutb argues, “to declare divinity for God alone ... means a full revolt against human rulership in all its shapes and forms, systems and arrangements ... It means the destroying of the kingdom of man to establish the kingdom of God on earth ... the wresting of power from the hands of its human usurpers to return it to God alone; the supremacy of divine law alone and the cancellation of human laws.”¹⁹⁸ Omar Abdel Rahman adds, “*Hakimiyya* means that God is the sole legislator and no one besides Him is permitted to rule, order or legislate, the right of legislation is not given to anyone in mankind, not given to a body or a party or parliament or to the whole nation and mankind combined. The source of ruling is God and He owns it alone.”¹⁹⁹ This concept becomes central to the division of the world into two camps; the land of Islam and the land of war. As Saleh Sareya notes, “The land of belief is the land in which the word of God is the highest and which is ruled by what God has revealed even if its inhabitants are unbelievers. The land of war is the land in which the word of unbelief is the highest and which is not ruled by what God has revealed even if its inhabitants are Muslims.”²⁰⁰ Sayed Qutb puts the two worlds in stark terms: “*Jahiliyyah* signifies the *hakimiyya* of man over man, or rather the subservience to man rather than to God. It denotes rejection of the divinity of God and the adulation of mortals. In this sense *jahiliyyah* is not just a specific historical period, but a state of affairs. Such a state of human affairs existed in the past, exists today, and may exist in the future, taking the form of *jahiliyyah*, that mirror-image and sworn enemy of Islam. In any time and place human beings face that clear-cut choice: either to observe the law of God in its entirety, or to apply laws laid down by man of one sort or another. In the latter case, they are in a state of *jahiliyyah*. Man is at the crossroads and that is the choice: Islam or *jahiliyyah*.”²⁰¹ For this reason, Rifa’i Taha, one of the leaders of Gama’a Islamiya, argues, “Egypt is today a land of unbelief and apostasy in which the rulings of those lands which do not apply God’s *shari’a* and even fights those who call for it, are applied, there is no doubt in this.”²⁰²

Ayman El Zawahiri identifies two reasons for declaring the ruler an unbeliever: ruling by other than what God has revealed, and loyalty to Christians and Jews.²⁰³ The eminent Jihadi theoretician Sayed Imam Al Sharif elaborates on both issues. “The truth is that the rulers who rule the land of Islam with man-made laws were never legitimate rulers according to *shari’a* at any point in time. Given that many of those rulers profess Islam, by virtue of their unbelief they have become apostates,” and “he who obeys the unbelievers or loves them or supports them has become loyal to them, and he who has

become loyal to them is an unbeliever.”²⁰⁴ The centrality to the Jihadi worldview of declaring rulers who rule by other than what God has revealed unbelievers is evident by Zawahiri’s usage of the concept to declare the United Nations an organization of unbelief.²⁰⁵ Jihadis reject the usage of the concept of unbelief below unbelief in declining to declare rulers unbelievers. Tarek Abdel Halim argues that “unbelief below unbelief is limited to issuing one ruling that is not from what God has revealed,” adding that “what we face today is an abandonment of all the rulings of God and preferring others to His.”²⁰⁶

Jihadis disagree on who besides the ruler himself can be declared an unbeliever. The question of the unbelief of assistants to the ruler, such as the police, the army, judges, and the bureaucracy, was at the center of the dispute between the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Gama’a Islamiya in the 1980’s. Gama’a Islamiya, while permitting the killing of those assistants, does not declare them unbelievers. As Rifa’i Taha argues, “Those government forces are a force of corruption and vice, they enforce the orders of he who prohibits Islam’s shari’a for the world ... hence we believe that they should be fought as forces of aggression and corruption on earth and not as apostates. They are fought as an assistant group and not as the main actor.”²⁰⁷ More extreme groups such as Excommunication and Emigration, the Saved from Fire, Stopping and Determining, and the Shawkies took a much more strict interpretation of unbelief, declaring anyone who accepts to be ruled by man-made laws, resorts to courts, or does not join their group, unbelievers.²⁰⁸ This includes general society.

The Jihadi view on ruling by other than what God has revealed underwent a serious revision at the hands of Nageh Ibrahim and Karam Zohdi in the Gama’a Islamiya revisions after 1997. Nageh Ibrahim argued that “to declare the ruler an unbeliever he has to declare that he does not want to implement Shari’a by conviction.”²⁰⁹ Later, after the Egyptian revolution, Nageh Ibrahim claimed that the issue of declaring the unbelief of the ruler who rules by other than what God has revealed was at the center of his fight with those released leaders of Gama’a Islamiya who rejected his revisions.²¹⁰ Some of the released members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad after the revolution also attempted to modify their position on the question, though in a much smaller form than Nageh Ibrahim’s radical revision. Osama Kassem argued that “Ruling by other than what Allah revealed is an act of unbelief below unbelief if without rejection of God’s *shari’a*,” but added that even “if without rejection then it is a grave sin that can lead to unbelief.”²¹¹

It is often claimed that Sayed Qutb was the first Islamist, or at least the first Egyptian Islamist to take the question of declaring the unbelief of anyone ruling by other than what God has revealed to its natural conclusion with his popularization of the concepts of *hakimiyya* and *Jahiliyyah*. While there is no denying that Qutb revolutionized Islamism and gave Jihad its theoretical and theological framework, he was preceded by a little known group, Gama’a Shabab Mohamed (The Youth of Mohamed Group), which broke from the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood during the life of its founder.

The first major break in the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood started at the end of the 1930’s and culminated in the establishment of a competitive group: Shabab Mohamed in 1940. The break received hardly any scholarly attention because the group did not

survive after 1952. But it sheds light on the major weakness of the Brotherhood's methodology, which would lead first to Sayed Qutb's serious reexamination and later the emergence of the Qutbist intellectual current. The Youth of Mohamed's criticism of the Brotherhood, while highlighting both the lack of internal *shura* and financial corruption, raised the thorny issue of Hassan El Banna's acceptance of working under a regime that ruled by other than what God has revealed.²¹² Its discourse, which formed the basis of the Jihadi formula twenty five years later, focused on the question of ruling with other than what God has revealed and the means of change rejecting political participation in a secular political system. The group lasted until immediately after the 1952 revolution, when it was banned by President Gamal Abdel Nasser. The only former member still alive is Sheikh Hafez Salama, who is lionized among Islamists and the general Egyptian public for his role in leading the resistance to the Israeli attempt to enter Suez during the 1973 war.²¹³

While the establishment of the Special Apparatus by Banna in 1940²¹⁴ had no theoretical framework related to the question of ruling by other than what God has revealed, early Brotherhood leaders before Qutb addressed the issue. Abdel Kader Ouda, whom Nasser hanged in 1954, declared that "if the laws are contradictory to the Quran and *Sunna* and against the general principles of *shari'a* and its legislative spirit, then they are null and void and no one should obey them. On the contrary, every Muslim must fight them."²¹⁵ Hassan El Banna himself had written: "We do not declare a Muslim who states that there is no God but God and that Mohamed is his Prophet and worked accordingly and performed the obligations an unbeliever for an opinion or a sin except if he states his unbelief and denied what is known from religion by necessity or questioned what is apparent from the Quran, or interpreted it in a manner that the Arabic language does not allow, or did something that cannot be understood except as clear unbelief."²¹⁶ Banna's words were open for interpretation. What exactly does "work accordingly and performed his obligations" mean, and what is "known from religion by necessity?" Does it include the question of *hakimiyya*, and how does one define "did something that cannot be understood except as clear unbelief?" And does it include ruling by other than what God has revealed? The question remained open until Qutb began reexamining the Brotherhood's methodology during his prison years and offered his radical interpretation of the issue.

A crisis erupted in prison between jailed Brotherhood members over Qutb's views. To answer the crisis, Hassan El Hodeiby, the jailed second General Guide of the Brotherhood issued the famous book, *Preachers Not Judges*. While the book is attributed to Hodeiby, it was more likely a collaborative effort by jailed Brotherhood members with deeper knowledge of *shari'a* and Islamic jurisprudence than Hodeiby. In his book, Hodeiby identifies the problem as attempting to approach the Quran individually and thus falling into mistakes. He begins by stating that "anyone who professes that there is no God but God and that Mohamed is his Prophet is a Muslim," adding that the Brotherhood "does not declare a Muslim an unbeliever for a sin he has committed no matter how grave." He argues that *Ahl El Sunna*, of which he considers the Brotherhood a part, is a middle ground between, on the one hand, Kharijites and Mu'tazila, who believed that he who commits a mortal sin will go to eternal hell, and on the other, Murji'ah, who declared that nothing can harm with belief and no obedience

can benefit in unbelief. “People are sinning and disobeying God but that does not make them unbelievers, for faith increases by obedience but that does not mean that lack of work means unbelief. The reason is that God himself declares that everything is forgiven except idolatry. He lists the cases in which unbelief is forgiven: ignorance, mistake, and being forced to.²¹⁷

While “we believe without a doubt that ruling is for God alone,” “Rule only for God does not mean that man cannot put for himself some legislations and rules.” Those comparing ruling by other than what God has revealed to the Devil are mistaken. “The Devil did not just disobey God and sinned, he more importantly questioned God’s rule,” and hence “he who debated the righteousness of God’s rule is an unbeliever.” “Whoever believes after having it explained to him that one does not have to rule by God’s *shari’a* is an unbeliever.” In fact “declaring people unbelievers is in itself ruling by other than what God revealed because He has not declared them unbelievers.” The very word *hakimiyya* does not appear in the Quran, argues Hodeiby, adding that “God has left us many of the issues of this world to organize as our minds guide us in the framework of general objectives and goals that God framed for us and ordered us to achieve, under the condition that we do not make something that is prohibited into permitted or something that is permitted prohibited.” Hodeiby makes the case that arguing that every act of legislation is an infringement on God’s dominion is wrong, citing the example of traffic laws.²¹⁸

Preachers Not Judges was intended as a definitive answer to the question, of declaring the unbelief of rulers ruling with other than what God has revealed and remains until today required reading for candidates seeking to become Muslim Brotherhood members. Nonetheless, it has not ended the debate that Qutb started with his theorization. Even Yusuf El Qaradawi, who is hardly a *takfiri*, and who writes that “we should not engage in declaring people unbelievers,” also writes that “everyone agrees that the ruler who puts aside ruling with what God has revealed by denying it or rejecting it and preferring man-made law to it is an unbeliever no doubt. This is different from he who puts it aside out of weakness or being forced to by foreign powers or seeking to keep his chair.” The question for him is which is which?²¹⁹

The Salafi Methodology and Its Detractors

Just like its Brotherhood and Jihadi competitors, the general framework of the Salafi methodology for change and its individual currents are not immune to criticism. If the Brotherhood and Jihadi groups are to continue resonating among millions of Muslims worldwide, it is not enough for them to prove their own individual merit and applicability. They also must prove the inherent weakness of the competing Islamist methodologies. The very nature of Islamism, with each current and group claiming sole representation and authenticity, makes this inevitable. Given that Salafism, in its wider understanding, remains the main creed and methodology adopted by millions of Islamists, proving the weakness of its methodology for change is a question of life and death for other Islamists.

The Brotherhood criticism of Salafism and its methodology takes various forms. The Salafi discourse is generally described as simply too harsh for Muslims to follow.²²⁰ Mohamed El Ghazali initiated the attack on Salafis in the 80's, rejecting the very term, which he considered as one describing a historical period with no modern resonance. Instead he described them as extreme Hanbalis.²²¹ A common theme in his attack on Salafism, prevalent in the Brotherhood's discourse, is that Salafis are a Saudi creation and that their conduct distorts the image of Islam in the world.²²² Of course, this claim is shared across the political spectrum among Egypt's non-Islamists.

The first theme in the Brotherhood's criticism of Salafis is that they are too focused on minor,²²³ superficial²²⁴ issues such as appearances and the identity framework.²²⁵ El Ghazali lists some of those appearances, which include listening to music, eating food with hands, the niqab,* and rejecting photographs.²²⁶ The second theme in the Brotherhood's criticism is that this focus on trivial issues leads Salafis to ignore the pressing crisis facing the Muslim world today.²²⁷ El Ghazali charges: "You are afraid to face the problems of your time so you focus on problems of previous centuries."²²⁸ Yusuf El Qaradawi mirrors this argument in his strong indictment of Salafis. "The issue that makes people engage in disagreements is the emptiness of their souls from the major concerns and great hopes and wide dreams," adding that Muslims should be solely concerned with the major challenges of the Muslim nation.²²⁹ This last argument forms the overriding thesis of Qaradawi's attack on Salafism. "It is treason to our nation today for us to drown it in seas of debates over issues that are in the branches of jurisprudence or the margins of the doctrine, on which the ancestors disagreed and those following them fought with no hope of the contemporaries agreeing on them, while forgetting the problems of the nation and its miseries and disasters, which we may be a reason or part of why it occurred;" moreover, "our problem today is not with those who say that the Quran is created but with those who say that the Quran is not from God but from Mohamed meaning those who say the Quran is human creation. Our problem also is with those who believe in the divinity of the Quran but do not accept it as a methodology of life and a constitution for the state and society." He is careful, however, to declare that the doctrine of the Salaf is itself the correct one. "The problem of Muslims is not with someone who interprets the attributes verses and their *hadiths*, although the Salaf's

* Full body cover for Muslim women.

doctrine is safer and more right, but with those who deny the essence and the attributes from the slaves of the imported thought from the West and the East.”²³⁰

The third major theme in the Brotherhood’s criticism of Salafism is an attack on the Salafis most tightly held theological assumptions. The Salafi obsession with conformity is attacked by El Qaradawi as unrealistic. He argues that differences over branches are natural given the nature of religion, language, man, and the world. “Those who want to gather people on one opinion in the rulings of rituals and human transactions and their likes in the branches of religion seek what cannot take place, and their attempt to highlight the disagreements do not result in anything besides widening the circle of disagreements.” For Qaradawi, “none of those issues has a clear jurisprudence verdict,” and the Salafi focus on them is contrary to the obligation for unity that Islam requires from its adherents. Unity is for El Qaradawi the most important issue. “We want the Islamist Front to stand as one line on the crucial issues of the nation and the major concerns of the *da’wah* and not consider differences in branches and situations and partial issues an obstacle in front of the will to unite and cooperate in confronting a common enemy and in achieving the great goals that everyone agrees on.” He adds: “I am not troubled by the Islamic revival having external enemies but that its enemy is within.” For El Qaradawi there is a huge difference between clear unbelief and small acts of unbelief in secondary branch religious issues that can be ignored for the sake of unity. Hence Salafis are wrong for their attacks on Sufis and Ash’aris, which are part of the nation.²³¹

El Qaradawi takes the theological attack on Salafis further by questioning the very *Hadith* of the Saved Sect*, which forms the basis for Salafi exclusivity and its claim to being the only Islamic sect on the right path. He calls Salafis Zahiris† for their commitment to the letter of the verse or *hadiths*.²³² Qaradawi argues that the Salafi focus on monotheism of the names and attributes of God is a trivial matter.²³³ El Ghazali adds, “The mind cannot comprehend the truth of the soul, so how do we expect it to understand divinity or the unity of the essence with attributes?”²³⁴ The Salafi rejection of the schools of jurisprudence is also criticized by El Qaradawi. “It is erroneous to become fanatic to one school of jurisprudence, but it is also erroneous to become fanatic against the schools of jurisprudence.”²³⁵

Lastly, the Brotherhood discourse is highly critical not just of the general framework of Salafism but also of its chosen methodology for change. The Brotherhood accuses Salafis of being apolitical and hence lacking in their understanding of religion, as Islam is inherently a political religion.²³⁶ El Ghazali criticizes the Salafi methodology’s emphasis on patience in the face of injustice as surrender to destiny.²³⁷ Khairat Al Shater offers

* The Hadith of the Saved Sect is foundational to the Salafi worldview. The Hadith is narrated in various forms: “My Ummah will split into seventy-three sects, all of whom will be in Hell except one group.” They said: Who are they, O Messenger of God? He said: “(Those who follow) that which I and my companions follow.” And “Those who came before you of the people of the Book split into seventy-two sects, and this Ummah will split into seventy-three: seventy-two in Hell and one in Paradise, and that is the Gama’a.”

† One of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence that has largely disappeared. Named after Daoud Al Zahiri, its most famous jurist is Ibn Hazm. The school is known for its commitment to the apparent meaning the Quran and Sunna rejecting esoteric interpretations.

the clearest indictment of the Salafi methodology. He lists the various responses to the crisis facing the Muslim world: “When this happened, there were reactions in the Islamic world to this new tragedy as to what we were supposed to do. His Grace Imam Mohamed Abduh, may he rest in peace, said that the solution lies in the reform of religious education. Sheikh Mohamed Ibn Abd Al-Wahab in the Hejaz said that the solution lies in combating *Bid’as** of creed. Sheikh Mahmoud Al-Sobky, the founder of the Shari’a Association in Egypt, may he rest in peace, said the solution lies in combating *Bid’as* of rituals. The Sennusi movement in Libya and the Mahdiyya in Sudan said the solution lies in liberating the occupied homeland first.”²³⁸ He then argues that while “Developments, visions and initiatives emerged for dealing with this new reality ... the problem is that none of these paid attention to the fact that the situation had changed and that for the first time we were outside the sphere of government or authority. We became a society without a government that represents Islam. Therefore, [we ask] Imam Mohammed Abduh, who is going to reform the religious education if the new government imposes a secular system which doesn’t want a religious educational system in the first place? It brought us an educational system tied to the Western model. Also who will fight *Bid’as*? Who will do anything?”²³⁹

The Brotherhood attack on Salafism and its methodology for change is vehemently echoed by rationalist Islamist reformers. Salafism is accused of being anti-reason, stagnant, allowing no interpretation of the text, and ignorant of modern sciences and technology.²⁴⁰ While the rationalist reformers claim a full commitment to the Islamic religious doctrines—as Ahmed Kamal Aboul Magd states, “The complete commitment to the book and the *Sunna* is an issue that cannot be debated” —they raise a distinction between *shari’a* and jurisprudence. This distinction in itself is not rejected by Salafis who claim transcendence of the schools of jurisprudence. Rationalist reformers, however, raise a further distinction regarding the *Sunna*, carefully distinguishing “in the Prophet’s actions between what is a general prescription that is applied in all times and between what served the specific nature of one time or place”²⁴¹ The rationalists also object to *hadiths* narrated by only one line of narrators and proclaim the supremacy of the Quran over the *hadith*.²⁴² Rationalist Islamists further criticize the commitment to the letter of the law and instead argue that the purpose and spirit of *shari’a* are more important. As Fahmy Howeidy argues, “The purposes of the street and the interests of Muslims are the accepted scale on which the *shari’a* judgment can be recognized.”²⁴³ He echoes Yusuf El Qaradawi, who says, “Adherence to the letter of the *Sunna* sometimes is not implementing the spirit of the *Sunna* and its goal, but can be the reverse of it, even if it appears to be adherence to it.”²⁴⁴ Selim El ‘Awwa describes Salafism as “a school whose advocates believe religion is an appearance before being a core and that the beard, male garb and niqab are the basics.”²⁴⁵ For ‘Awwa, the very Salafi worldview of recreating the society of the Salaf is a pure fantasy as “we cannot recreate the society of the Companions of the Prophet.”²⁴⁶

The Jihadi criticism of Salafism echoes the Brotherhood’s criticism of the Salafi methodology as apolitical,²⁴⁷ and thus inherently limited and wrong in its understanding of Islam and passive toward the crisis facing Muslims.²⁴⁸ Naturally,

* Innovation in religious matters or heresy

however, their criticism is offered from a completely different angle. Jihadis accuse Albani Salafis of being Murji'ah.²⁴⁹ This accusation is leveled by both Ayman El Zawahiri²⁵⁰ who considers those advocating against Jihad, which he views as an act of faith, Murji'ah, and Tarek Abdel Halim,²⁵¹ who labels them secularists. Jihadis generally lay an exclusive claim to Salafism, calling themselves Salafi Jihadis and arguing that they are the only true Salafis by claiming a complete symmetry between monotheism and Jihad.²⁵² Tarek Abdel Halim, however, rejects the very term Salafism, instead claiming the historical term *Ahl El Sunna*. He lists eight categories of groups and individuals beginning with the ones he considers furthest from the true path of *Ahl El Sunna*. He starts with Madkhalis, followed by Al Albani, Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek, Ibn Baz, Mohamed Sorour, Sorouris such as Salah El Sawy and Safar Al Hawali, Qutbists such as Mohamed Qutb, Abdel Meguid El Shazly, Ahmed Shaker and Abu El 'Ala El Mawdoudy, and finally *Ahl El Sunna* Jihadis. For him, Sayed Qutb is the litmus test by which to judge whether people are on the right path or not.²⁵³

Jihadis also offer strong criticism of the Salafi methodology for change, questioning its applicability. Abdel Salam Farag wrote: "There are some among them who say the road to establishing the state is only *da'wah* and building a broad base. This does not establish a state ... Islam does not win with numbers ... and how can the *da'wah* succeed when all the media is under the control of unbelievers?" He continues, "There are those who say that the road now is to be occupied with acquiring knowledge, and how can we conduct Jihad if we are not knowledgeable (about religion)? ... We have not heard anyone say that it is permitted to leave one of the obligations of Islam with the excuse of acquiring knowledge, especially if that obligation is Jihad ... How can we learn the smallest of the Prophet's practices and let go of one of the greatest duties he taught us? ... It is known that he who teaches people how to pray has to himself pray, he who teaches people how to fast must fast himself. Likewise he who teaches the duty of Jihad has to conduct Jihad himself ... As to delaying Jihad with the excuse of learning; this is the excuse of he who is looking for an excuse."²⁵⁴

Although criticism of Salafis and their methodology is a major occupation of Jihadis, before the Egyptian revolution Ayman El Zawahiri reserved praise for the Salafi Call in Alexandria, "Our position towards the Salafi Call and its righteous leaders is love, appreciation, and respect. We miss them and the fields of Jihad miss them, to inspire their brothers and lead their battalions and bombard the forts of their enemies and raise the banner of Jihad inside their countries and outside."²⁵⁵

The Salafi response to criticism by other Islamists takes various forms. First, Salafis stress their authenticity and claim to sole representation of Islam in its pure and best form. "Salafism is a complete life methodology and a formulation of life as if the Pious Predecessors, which are the Sahaba, the followers and their followers from the people of the good centuries, are living in our time."²⁵⁶ Second, in response to criticism of the *Sunna*, they stress that without the *Sunna*, Muslim would not have known the very basics of their religion.²⁵⁷ As Abu Ishaq El Howeiny stresses, "The life of this nation

is based on keeping this important source of our *shari'a*, and if the Sahih El Bukhari* ever fell one day, the whole nation would fall. Today we find that the military invasion and the political issue is what garner general attention. In my opinion, the attack on Sahih El Bukhari and Sahih Muslim† is more harmful to the nation than the American entry into Iraq or the enemies taking the land of Muslims.”²⁵⁸ Third, the Salafis reject the Brotherhood’s criticism of the Salafi focus on appearances, rituals, and doctrinal differences and the Brotherhood’s position that these are branches of religion on which disagreement is permissible. Ahmed Farid states the Salafi position that “dividing religion into fundamentals and branches has no origin and bases in religion.”²⁵⁹ Fourth, the Salafi rejection of the four schools of jurisprudence is praised as unique in achieving unity by removing the fanaticism of following one of the schools. This unity also makes Islam easy to understand for normal Muslims.²⁶⁰ Abu Ishaq El Howeiny devotes an entire book to answering El Ghazali’s attack on Salafism, rejecting El Ghazali as an Ash’ari who puts reason above the literal meaning of the text. Howeiny accuses El Ghazali of being too lenient in his *fatwas*, not abiding by the text, rejecting *hadiths* that his mind does not accept, and using weak *hadiths* to praise reason over belief. Howeiny also berates El Ghazali’s personally for shaving his beard and having statues in his house.²⁶¹

In response to criticism by other Islamists of the Salafi methodology, Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek argues that the Salafi methodology is unique among Islamist methodology in achieving the main goal of Islam: monotheism. “In this, the Salafi *da’wah* is distinguished from all other calls for partial reform that are attributed to Islam. For these calls start from a portion of religion, such as attempting to reform ruling and politics. They understand that achieving this portion cannot take place without gathering people and not alienating them so that people help them reach power. They understand that gathering people does not take place without being silent on their doctrinal mistakes. Hence among them lurk those engaged in idolatry and those calling for other than God They are silent on many doctrinal heresies and myths so that they don’t alienate people from their call. They invent a term for this (the interest of *da’wah*) and thus permit many prohibited things and prohibit many of the permitted things. This may be in their interest as a party that aims to reach power but it is certainly not in the interest of the Islamic *da’wah*.”²⁶² Any *da’wah*, declares Ahmed Farid, “that does not care about the issue of monotheism and does not make monotheism its sole target is a *da’wah* that is not on the path of prophets.”²⁶³ Ansar El Sunna insists that “the condition for empowerment and the establishment of the Islamic state is through spreading pure monotheism.”²⁶⁴ The Salafi methodology with its focus on spreading true knowledge and upbringing is the only one that can really change the state of Muslims today, argues Al Albani. “Those European demonstrations and their imitations by Muslims, they are not a *shari’a* prescribed means for changing governing and hence reforming society ... Society in the Islamic system cannot be changed with slogans, chants, and demonstrations. It is done through patience in spreading knowledge between Muslims and upbringing them on that Islam so that this upbringing bears fruit even after a long time. Upbringing methods in Islamic *shari’a* are completely different

* One of the six major collections of Hadith recognized by Sunnis. It is considered the most authoritative collection.

† Second most authoritative collection of Hadiths recognized by Sunnis.

from upbringing methods in countries of unbelief.”²⁶⁵ The Salafi focus on scholarship is critical for “knowledge protects *shari’a* from the deviation of later schools and Sufis.”²⁶⁶ Mohamed Sa’id Raslan insists that “reform does not start with reforming the ruler but with reforming the people.” The Prophet, he argues, “did not start with political reform but instead with doctrinal education and reform,” adding that “the Prophet did not participate with Quraysh in ruling in order to implement God’s *shari’a*.”²⁶⁷

Patience in the face of injustice is not something to be ashamed of for it is the methodology of the Salaf.²⁶⁸ Salafis reject the call for change for the sake of change, for change has to have *shari’a* constraints on the process.²⁶⁹ Salah El Sawy defends Salafism against accusations that it solely focuses on historical deviations, arguing that “ By Salafism we do not mean stopping at the concepts and doctrinal issues that our Salaf confronted in the deviations of their time and ignoring the battles that *Jahiliyyah* is conducting in contemporary societies to remove the signs of Islam and obliteration of Muslims ... True Salafism does not accept for the *da’wah* to target the liberation of doctrines from the idolatry of the dead and idols while ignoring the idolatry of the living and contemporary conditions It does not accept to declare war on metaphors or postponement in some attributes and not declaring on not implementing *shari’a* and ruling with manmade laws and separation of religion and state.”²⁷⁰ In response to accusations that Salafis lack a methodology of change, Ahmed El Naqeeb says, “We adopt a pure Islamic Salafi project, and over tens of years this project was an experiment that was maturing until it nearly grew up, just before the events (The Egyptian revolution). Yes, with our blessed Salafi methodology, which represents the authenticity of the Salafi *da’wah*, we prepared a center for studies. We prepared economic studies. We had effective contributions in the realms of education, strategic studies, and environmental studies. We established an advanced hospital in Mansoura.”²⁷¹

Salafis criticize the assumption by other Islamist currents that Islam can be established in a short and easy way. Sa’id Abdel ‘Azeem writes that “establishing the Islamic society that is ruled by God’s *shari’a* cannot take place in one day. The issue is greater than this and requires continuous work, great patience, and many years of upbringing and education to spread true Islam and establish complete cooperation between all those who work for it.”²⁷² Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek adds, “The followers of other methodologies (Brotherhood and Jihadis) have not considered the burden that befalls the establishment of an Islamic society and imagined it can be created in a day and night and with the efforts of a few.” Finally, Salafis attack their adversaries within Islamism as being themselves far away from Islam. “They are themselves as far away from the Islamic model of the Rashidun Caliphs as is possible ... because they have not established a clear basis for the understanding of Islam and working with it.”²⁷³ After all, those who call for reform must themselves be good as well.²⁷⁴

Salafism is, of course, hardly a unified front, and hence various criticisms of the methodology of change adopted by its various currents are exchanged within the broader umbrella of Salafism itself. I discuss intra-Salafi disagreements extensively in other portions of this report. However, it is necessary here to shed light on some broad themes.

Sorouri scholar Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim offers a long critique of the state of Egyptian Salafism today. He criticizes the Salafi lack of political engagement, arguing that they view politics as dirty and corrupting.²⁷⁵ In an analysis of problems in Egyptian Salafism, he lists the following: lack of a unified scholarly reference, absence of think tanks and strategic studies, focus on doctrinal disagreements, deficiency in organizing priorities, a tendency to theorizing and deficiency in operations, lack of institutions, weakness of political performance, absence of a comprehensive and unified view of reform, fluctuation in the position on collective work, lack of attention to upbringing, hardline positions, dominance of terrorization discourse instead of enticement, growth in Salafi divisions, weakness of Salafi media discourse, and finally administrative mistakes represented in the leadership's domination of the followers.²⁷⁶ Mohamed Yousry Salama, who was for a while the Nour Party's official spokesman before resigning and joining Mohamed El Baradei's Dostour Party, attributes those flaws to the Salafis' youth when they adopted Salafism. "The Egyptian Salafi current suffers from a knowledge and scholarship deficit. Its founders were young men in their mid-20's. Some of them had not even turned 20. But they became sheikhs, teachers, and leaders before they acquired the necessary tools to deal with these issues. So they were forced to discover and deal with the controversial issues through personal efforts or total dependence on the guiding of Saudi scholars."²⁷⁷

Criticism of some Salafi practices and aspects of the methodology of change has also come from young Salafis looking for action and frustrated by their Sheikhs' lack of engagement with developments. In Rifa'i Sorour, many of them have found an alternative Salafi voice. Before his death he had become a Godfather to the emerging revolutionary Salafi discourse. Sorour attacked appearances of religiosity that are not based on upbringing or *da'wah*. He blamed the current state of Egyptian Salafism on "the Islamist movement being established by a group of young men without any experience, ability, support, or conception except the question of *hakimiyya*."²⁷⁸ Even before the Egyptian revolution, rumblings of discontent were simmering within the ranks of young Salafis. Former students of Scholarly Salafi Ahmed El Naqeeb were frustrated with the lack of an action plan and felt useless watching the world change around them with no Salafi response to the emerging challenges facing Muslims. Among young disgruntled Salafis were Ashraf Abdel Monem, Khaled Sa'id, Ahmed Mawlana, Mohamed Galal El Qassas, and Saad Fayad. Later on, after the revolution they formed the Salafi Front.²⁷⁹ Even before the revolution, cracks were appearing as young Salafis took part in demonstrations (despite their Sheikhs' hesitation) in support of Christian women, whom Islamists argued had converted to Islam and were being held by the Church. In August 2005, Reda Samady, a Thai former student of Yasser Burhami, founded the Salafi Movement for Reform (HAFS). It sought to "offer a voice that represents the Salafi methodology in reform and change in Muslim society and the rationalization of political practice in all its forms and levels to conform to Islamic *shari'a*. To remind the nation of the constants that have to be invoked in every reform project and to compose a leadership reference to the Salafi current so it can invest its classes in favor of Islam and providing advice and guidance to Salafi cadres working in all levels."²⁸⁰ The movement issued hundreds of statements commenting on all contemporary issues facing the Muslim world and capitalized on the Christian convert issue.²⁸¹ On the ground, that effort was led by Khaled Harby, who was married to Rifa'i

Sorour's daughter. However, HAFS remained limited in its influence. With its founder in faraway Thailand, and lacking any real following, the movement was easily dismissed as out of touch with Egyptian reality. The movement was troubling to Salafi Sheikhs who were aware of the rumblings within the ranks of their followers. Both Yasser Burhami²⁸² and Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem²⁸³ attacked it in sermons. The emergence of the Revolutionary Salafi challenge to other Salafi currents would have to wait until the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution.

The Jihadi Methodology

Given the potential of losing followers to Jihadis and the challenge that Salafi Jihadis pose to the claim by other Salafis of sole representation of the methodology of the Salaf, Salafis devote a major portion of their sermons and books to answering Jihadist arguments. This challenge to authenticity and representation is certainly on Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek's mind as he argues that "the Salafi *da'wah* is Jihad with all the meanings of Jihad in order to restore what is right and making religion for God alone and liberating the nation from this grave idolatry and clear unbelief."²⁸⁴ The preoccupation with answering Jihadi theories and their methodologies spans across the divisions within Salafism. The Madkhali Salafi Talaat Zahran, the Cairo Activist Salafi Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, and Salafi Call leaders Ahmed Farid and Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem have all written extensive answers to Jihadi claims.²⁸⁵

The Salafi criticism of the Jihadi methodology varies considerably across the Salafi spectrum, with the most antagonistic position naturally occupied by Madkhali Salafis. The complete contradiction between the Madkhali and Jihadi positions on the question of ruling by other than what God has revealed, the legitimacy of rulers and obedience to them, the question of unbelief, and the position on rebellion allows no common ground. Madkhalis as a result do not mince words in cursing their adversaries. Furthermore, Madkhalis are obsessed with purifying the ranks of Salafism from anyone they view as a heretic, which includes all other Salafis. But Jihadis occupy a special position as the worst of the lot. Madkhalis have made answering their adversaries their sole purpose, engaging in the debate with the vigor of self-anointed guardians of Salafism who act like a Salafi thought police.²⁸⁶

For Madkhalis, "Jihad in Islam is not a goal in itself. It is a method to raise Allah's word followed by establishing security to Muslims. If that is not achieved, Jihad is not permissible until the belief, military, and economic preparations are completed."²⁸⁷ As Osama El Qoussy argues, Jihad is an obligation that if met by some is not required from others and is the responsibility of modern armies in the contemporary world.²⁸⁸ Mohamed Aman Al Jami argued that the Jihadi methodology is "vanity and ignorance. They have to learn first. Knowledge is the way. Those who fancy Jihad will be fooled and will lose the opportunity for science and knowledge."²⁸⁹ Upon Osama Bin Laden's death, Hesham El Beilay cursed him. "This man was on a perverted methodology. This man was on a corrupt methodology."²⁹⁰ For Madkhalis, Jihadis are nothing but the modern rebirth of Kharijites, whom the Salaf fought.

Scholarly Salafis' tone in criticizing Jihadis is less harsh than Madkhalis, though their criticism of the Jihadi methodology is no less severe. Madyan Ibrahim criticizes the Jihadi neglect of fighting heresies. "In prison I met many *takfiris* who would become very harsh with the issue of *hakimiyya*, but when it comes to intercession with the dead, they may allow it. Some of them excuse the worshipers of the dead and the graves with ignorance, while in *hakimiyya*, they do not allow an excuse for ignorance. There is no doubt that this is a false understanding and deep ignorance with the foundation of this religion, which is worshiping God alone with no partners."²⁹¹ Madyan further criticized Abu Mohamed Al Maqdisi and Abu Mus'ab Al Zarqawi for in his view not criticizing

Shi'a and other heretics enough, accusing them of only being interested in power.²⁹² Though Al Albani called them modern Kharijites,²⁹³ he supported Afghan Jihad.²⁹⁴ Mustafa El 'Adawy praised Osama Bin Laden after his death. "He fought jihad against the Russians and the Americans and if the Americans are honest in claiming to have killed him, then we consider him a martyr."²⁹⁵ Mohamed Hussein Yacoub similarly called Bin Laden "the greatest man in the world, and a symbol of honor and heroism to all Muslims."²⁹⁶ Abu Ishaq El Howeiny attempts to differentiate between Jihad against Muslim rulers and Jihad against foreign invaders, arguing that Jihad is an obligation if a Muslim country is attacked but that currently individuals are not faulted for refraining from Jihad.²⁹⁷ As for bombings, he permits them only if the attacker can survive and will hurt the enemy significantly. The attack must benefit Muslims.²⁹⁸

The question of *takfir* confronted the Salafi Call even before its founding. As members of the umbrella organization, Gama'a Islamiya, in the Egyptian universities during the 1970's before its division into three groups, Alexandria Salafis opposed the 1977 killing of the former Minister of Religious Endowments, Sheikh Mohamed El Dhahabi, at the hands of the Society of Muslims, known in the media as the Excommunication and Emigration Group. Fearing that the media will paint all Islamist students as part of this group and be blamed for its actions, the future founders of the Salafi Call paraded through the streets of Alexandria wearing T-shirts with the slogan "The Gama'a Islamiya: We call to God and renounce *takfir*, and the killing of El Dhahabi."²⁹⁹

Yasser Burhami attempts to broaden the scope of what Jihad means by arguing that there are 13 categories of Jihad,³⁰⁰ and that Jihad is not just rebellion against rulers.³⁰¹ He argues that "love of Jihad is an obligation on all Muslims, and preparing for it is a duty on the nation."³⁰² Burhami differentiates between two groups who have taken an extreme position on Jihad: those who attempt to enforce it and create great harm by killing those whose blood is not permissible to shed, and those who attempt to stay away from the strife and hence neglect this duty. He charts a third course of those who command what's right and forbid what's wrong. He argues that there are four options in Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong: replacing the wrong with right, replacing the wrong with a lesser wrong, replacing the wrong with an equal wrong, and replacing the wrong with a greater wrong. The first two cases are permissible, the last prohibited, while the third is debatable.³⁰³ Jihad for Burhami is in phases: patience on harm, permitting Jihad, Jihad as an obligation to fight those who attack Muslims, and finally attacking unbelievers unprovoked.³⁰⁴ For Burhami, it is permissible in the case of weakness to be patient and not conduct Jihad until ability is available.³⁰⁵ "Jihad has manners and rules that have to be followed," he argues.³⁰⁶ Such manners and rules include "not killing non-Muslims in the lands of Islam, because they entered those lands peacefully."³⁰⁷ On the other hand, if a Muslim country is invaded, then fighting the invaders becomes an obligation for the people living in that country. If they are incapable of fighting, then Muslims in the surrounding countries are obliged to join them. Burhami stresses that the existence of a Caliph is not required to declare Jihad.³⁰⁸

Burhami differentiates between the case of necessity and the case of choice in Jihad. "If we tell people now that the most important priority at the present time is preparing militarily (and we have no doubt on its obligation in case of ability), but we know the

weakness of the believer's power, and we also know how distant that youth and men of the nation are from being committed to their religion in the first place, and we know that this may result in things that can destroy the *da'wah* itself ... if we say this is the first obligation and that he who does not rise to perform it is a traitor to his nation and religion, that would be a mistake in the scale and a reversal of the Prophet's *Sunna* ... This is why we must begin by educating Muslims on the spirit of giving and Jihad with its different categories and informing them of the truth of their struggle with evil and love of Jihad for the sake of God."³⁰⁹ On that note, Burhami states, "as to the slogan: Jihad is the solution, we have to realize that the ultimate goal is built on foundations."³¹⁰

The decision to rebel for the Salafi Call is based on the balance of benefits and evils, ability and lack thereof. A key reason for not engaging in Jihad for them is that "it may result in great bloodshed and it might lead to the crushing of the Islamist *da'wah*."³¹¹ That last reason, the protection of *da'wah*, has remained a constant since their public stand in 1977. Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem argues that "believers should not rush into action which results in destruction."³¹² It led them to refuse to escalate with the Egyptian regime after the death of one of their members, Sayed Bilal, tortured at the hands of the Egyptian police.³¹³ Though Salafi youth were boiling, the Salafi Call chose not to take any action, instead limiting their condemnation to a banner on their website with the words "God accept the dead from martyrs, God take revenge from the unjust, God we are defeated so You win." As Burhami argued, "the Salafi Call is part of a reality that is full of complex calculations. We strive with the energy we have to do what brings interest and ward off evil without haste and without bringing upon us or on our *da'wah* scourge."³¹⁴ It certainly helped validate their position that one month later, Hosni Mubarak was forced to resign.

The balance of benefits and evils is clear in the Salafi Call's reaction to developments in the world of Jihad. Though Abdel Monem El Shahat argues that the term Jihadi Salafism is a deviation from the Salafi methodology and has some non-Salafi roots (Sayed Qutb),³¹⁵ Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem praised Afghan Jihad, arguing that it was permissible even if the ranks of the Jihadis included heretics, to the point of defending the Jihadi's acceptance, at the time, of aid from unbelievers.³¹⁶ Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem criticized the September 11th attacks stating, "I am surprised that there are still those who consider the September events an achievement. The lands of Muslims have paid a heavy price since they happened."³¹⁷ This did not stop Salafi Call leaders from heaping praise on Bin Laden following his death.³¹⁸ However, Salafi Call leaders are firm in rejecting *takfir*. As Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem writes, "In declaring a land a land of unbelief, we have to differentiate the land and the society that lives in that land. If people have inherited Islam, were ignorant of its meanings, and were not explained the right path, we cannot declare that society a society of unbelievers of a *Jahiliyyah* society so that fighting it becomes permissible."³¹⁹

The Sorouri position on the Jihadi methodology is the most accommodating among Salafi currents. Though Mohamed Sorour himself criticized Jihadis for hastiness that led to failure,³²⁰ Egyptian Sorouris have praised and supported Jihadis. Salah El Sawy writes that "the disagreement over timing is a natural disagreement and does not indicate a denial of the principle of Jihad ... It is a difference of plans and means and not

a difference of basics and principles.”³²¹ Sorouris are careful not to condemn Jihadis. “One of the constants is not falling into condemning other factions working for Islam in a public condemnation under the slogans of fundamentalism and radicalism no matter how much those factions commit actions that appear contrary to moderation If there has to be a statement on such actions, it begins first with condemning government terrorism repressing Islam, of which these acts are their natural outcome. These represent an expected reaction to the radicalism that governments commit in their animosity to Islam and their refusal to implement the *shari'a*. There is no means to solve those reactions and to stop the road to radicalization by both sides except by implementing *shari'a* and establishing God’s book in the nation.” Arguing that all Islamists work for the same end though their means may differ, “we can also say that the interest of the Islamist action may require that one group of its men would conduct some Jihadi operations, while another group shows its rejection of it.”³²² Sorouris go so far as to allow killing of unbelievers in the case of *tataros**.³²³

The Jihadi response to Salafi criticism of them and of their methodology takes various forms. First, Jihadis stress not only that they belong to Salafism, but also that they are “the sole representatives of it by claiming a complete symmetry between monotheism and Jihad.”³²⁴ To refute contemporary Salafi criticism, they cite historical Salafi icons such as Ibn Taymiyyah and modern Salafis. Ayman El Zawahiri claimed that Mohamed Khalil Harras issued a fatwa in 1974 that the Egyptian regime was apostate and must be removed. Zawahiri also claimed that Abdel Razek Afifi declared the Mubarak regime unbelievers and that it was not only a must to rebel against it, but that those who do not rebel are sinning.³²⁵ To counter Salafi accusations of Jihadis being Kharijites, they contend that some mix between pure *takfiris* and Salafi Jihadis insisting that they belong to the later current.³²⁶ Ayman El Zawahiri not only counters the Kharijite label by calling other Salafis who criticize Jihadis Murji’ah, but he goes even further in writing that they are a mixture of Murji’ah and Kharijites themselves. “Religious scholars in service of the regimes have gathered the Murji’ah discourse and the Kharijite discourse by declaring rulers legitimate and declaring Jihadis unbelievers.”³²⁷

It is God who ordered us to fight unbelievers, writes Ayman El Zawahiri. Muslims, he argues, have an obligation to hate unbelievers and not support them, express loyalty to them, take them as advisors, appoint them in important positions, or respect their rituals.³²⁸ “Jihad to change those governments and establish the Islamic state is an individual obligation on every Muslim man and woman,”³²⁹ argued Salah Sareya. Sayed Imam Al Sharif is adamant that “leaving Jihad is a mortal sin.”³³⁰

Jihadis reject political, social, and educational reform as a means for establishing the Islamic state both because those means cannot succeed in an environment that is hostile to Islam and because the current situation requires not slow reform and change but a fundamental and total change and a complete overhaul of the system.³³¹ Preempting the Salafi claim that knowledge is the only true road to change, Sayed Qutb argued that

* The word comes from the word *ters*, shield in Arabic. It refers to the case where unbelievers hide behind women and children, taking them as a shield of protection.

establishing the Islamic state, “will not be achieved merely by teaching and preaching, for those who inflict the yoke on the necks of the people and who usurp the authority of God on earth will not concede their position through such explanation and sermonizing.”³³² In his foundational book, *The Neglected Duty*, Abdel Salam Farag argues that strength is the only means for returning Islam and that establishing the Islamic state is a must.³³³ Ayman El Zawahiri throws the ball back in the Salafi court. “They claim that Jihad is right, but it is not its time since we are unprepared. But what have they prepared during all the previous years?” He adds: “They argue that Jihad has brought more evil on Muslims, so what is the Jihadi approach you suggest? Their answer is leaving Jihad.”³³⁴

Jihadis offer specific answers to Salafi criticisms of their practices. On targeting tourists, Jihadis counter, “The ruling on these is the ruling on nonbelievers not protected by treaty, meaning their blood and money is not protected.”³³⁵ On criticism of their lack of adherence to Salafi appearances, members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad stress their rejection of cooperating with Saleh Sareya because of their insistence that such theological questions could not be delayed to after the establishment of the state.³³⁶ On excusing ignorance, Gama’a Islamiya stresses that it does indeed excuse ignorance and that this was the reason it broke with the Egyptian Islamic Jihad during their prison years in the early 1980s.³³⁷

Though the Jihadi methodology has had internal disagreements from the moment of its inception, the revisions offered by Jihadis in the late 1990s and after have offered an important challenge to the basic premises of the methodology. Those revisions have been conducted both by Gama’a Islamiya as a group and by former Egyptian Islamic Jihad leader and theoretician Sayed Imam Al Sharif. The two revisions have been built on different foundations and have led those who conducted them to separate ways.

Leaders of the Gama’a Islamiya imprisoned since 1981 began to rethink their positions when they found themselves under pressure from the Egyptian regime, their members imprisoned and killed, and their methodology failing to achieve its desired result. As Amr El Shobky argues, the revisions were the result of the intellectual and political defeat of the Jihadi organizations and were not being imposed on them or an attempt by them to camouflage their discourse.³³⁸ After their call for a secession of violence in 1997, Gama’a Islamiya leaders began offering a complete revision of their previous methodology and overall worldview. Not all of Gama’a Islamiya’s leaders were onboard with this revision, which resulted in 20 books. Both the Zomor cousins, ‘Abboud and Tarek, rejected them outright, while Essam Derbala and Assem Abdel Maged endorsed only the first four books. While Karam Zohdi became the public face of the revisions, its real mastermind was Nageh Ibrahim.

In its revisions, Gama’a Islamiya “acknowledged that circumstances matter and not just the theological text and argument.” It argued that Jihadis were mistaken in “building their discourse on a simple reading of interpretations of the religious text.” Circumstances on which those interpretations were written have changed. Only religious experts can interpret and offer fatwas. Jihad, they argued, was legislated by God to serve a purpose. If that purpose is not met, then Jihad is not permissible. Theologically,

Nageh Ibrahim argued, “to declare the ruler an unbeliever, he has to declare that he does not want to implement *shari’a* by conviction.” On practical considerations, the revisions stressed themes that Salafis use in criticizing Jihadis such as lack of ability and the crushing of the Islamist current as reasons for not engaging in Jihad. The revisions also rejected the concept of the end justifying the means and hence rejected previous practices of stealing and kidnappings. They renounced current mistakes that Jihadis commit such as killing civilians, the lack of ability to protect families and believers, accepting support from other regimes, and seeking political asylum in the West. They also stressed the availability of other means besides Jihad such as *da’wah*, emigration, isolation, forgiveness, and keeping one’s faith a secret. They argue that it is circumstances that should lead one to choose one option over the others and cite Quranic examples of Jihad, the faithful man in the time of the Pharaoh and the People of the Cave, all of whom were praised by God in the Quran despite each choosing a different path (Jihad, keeping faith secret, and isolation).³³⁹

Nageh’s revisions did not stop there. Nageh was ousted from Gama’a Islamiya’s leadership in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution as his newly released former colleagues, who had rejected his revisions completely or partially, took the reins of the group. Nageh has truly parted ways with his old ideas. In a 2014 book chapter, Nageh attacked Al Qaeda’s methodology with the passion of a convert. He attacked Al Qaeda for a long list of mistakes, including its declaration of the unbelief of rulers, assistants, armies, parliaments, and judges. Another set of mistakes, argued Nageh, was its targeting of civilians, which the Prophet prohibited. Nageh cited the killing of Hollywood producer and director Mustafa Al Akkad in the Amman bombings in 2005. Akkad had served Islam greatly with his movie, “Mohamed, Messenger of God.” Nageh also identified as a grave error the theory that citizens are responsible for the policies of their countries, and thus can be killed based on their nationality alone. Nageh’s fourth charge was Al Qaeda’s setting of impossible goals, since the Prophet took things step-by-step. A fifth error was acting as if Al Qaeda represented the entire Muslim nation. Other mistakes Nageh identified include Al Qaeda’s belief that all Muslims except their own are doomed, its reliance on a stagnant strategy, and the consequences it had caused of uniting the whole world against it.³⁴⁰

The revisions conducted by Sayed Imam Al Sharif were important because of their author’s previous role as a key theoretician of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. But they hardly took the complete change of direction that Nageh Ibrahim took. Even after his revisions, Sayed Imam Al Sharif remained a *takfiri* as was evident with his declaration that Mohamed Morsi was an unbeliever, along with anyone who voted for him.³⁴¹ He declared Brotherhood supporters killed during the Presidential Palace clashes in December 2012 as unbelievers because they were defending a palace of unbelief.³⁴² In his 2007 revisions, Al Sharif stressed that “knowing something in theory does not mean implementing it in practice.”³⁴³ He argued that there were many preconditions before one engaged in Jihad, including ability, one’s financial independence, permission from one’s parents, and that maintaining one’s life is a duty. Rebellion is only permissible if the ruler shows clear unbelief, though left unsaid is that for him pretty much everything qualifies as clear unbelief. Al Sharif rejected the targeting of tourists because they are given protection by rulers. He rejected the targeting of Western states as a form of

treachery since the Jihadis conducting those attacks had been issued visas and thus entered based on their declared peaceful intentions.³⁴⁴

The revisions by Gama'a Islamiya and Sayed Imam Al Sharif have ignited a firestorm within the Jihadi universe and have numerous detractors. 'Abdoud El Zomor raised a number of points: revisions do not mean retreating from the high goals of the Islamic revival, revisions are not a sign of weakness, and revisions do not mean supporting state secularism. Furthermore, he stressed that the revisions require the state to stop its persecution of Islamists and that they do not apply to Jihadis in countries under occupation. Nor do they mean a change in the disagreement with the regime over *shari'a*.³⁴⁵ Essam Derbala accused Nageh Ibrahim of arguing that Islamists should abandon politics and focus on *da'wah*, with which the majority of Gama'a Islamiya members disagreed.³⁴⁶ Famed 1970's *takfiri* Taha El Samawey criticized the revisions as taking a complete u-turn.³⁴⁷ Ayman El Zawahiri devoted considerable energy to answering the revisions of his former colleague, Sayed Imam Al Sharif, accusing him of attempting to weaken the spirit of Jihadis and serving the interests of the Crusader Jewish Alliance. Zawahiri argued that ability is determined by Jihadis themselves, that the revisions meant accepting injustice, and that there was no jurisdiction for a prisoner to issue a religious ruling.³⁴⁸ Sorouri Scholar Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim also criticized the revisions.³⁴⁹ Interestingly, the Muslim Brotherhood hosted a discussion to criticize the revisions by Al Sharif in which the participants argued that he made terrible mistakes such as arguing that basis of the relationship of Christians with the state is citizenship and not Dhimmitude.³⁵⁰

However as Amr El Shobky argues, the revisions are unlikely to have a lasting impact on Al Qaeda nor resonate with a new generation of Jihadis. A major reason is the change of direction from fighting local regimes to fighting the far away enemy (the West). Today, he argues a shift has taken place from the Jihadi discourse and thought to the Jihadi action, an analysis that seems to fit the new pattern emerging with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). More importantly, the revisions have left former Jihadis in limbo between renouncing their old methodology and the adoption of a new one. As Shobky argues, "The problem after the revisions is that these people have not been allowed to be incorporated in the public square and lack the experience to offer any meaningful discourse or organization."³⁵¹

Political Participation

Political participation through elections has been one of the most contentious issues within the Islamist movement in the last four decades. The Muslim Brotherhood has been the key proponent of political participation, with Hassan El Banna himself running for parliament before the 1952 military coup (although he eventually withdrew his candidacy). But the Brotherhood has hardly been the group advocating for participation. Even before the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood decided to compete in the 1984 parliamentary elections through its alliance with the Wafd Party, Kuwaiti Salafis led the way with their decision, largely driven by Egyptian born Sheikh Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek, to compete in the 1981 parliamentary elections. For Salafis seeking to influence their countries' politics, Abdel Khalek offered an alternative to the Saudi religious establishment, for whom the question of political participation had no meaningful resonance since it was not an option in Saudi Arabia.³⁵² The National Salvation Front in Algeria, with its major Salafi component represented in Ali Belhadj, followed suit.

Given the centrality of electoral participation to the Muslim Brotherhood's methodology for reform and establishing the Islamic state, however, it is no surprise that other Islamists would be quite critical of that approach for ideological and practical reasons, and as a means of emphasizing the superiority of their own methodologies to that of the Brotherhood.

At the center of the internal Islamist warfare over political participation is the question of democracy as a system. For many Islamists, democracy is simply incompatible with Islam. As an author belonging to the Egyptian Sorouri current writes: "Democracy is not an Islamic system and should not be painted as true religion."³⁵³ In a Saudi produced book that reflects the official position of the Saudi religious establishment, another author states, "There is no democracy in Islam and no Islam in democracy."³⁵⁴ Echoing such sentiments, Salafi Call leader Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem writes: "Democracy is something, Islam is something else."³⁵⁵ "Democracy is in clash with the basic principles of politics in Islam,"³⁵⁶ sums up an Alexandrian Salafi.

A number of reasons explain this strong emphasis on the fundamental incompatibility of democracy with Islam. The first among them, quite naturally, is the question of the very notion of human legislation. For Islamists, legislation is the exclusive domain of God, who in His book and in the *Sunna* of His Prophet gave man comprehensive legislation that is suitable for every time and place. Hence, human attempts to legislate are not only an infringement on that divine right but by that very act an act of rebellion against God's legislation, a rejection of His religion, and an act of unbelief. As the founder of Madkhali Salafism, Mohamed Aman Al Jami, bluntly puts it: "We don't have a legislative branch and it should not exist. It is prohibited for Muslims to have a legislative branch that legislates with God."³⁵⁷ Madkhalis refuse to give the concept of *hakemiya* the same importance that Sayed Qutb attributed to it by considering it one of the foundations of monotheism. But Al Jami's statement is no different from that of Qutb's brother Mohamed who says that "The most particular of the properties of divinity is *hakemiya*. The one who legislates for a group of people takes amongst them the place of divinity and uses its properties. They are his servants and not the servants of

God. They are in his religion and not the religion of God.”³⁵⁸ Given such an infringement on what is solely the domain of God, Mohamed Abdel Maksoud called parliaments “the councils of unbelief.”³⁵⁹ “The nation in Islam does not have the right to legislate. Instead the Legislator (God) has entrusted to it within certain constraints the right to choose its rulers to rule it according to the Book and *Sunna*”,³⁶⁰ stressed Salah El Sawy.

Second, is the question of the very basis of democracy, i.e., the notion of the people as the source of all authority. Yasser Burhami wrote that the sovereignty of the people is “a clear difference between Islam rule and secular democratic rule.”³⁶¹ This absolute power of the people to decide as they please is limited in Islam to what does not contradict *shari’a*. By giving people absolute power, democracy makes the words of men higher than the word of God.³⁶² Sa’id Abdel ‘Azeem adds that “the worshiped God for democrats is the people, and there is no doubt that this is a form of modern paganism.”³⁶³ For Egyptian Sorouri theoretician Salah El Sawy, the historical European “tyranny that is practiced in the name of the divine right of the church and rulers” has not been diminished but simply replaced with “tyranny that is practiced in the name of the divine right of individuals and the people.” This accords people divinity and makes them an idol that is worshiped. “This new religion was stated in this magical sentence; sovereignty of the people.” Making human reason the source of legislation is a clear declaration of unbelief. Salah El Sawy further emphasized that “no Islamic religious scholar throughout history accepted that supremacy belongs to anyone but God.”³⁶⁴ The Saudi religious establishment was clear in its opposition to the concept of the sovereignty of the people: “calling for the rule or democracy of the people means in reality removing religion from the world so that sovereignty and authority is to the people and not to *shari’a*.”³⁶⁵ Jihadis are no less adamant in their rejection of this philosophical basis of democracy. Ahmed ‘Ashoush writes that “elections on principle are forbidden and one is not permitted to participate in them because they are based on an idolatry foundation.”³⁶⁶ Revisionist Jihadi theoretician Sayed Imam al Sharif adds that it is “enough to prove the unbelief of democracy that the decisions of parliament come out in the name of the people and not in the name of God. They have replaced God with the people, hence democracy is a form of making men into Gods.”³⁶⁷

The Brotherhood’s response to such criticism is on three fronts. First is the complete dismissal of such complaints as El Ghazli’s by arguing there is nothing wrong with saying that the nation is the source of authority.³⁶⁸ Second, Sa’id Ramadan highlights that the Quran and the *Sunna* do not specify a specific system of government. Hence there is no conflict if a ruler chosen by the nation derives his authority from it. Ramadan further argues that in Islam, God has delegated such authority to the nation and hence its authority is derived from that of God. He adds a key limitation on the authority of the nation, though, limiting it by the authority of God. “Hence it is not allowed to permit what is prohibited and prohibit what is permitted ... In other words, the Book and the *Sunna* are the *shari’a* that the nation does not have the power to change anything from and does not have the power represented in the people of *shura* to decree a law that contradicts a text from its texts.” Lastly, Brotherhood spokesmen have attempted to offer the system that they advocate: a democracy with an Islamic reference, as distinct from the two poles of democracy in the Western understanding and theocracy in the

Western understanding, arguing that Islam by its very nature does not know theocracy and has never had a theocracy given the lack of a religious establishment in Islam.³⁶⁹

But the questions of legislation and the sovereignty of the people are hardly the only two complaints Islamists have with democracy. Democracy's guarantee of various freedoms is invoked by Islamists as a key incompatibility with Islam. Democracy includes absolute freedom and allows all points of view and ideology, complains an Egyptian Sorouri.³⁷⁰ Islam does not permit unconstrained freedoms, adds an Alexandria Salafi.³⁷¹ "Freedom according to the Western understanding is *Jahiliyyah* idolatry,"³⁷² declares the Saudi religious establishment. Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem lists the freedoms that Salafis find problematic such as freedom of belief, freedom of thought, freedom of opinion, and personal freedoms in general.³⁷³ Freedom of thought equals atheism, while real freedom as understood by Islam can only be attained by submitting oneself to God.³⁷⁴

Equality of citizens is no less problematic for Islamists.³⁷⁵ Equality in democracy is problematic on three fronts: equality between Muslims and non-Muslims,³⁷⁶ between men and women,³⁷⁷ and between knowledgeable men who should be vested with authority and the ignorant masses. As Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem states: "What is the value of the ballot box that brings us a Jew?"³⁷⁸

The pluralistic nature of democracy in terms of ideas, ideologies, and political parties is another Islamist grievance. As one Alexandrian Salafi bluntly states, pluralism is problematic because, according to the Prophet's famous *hadith*, only one group is on the right path and hence saved and will go to heaven.³⁷⁹ Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem calls political parties "an evil heresy" and argues that the very notion is "a result of colonialism that colonialists have invented to divide the sons of the one nation" and hence "joining a political party is a heresy that *shari'a* does not endorse."³⁸⁰

Nor is the procedural aspect of democracy any more acceptable. One of the key democratic principles at odds with Islam is the very idea of majoritarianism, argues one Alexandria Salafi. This is for two reasons. First, this aspect of democracy is built on the Western understanding of the philosophy of conflict while Islamic *shura** is built on the philosophy of harmony. Second, rightness is not established by a majority of supporters.³⁸¹ The very idea of an equality between all citizens in the weight of their votes is rejected by Ahmed El Naqeeb. "The mechanisms of democracy are all invalid. The mechanisms of democracy are free elections. In free elections a man and a woman are equal, a Muslim and an unbeliever are equal, he who says God is One and he who says the pig is God."³⁸² Parliaments that allow the majority to have the right to force its opinion even if it is in conflict with *shari'a* are councils of unbelievers, declared Yasser Burhami.³⁸³ "The opinion of the electoral majority does not matter if it changes the *Shari'a* of Allah," declares an Alexandrian Salafi.³⁸⁴ Moreover, Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek argues that "the history of Islam does not know and it should not know reaching the right ruling through voting because God's *shari'a* knows no majority or minority."³⁸⁵ The only issue on which voting and majority opinion is permissible is choosing the ruler,

* Consultation

just as Umar Ibn al Khattab adopted a six-member committee to succeed him.³⁸⁶ Others disagree, with one Sorouri author writing: “as to the practical procedures of democracy, we have no major objection to them.”³⁸⁷

But if not democracy, does this mean that there is a preference for dictatorship as the alternative? The answers are mixed. For some Islamists, a dichotomy between the two is alien to Islam. Both democracy and dictatorship are Western terms that do not apply to Islam, which for them offers a complete alternative to Western civilization. In this light, Gamal El Marakby, the previous president of Ansar El Sunna, writes, “The Islamic political system is not a democratic system, as it differs extensively from democracy in its basis and principles. Islam is also not a totalitarian system or a socialist system and it is not similar to sectarian dictatorships or czarist dictatorships; we may not endorse it under any of these regime types. The Islamic political system is a pure Islamic system that doesn’t relate to theocracy or autocracy or democracy or socialism.”³⁸⁸ Sa’id Abdel ‘Azeem is adamant in rejecting “both dictatorship and democracy” and does “not accept an alternative to Islam.”³⁸⁹ One key point raised by Salafis is that in contrast to democracy’s emphasis on term limits, Islam knows no such practice. An Alexandrian Salafi explains that the issue is simply irrelevant: “Inheritance of rule does not matter. What matters is that the ruler is a Muslim who rules with Allah’s book.”³⁹⁰ Sa’id Abdel ‘Azeem clarifies, “In Islam, the ruler remains for life.”³⁹¹

Others take a more practical position. One Sorouri author makes the case that “if secularism is a fact that we cannot change in this phase, and we have no ability to implement the pure Islamic system, then secular democracy is better than secular dictatorship.” He further argues that “it wasn’t democracy that changed God’s *shari’a* and enforced manmade laws” and that “democracy is not stagnant but its understanding changes.”³⁹² He cited the changes that the concept underwent from the time of Athens to today, including enfranchising women worldwide, and African-Americans in the United States. This makes it clear that Islamic democracy need not be exactly the same as the Western model.

In response to the portrayal of democracy as completely alien to Islam and at odds with its basic principles, the Muslim Brotherhood has attempted to connect democracy with the Islamic concept of *shura*, arguing that democracy is merely the modern form of the Islamically sanctioned practice. This attempted defense by the Brotherhood and other Islamist reformers is rejected by Salafis, who raise a number of key differences between both concepts and practices. Mohamed Aman Al Jami points out that *shura* in Islam is not obligatory.³⁹³ Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek disagrees, arguing that *shura* is obligatory and the ruler must follow it. He acknowledges that Islam has no clear rulings on a number of aspects of *shura*, such as on the number of people that are to be consulted, how they are to be consulted, or their attributes. But he does cite numerous differences between *shura* and democracy, such as limiting a ruler’s consultations to six issues: war and peace, priorities in implementing *shari’a*, choosing the Caliph, guiding the financial system, supervision of rulers, and dealing with developments. He further adds, “*Shura* is asking the opinion of the experienced to reach what is closest to what is right. It is not used except when what is right is not known. If it is known, there is no *shura*.”³⁹⁴ Ahmed Shaker argues, “*Shura* in Islam is asking advice from good men whose

religion is not doubted.”³⁹⁵ Salah El Sawy concurs: “*Shura* is only in the areas that *shari’a* allows ... there is no *ijtihad** with the text.”³⁹⁶ Yasser Burhami sums up the Salafi position: “*Shura* in Islam is different from the democratic system.”³⁹⁷

Another key Brotherhood response to Salafi criticism of democracy is to stress practical considerations. The Brotherhood notes that the Egyptian population is overwhelmingly Muslim, so given the option, a majority of voters will choose *shari’a*. Thus, whatever objections Salafis have with the process, the end result is the same. Salafis vehemently reject this approach. A Sorouri author writes: “Sovereignty of the people contradicts *shari’a* and is clear unbelief: even if the people choose an Islamic rule it is doing so out of people’s choice and not by subjugating oneself to God’s rule.”³⁹⁸ Madkhalis concurs: “If people voted in that council to implement *shari’a* and it is implemented, because the parliament approved it, this is not in any way Islam. *Shari’a* has to be implemented despite the rejecters’ objections because it is the law of God. Those who are given the right to implement it now, have the right to cancel it in the future. If *shari’a* is implemented because the majority in parliament approved its implementation and the constitution states that rule is for the majority, this means that the constitution is governing God’s *shari’a* and this is clear unbelief as all Muslims agree.”³⁹⁹ Yasser Burhami agrees: “It is not permissible to offer Islamic *shari’a* on individuals to say whether it should be implemented or not.”⁴⁰⁰ Sayed Imam Al Sharif adds his agreement: “Holding a referendum of the people or a parliament members’ vote on whether *shari’a* is to be implemented in the name of democracy is a clear act of unbelief because it means that the implementation of *shari’a* is up to the will of the created and that they have a free will in implementing it or not.”⁴⁰¹

While the ideological objections to democracy have been stressed by Salafis, even before the Egyptian revolution, the Salafi Call offered a number of practical considerations that make political participation, under current circumstances, impossible.

The first of these practical considerations is that political participation in elections under the Mubarak regime would require Salafis to offer concessions on first principles, which religion does not permit.⁴⁰² These are basic aspects of belief in which they are unwilling to compromise.⁴⁰³ After the revolution, Yousri Hamaad, the Nour party’s official spokesman, stated, “We were not allowed to be present unless we offered concessions on principles and values that we do not agree to give up. This is what made us stay away from the political process and not take part in it.”⁴⁰⁴ The same reason was given by Yasser Burhami before the revolution. “Salafis choose not to participate because the conditions of the game in light of the balance of contemporary powers internationally, regionally, and internally does not allow participation except by relinquishing beliefs, principles and values that no one from *Ahl El Sunna* would agree to sacrificing in return for gaining a temporary success or a political position, or just proving one’s existence on the field.”⁴⁰⁵ Abdel Monem El Shahat echoed the same sentiment: “The political environment did not allow anyone to enter the political arena without giving up a lot of the *shari’a* constants on top of which is absolute acceptance of

* Independent reasoning

Western democracy without any condition with implementing this on the most important branch which is talk of absolute freedom.”⁴⁰⁶

The second practical consideration raised by the Salafi Call was the lack of any likely gains due to their participation. The balance of powers would simply not allow them to change anything in Egypt.⁴⁰⁷ Yasser Burhami clarified: “These principles are more valuable than to be sold to prove a point or to make people hear a voice loudly, after which nothing results from those positions in reality from the desired reform and the promised implementation of Allah’s *Shari’a*.”⁴⁰⁸ Abdel Monem El Shahat added: “This would not result in anything under a stagnant system with no hope of real change in policies let alone laws and the constitution.”⁴⁰⁹ He uses Turkey as an example of a country governed by a secular framework where Islamists cannot achieve anything⁴¹⁰.

Regime repression was another reason the Salafi Call cited for its decision not to participate in elections. The regime was hostile to Islamists,⁴¹¹ and this forced the Salafi Call to “confine their political views to private settings out of fear of retribution.”⁴¹² Additionally, the entire international system is antagonistic to Islamist participation. As Ahmed Farid argues, “The Algerian experience is the best testament that the road of parliament and politics is a closed road that does not take one to the destination.”⁴¹³ The case of Hamas’ victory in Palestinian elections is often cited with the case of Algeria as testament to Western powers rejecting any Islamist victory.⁴¹⁴ Jihadis certainly agree with that statement, as Ahmed ‘Ashoush reflects: “The road of democracy and elections is a road closed in the face of Islam and does not bring anything but idolatry results.”⁴¹⁵

Salafis cite these two practical considerations; being forced to offer concessions and the lack of achievements due to participation when criticizing the Brotherhood’s methodology. As one analysis of the Salafi Call highlights, “Salafis had criticized the Muslim Brotherhood under Mubarak for constantly sacrificing their Islamic principles for political gain in a system that was insufficiently Islamic.”⁴¹⁶ Mohamed Sa’id Raslan laments that “we see people who entered politics to change but instead were themselves changed.”⁴¹⁷ Burhami notes that “Islamist groups who have participated thus far have done so only by sacrificing these Islamic principles and privileging political gains over them.”⁴¹⁸ He lists Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Morocco as examples of Islamist parties offering concessions and says: “I have a reservation on calling what these parties who participated or reached power have achieved, as Islamists reaching power. These parties and groups did not achieve what they achieved except by losing a lot of its Islamic identity and sacrificing it. God’s *Shari’a*, his book, and the *Sunna* of His Prophet do not accept to be an issue on which people’s opinions on them are to be taken.”⁴¹⁹ Abdel Monem El Shahat adds that participation in politics has achieved nothing for Islam.⁴²⁰ He is highly critical of the Brotherhood’s methodology: “Why do some Islamists adopt a pragmatic approach? Some calculate everything based on number of seats and votes, others because they belong to a *da’wah* group that adopts this approach in *da’wah* and transfer it to politics.”⁴²¹ He blasts the Islamist experiment in Turkey, arguing that “the issue of *hakimiyya*, which occupies a major space among the Salafi doctrines, has suffered from a lot of misconceptions due to the practices of the political Islam groups and their acceptance of the principles of democracy and even blatant

secularism sometimes as in Turkey besides their acceptance of the principles of international law.”⁴²²

Yusuf Al Qaradawi attempts to create a common ground among various Islamist currents and movements and argues that the disagreements within the Islamist movement on questions of participation in parliaments and even alliances with non-Islamist parties are natural and within the bounds of accepted disagreements. He adds, “We should accept that we all seek the same goal but that each of us adopts a different means.” This means that we should not criticize each other’s choices. He further writes, “In one country it may be good to participate in elections and enter parliament in an attempt to influence the authorities, while in another country this may be an unnecessary burden.”⁴²³ This approach is vigorously criticized by both ends of the Salafi spectrum; Madkhalis and Jihadis who portray “participating in an Un-Islamic system as analogous to eating a corpse in a desert.”⁴²⁴ Not only that, as Ahmed Farid clarified, political participation is a road that prophets have not taken.⁴²⁵ “The prophets focused on unifying the hearts by reforming people’s beliefs,” writes Mohamed Sa’id Raslan, who warns of the dangers of politics. “Concern with politics makes preachers forget about the matters of religion” and “politics has no religion. This is why you see now anyone who enters parliament loses his religion step by step until he retains nothing but slogans.”⁴²⁶ He adds, “They call for democracy, parties, elections, and councils and they are not being honest as a man who is looking in a place with light for something he lost in a dark place. Look for it where you lost it in God’s book and the *Sunna* of his prophet.”⁴²⁷ A Scholarly Salafi author insists, “God’s methodology for change is not through parliaments, but through monotheism and obedience to God and helping the poor,” and “to implement the divine methodology, the road to it is not through the secular constitution or democratic elections. The road to it is raising the word of monotheism and doctrine and establishing loyalty and disavowal, and uniting the Islamist ranks.”⁴²⁸ Raslan blames Islamists’ political participation for their failure. “The reason for the failure of Islamist movements today in reforming the general corruption is it mistaking the road to reform. For it entered into the political arena and made it the basis for its reform work, no matter what they claim of the totality of the righteousness of the methodology and the totality of the *da’wah*.”⁴²⁹

Other Salafis attempt to offer a few venues for participation in elections without compromising their principles. Al Albani, while insisting that Salafis should not run for parliament, permitted them to vote for Islamist candidates.⁴³⁰ During Egypt’s 2005 parliamentary elections, Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem wrote that those voting in elections are not considered sinners by the Salafi Call because the issue was one on which there was disagreement among scholars and because the alternative to the Brotherhood’s candidates were people opposed to Islam.⁴³¹ Since the 1980’s, Salafis had voted for Brotherhood candidates in student union elections and in professional syndicates, though not for parliament.⁴³² Given that those elected bodies did not legislate, there was no reason for Salafis to reject voting in them. Even parliamentary legislation that involves administrative rules such as traffic laws are not prohibited, argued both Yasser Burhami⁴³³ and Sa’id Abdel ‘Azeem.⁴³⁴ Both men also insisted that there was a clear difference between the genus and the particular⁴³⁵ and that “saying that democracy is pagan unbelief does not mean declaring the particular who calls for

democracy an unbeliever.”⁴³⁶ Burhami further made a distinction between two groups who participate in politics. “Those who participate in parliament are two kinds: those who aim to establish democracy by legislating other than what God revealed [and] those who participate in order to implement *shari’a* under the condition that they renounce the basis on which those councils are based, from legislating with other than what God revealed. (The last position) is a debatable issue.”⁴³⁷

Observers of Egyptian Salafism before the revolution described Salafis as apolitical and were thus shocked by the Salafi embrace of political participation immediately after the revolution. Yet the Salafi decision was hardly surprising especially in the case of the Salafi Call. Its emphasis on practical considerations in rejecting political participation and the small avenues that they charted for participation before the revolution indicated that a change in circumstances would result in a change of course for them. As Yasser Burhami made clear before the revolution, Salafism is anything but apolitical. “The truth is that most Salafis do not participate in politics, not because there is no religion in politics and no politics in religion. For this belief includes denying what is known of religion by necessity, which is the totality of Islam to everything that people need, part of which is politics.” He added: “Salafis have clear positions on the nation’s problems, authenticated with the basic beliefs such as the issue of rule, the necessity of the Caliphate, the conditions for *Imamah*, the attributes of decision makers, the relationship with followers of other beliefs through the tenet of loyalty and disavowal, what is permissible in dealing with non-believers and what is not, the concept of jihad and its parameters and kinds, the types of peace, protection and truce with non-believers, Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong. Also their position on the nation’s issues such as Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, and others is a clear position. Don’t you see that all of this is political participation?” He insisted that “lack of participation is itself a political act by exposing reality and depriving it of legitimacy, I mean Islamic legitimacy.”⁴³⁸ The Salafi Call’s political engagement was quite evident for any careful observer when they issued their initiative for reform on November 6, 2009.⁴³⁹

Burhami left the door open for political participation in the future by saying: “When these balances and conditions change, we can at that time deal with the situation in a different way.”⁴⁴⁰ More strikingly on November 21, 2010, just two months before the revolution, Yasser Burhami seemed to see the future through a crystal ball. He said: “If a suitable group existed for the heavy task of leading the nation and the current balance changed, we would have a different position.”⁴⁴¹ After the revolution, a careful reading of the Salafi Call’s position concluded: “Our research has found that the Salafis’ abstention from politics was not based on any monolithic ideological prohibition of political activity in general. Rather, the Salafis believed Egypt’s political system under President Hosni Mubarak was illegitimate and lacking in Islamic reference. According to the Salafis, participating in a non-Islamic system in which they had no opportunity to alter the rules of the game would have required them to make unacceptable compromises on basic Islamic principles, and thereby their Islamic identity.”⁴⁴²

Collective Action

The question of the permissibility of collective action occupies a central position in the intra-Islamist debate, with one notable exception: Jihadis. For Jihadis there is no debate about the necessity of collective action. After all, collective action is a prerequisite for Jihad to succeed. For other Islamists who adopt collective action, doing so creates its own set of disagreements and fights as “organization and protecting the organization and its cohesion and areas of influence increases the conflict between Islamists.”⁴⁴³

Madkhali Salafis spare no words in attacking the idea of collective action and those who engage in it. In fact, “secular criticism of the Muslim Brotherhood and Activist Salafism is dwarfed by the criticism Madkhalis leveled on them.”⁴⁴⁴ For Madkhalis, the very idea of collective action is heresy;⁴⁴⁵ their position is explained by their view of the center of the Muslim community as the state.⁴⁴⁶ As Mahmoud Lutfi Amer declares in his questions to Salafis: “Do you acknowledge that there is a community of Muslims in Egypt and that Hosni Mubarak is its Imam?”⁴⁴⁷ Hence, forming an organization or group within the state is prohibited for it is considered an act of rebellion against the ruler.⁴⁴⁸ The Madkhali position on collective action led them to engage in a battle with the Salafi Call over the issue.⁴⁴⁹ Mohamed Sa’id Raslan began the attack after reading Yasser Burhami’s defense of collective action.⁴⁵⁰

The Madkhali criticism of collective action spans several fronts. First, Madkhali’s criticize Islamist groups as lacking theological harmony. As Rabi’ Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali argues, “Those gatherings and partisan bodies are based on heresies.”⁴⁵¹ Second, the very idea of forming an organization is alien to Islam and its pious Salaf. As a result, Hesham El Beialy attacks other Salafis who adopt collective action. “These are heretics who are ignorant of the Salaf’s methodology.”⁴⁵² Third, political parties seek self-interest. Madkhalis cite the example of Hassan Al Turabi in Sudan, who allowed churches to be built, worked closely with Shi’a and Iran, and accepted Sufi practices of praying at graves all for the purpose of remaining in power.⁴⁵³ Fourth, partisanship is a grave concern for Madkhalis. “Partisanship begins with division and ends with fighting,”⁴⁵⁴ argues Mohamed Sa’id Raslan. Rabi Ibn Hadi adds, “Partisan pluralism is inherited from the unbelieving Democratic West, which forces this kind of pluralism to achieve its interests. It is happy that Muslims live under conditions insulting to Islam and its people, for the West finds the way to play them against each other using the principle divide and rule.”⁴⁵⁵

It is the state of division under Taifas rulers in Andalusia that led to the extermination of Islam from the Iberian Peninsula, adds Raslan. He argues that the enemies of Islam divided the Muslim nation into states and divided each of these states into parties.⁴⁵⁶ Rabi Ibn Hadi contends that “the crisis Muslims face today is due to political rebellion and not political oppression.” He adds that it was rebellion that led to dividing the nation into states and cites the rebellions against the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates.⁴⁵⁷ The Madkhali criticism of those engaged in collective action can be summed up in the following statement: “People who appear to be working for Islam and view jurisprudence in religion as not enough to do that until every individual belongs to a *da’wah* organization, where he receives orders and obeys them, and generally that

includes an oath of allegiance even under a country ruled by a Muslim ruler. Thus we understand calling them Activist for their doubts about jurisprudence in religion that makes them imagine it cannot move.”⁴⁵⁸

Scholarly Salafis are critical of political collective action as it forms the very basis of their disagreement with Activist Salafis,⁴⁵⁹ although they avoid polemics and are less hostile in their attacks than Madkhalis. With the exception of El Gam’eya El Shar’eya and Ansar El Sunna, Scholarly Salafism completely lacks an organized structure and is based on students and disciples attending sermons and lectures by Sheikhs.⁴⁶⁰ Both El Gam’eya El Shar’eya and Ansar El Sunna are based on the concept of collective action, though they stress that this is only outside of the political sphere.⁴⁶¹ While Al Albani was not a member of any Islamist group, and criticized them, he did not go to war with them, which allowed his influence to infiltrate all of them. Al Albani’s personal history and experience in fighting in the 1948 war, writing for the Muslim Brotherhood magazine, and meeting the founder of Hizb Al Tahrir, helped shape his approach to them. Al Albani argues that “all Islamist groups focus on quantity not quality.”⁴⁶² According to him, “partisanship does to the nation what the disease does to the body.”⁴⁶³ Abu Ishaq El Howeiny declares his opposition to pluralism in Islamist groups as it increases intolerance between Muslims.⁴⁶⁴ El Howeiny is also troubled by the inevitable drawback of collective action in seeking to unify people. It enables heterodox theological views in order to maintain the unity of the group. He argues for the opposite, “The word of monotheism before uniting our word*.”⁴⁶⁵

Mustafa El ‘Adawy declares his opposition to groups. “Do not join a group, do not join any of the groups, do not give your oath to any one of them. You are Muslim and we are Muslims.” He adds, “Many of those groups end up rebelling against the ruler and worse you find the member of this group in animosity to anyone who does not belong to his group.”⁴⁶⁶ Abdel Salam Abdel Karim sums up the negatives of collective action from the Scholarly Salafi view point as follows: collective action requires giving an oath of allegiance and collecting followers on methodologies and constitutions, which is a heresy; it changes the basis of the concept of loyalty and disavowal and bases it on loyalty to the group instead of to Islam; it creates internal divisions and fights; it decreases the importance of scholarship; and finally members follow the interest of the group.⁴⁶⁷

The Salafi Call, according to Abdel Monem El Shahat, is “a *da’wah* reform group that adopts Salafism as a methodology and collective organized work as a technique.”⁴⁶⁸ More than anything else, his adoption of collective organized work distinguishes the Salafi Call from other Salafi currents. It has made it “the strongest current within Salafism because of its organizational unity, and hence its ability to produce the largest number of students who spread its approach throughout Egypt.”⁴⁶⁹ Those surprised by the strong showing of the Nour Party’s performance in the first parliamentary organization needed only to look at the Salafi Call’s organization before the revolution to understand where this success came from.

* The words monotheism and uniting are the same in Arabic.

Why the Salafi Call adopted collective action and built an impressive organization, however, had little to do with theological reasoning, for those appeared later to justify an existing fact. Collective action instead was the result of the environment of Alexandria in the 1970's and the role of one man, Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem. As members of the umbrella organization Gama'a Islamiya in the Egyptian universities, the six founding members of the Salafi Call were confronted with a grave challenge in the late 1970's.⁴⁷⁰ Unlike others, Mokadem had refused to give his oath of allegiance to an undeclared Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁴⁷¹ Mokadem enjoyed great respect among all Islamists for his deep knowledge of religious texts. He was a committed Salafi in his methodology. Hence the other five founders of the Salafi Call followed his decision. That left them in a predicament, however. As they began to spread their *da'wah* in Alexandria University as they had before, they found themselves attacked by their former colleagues, now members of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood attempted to silence them and ban their meetings⁴⁷², and the clashes in university became violent.⁴⁷³ As a result, the six founders met and decided that they had to be organized as well.⁴⁷⁴ As Yasser Burhami would later recall, "They were organized and we were not. After that, we met together and decided to organize work between us."⁴⁷⁵

The second reason for the Salafi Call's adoption of collective action and their creation of their own organizational structure was the closed doors they encountered in the only existing Salafi organization at the time: Ansar El Sunna. They would later claim that they "decided to work outside of Ansar El Sunna because of the behavior of the older people running Ansar El Sunna locally in Alexandria, who did not welcome the young ones."⁴⁷⁶ They explained that working through Ansar El Sunna "depended on the personalities of those who ran the different branches, and that in Alexandria Ansar El Sunna were closed minded and were not able to absorb the energies of the youth."⁴⁷⁷ While certainly this played a huge factor in their decision, it was not the sole reason. The young Salafis also refused "to work through an official religious organization"⁴⁷⁸ that was under the supervision of the state as they "were looking for more room for operation and activism without the barriers of working in an officially registered organization."⁴⁷⁹ They thought that working under an official umbrella would constrain their activities, and "Ansar El Sunna was too apolitical for them."⁴⁸⁰ Hence, they created their own organization outside of the control of the state,⁴⁸¹ often paralleling its structures, and replacing them in religious education and social services.⁴⁸² Their social and education networks, however, suffered a heavy blow in 1994 as the state heavily cracked down on them.

The Salafi Call's endorsement of collective action has come under severe criticism from Madkhalis.⁴⁸³ In response to Mohamed Sa'id Raslan's criticism, Mokadem engaged him calmly, conceding that there are problems in collective action and that these should be corrected. But he maintained that collective action should not be abandoned completely.⁴⁸⁴ Burhami argued that those who criticize collective action "overstate the negatives of Islamic groups and overlook their benefits."⁴⁸⁵ The Salafi Call highlights that its endorsement of collective action is conditioned on it not being partisan.⁴⁸⁶ As Burhami argues, "Pluralism that results from differences in methodologies between *Ahl El Sunna* and others is a condemned pluralism and not permissible ... pluralism that is a result of plurality of leadership, there is no doubt that this has to be changed ... as to pluralism that is the result of the plurality of duties and that which is the result of the

differences between countries and the lack of ability to manage them all with one management, that pluralism is not condemned because it completes one another.”⁴⁸⁷

Due to the Salafi wariness of the word organization, the Salafi Call prefers using the words collective action and cooperation. Cooperation in *da'wah*, they argue, “does not require a deep organization.”⁴⁸⁸ In response to other Salafis criticizing collective action and organization for requiring an oath of allegiance, the Salafi Call declares, “we do not have an oath of allegiance.”⁴⁸⁹ “An oath of allegiance is not necessary for collective action,” they argue, and add that the issue was determined for them early on by the visiting Sheikh Abu Bakr Al Jaza'iri.⁴⁹⁰ Furthermore, the Salafi Call highlights the necessity of collective action for certain tasks.⁴⁹¹ “Cooperation is necessary to engage in important tasks such as education, *hesba*, and helping the poor.”⁴⁹² As El Shahat notes, “The Salafi Call is interested in pursuing knowledge and teaching it, solving disputes between people, and serving the rights of the poor and humble through an organizational council for each governorate.”⁴⁹³ In response to Madkhali criticisms that collective action replaces the community of Muslims and divides it, Burhami argues, “It must be known that the contemporary Islamist groups are a middle phase that aims to establish the Muslim's group through doing what it can in the areas of *da'wah*, Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong, education, fatwa, and collecting zakat.”⁴⁹⁴ Finally, as Burhami argues, the Salafi Call does not put the protection of the *da'wah* and organization above principles. “Many of the members of this current are to be criticized for ignoring the violations that governments adopt and spread among the people such as the issue of ruling with other than what God revealed, issues of loyalty and disavowal This cannot be excused by arguing for protecting the *da'wah*. The *da'wah* loses its identity if it seems people fall into sins, even into idolatry, and does not move as if the issue does not concern it at all.”⁴⁹⁵ As events have proven, however, this last claim is quite dubious.

Other Egyptian Activist Salafis accept the principle of collective action but have not, until the Egyptian revolution, created their own organizations out of fear of dividing the nation further.⁴⁹⁶ In his response to Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali's book criticizing him, Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek wrote, “Our disagreements are not over any of the fundamentals of religion but over the legitimate political policy that should be followed today, especially toward groups of *da'wah* to God and toward Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong.” He explained, “I view these groups as *da'wah* to God, he views them as heretics.” Criticizing Madkhali, he noted, “He is now obsessed with these groups, views fighting them as preferred to fighting Jews and Christians” and “he wanted to unite Muslims, but instead has divided them, to serve Muslims but instead has harmed them, to do Jihad in the way of God but instead has helped the enemies of Muslims over Muslims. He wanted to end partisanship and division but instead has formed the worst party and group and planted the greatest division.” He further highlighted that Saudi Mufti Abdel Aziz Ibn Baz praised the work of Tabligh and *Da'wah*.⁴⁹⁷ In another book, Abdel Khalek argued that “*da'wah* groups are necessary since the rulers have ignored ruling with God's *shari'a* and conducted Jihad against the enemies of God's religion.” He highlighted the differences between general leadership of the Muslim community and leadership in those groups, arguing that the former is

obligatory and requires obedience and commitment and only one can exist, while in the latter case, circumstances may require pluralism.⁴⁹⁸

The Egyptian Sorouri current “permits collective action as long as loyalty and disavowal is not based on belonging to a party or a group.” Sorouris emphasize the importance of organized collective actions. “It is an effective means to achieve the largest success for the Islamist cause and provides clear evidence on the truthfulness of the Islamist experiment ... and will be a practical field to train on the lost Islamic terms to the nation today such as *shura*, justice and impartiality.”⁴⁹⁹

Salah El Sawy argues that contemporary Muslim countries “do not represent the Gama’a of Muslims” and hence forming groups is permissible. He argues, “In our time, there is no legitimate authority, which means that authority is invested in the leaders of the nation who are still loyal to Islam and committed to *shari’a* and in them is represented the Gama’a of Muslims in its political framework.”⁵⁰⁰ El Sawy accepts disagreements within the Islamist camp. “We should be gentle with those seeking salvation who fall into wrongs or partial heresies, whether intellectual or practical, from among the contemporary factions of Islamist work.”⁵⁰¹ Sorouris argue that, “Differences in the program of action and the methods of change are differences in issues that are up to *ijtihad*.” “The pluralism that is accepted in those groups is the pluralism of specialization and the diversity whose efforts complete each other.” “Each group should specialize in one issue, as they complete each other: Jihadis for example the fighting, Scholarly Salafis defending the faith, Activist Salafis organizing and educating, and the Muslim Brotherhood political work.”⁵⁰² Sorouris are distinguished by their focus on coordination between Islamists so that collective action does not result in dividing the nation. “If we accept pluralism in the components of Islamist activism, and each group is allowed to organize its internal issues related to *da’wah* and education, anything that is related to the confrontation with the enemies whether peacefully or violently has to be left to the decision makers. Islamist activism deals with them with one strategy in that framework. No Islamist group should be allowed to independently decide on the whole future of Islamist activism or to drag it to a total confrontation based on their calculations alone—especially since the effects of this will not be felt by them alone but will naturally have ramifications on all the groups of Islamist activism.”⁵⁰³

Naturally, the Muslim Brotherhood completely endorses organized collective action. As Khairat Al Shater notes, “We also learned in the method of the Muslim Brotherhood that this overall mission and these secondary goals can only be achieved by means of the strong Gama’a.” He adds, “This is the same idea as that was expressed by Umar Ibn Al Khattab, which some scholars attribute to the Prophet himself, stating, “there is no religion without a *Gama’a*, no *Gama’a* without an Imam, and no Imam without obedience.” Al Shater traces this to the Prophet: “Whoever studies the jurisprudence of instituting religion as established by our master the Prophet will find that the instrument which he used was the *Gama’a*. Not only is the *Gama’a* a must, but Al Shater warns of what he calls the pious unorganized man. “It is not possible for someone to say, ‘I’m one of the Ikhwan,’ despite his lacking some of these characteristics in the first place, even if he himself is a virtuous and pious brother. This is why El Banna in his memoirs warned of the pious unorganized man or he who always breaks ranks because

the issue is not only one of individual piety, but rather with individual piety the issues connected to organizational developing must also be present.”⁵⁰⁴ Yusuf El Qaradawi adds his voice, arguing that disagreements between Islamist groups are natural given that the Companions of the Prophet themselves disagreed and so did the founders of the four schools of jurisprudence. Even prophets Moses and Aaron disagreed and so did David and Solomon. Hence, disagreements in jurisprudence between Islamist groups is permissible while disagreements in doctrines are prohibited, defining unacceptable disagreements as “those that lead to dividing the nation.”⁵⁰⁵ On that note, Al Shater argued that the *Gama'a* as defined by the Brotherhood “is not an instrument of conflict or competition. The *Gama'a* is an instrument of integration and rallying of the entire nation in order to build its *Nahda* on the basis of Islam.”⁵⁰⁶ Lastly, an important argument that the Brotherhood uses in its defense of collective action is that it is necessary to counter the world conspiracy against Islam. Mohamed El Ghazali gives voice to this complex conspiracy in the Brotherhood discourse, arguing that the Vatican’s *Nostra Aetate* in rejecting Jewish deicide was part of efforts to create a Jewish-Christian alliance against Islam and that “the Catholics and Protestants solved their disagreements and the differences and internal battles were forgotten between the two camps and Christian conferences now include both to face Islam together.”⁵⁰⁷

Position on the Muslim Brotherhood

Though the Muslim Brotherhood hardly represents the majority of Egypt's Islamists and may appear as a minute detail in the sea of Salafism, it nonetheless, occupies a central position in intra-Islamist disagreements due to its long history, strength of organization, and political engagement. While hardly a majority of Egyptian Islamists were former members of the Brotherhood, it is impossible to find an Islamist in Egypt who has not, at one point in his life, encountered the Brotherhood as a methodology, organization, or social service organization and hence formed an opinion of the Brotherhood. While Salafis disagree on numerous issues, their position on the Muslim Brotherhood, its founder, and ideology remains one of the most important divisions within Salafism.⁵⁰⁸

Some aspects of the Salafi criticism of the Brotherhood are shared by all Salafi currents. Salafis point out that the "Brotherhood's methodology of gathering supporters lacks purity of methodology, which means that many of their followers don't know their religion and that the group includes a wide spectrum of views in doctrinal issues." In addition, the Brotherhood is completely devoid of scholarship. That results in membership being based on loyalty to the organization and the general idea. Heresies are widespread among Brotherhood members, due to the Brotherhood's lack of focus on doctrines and tenets and its focus on gathering followers. As Banna argues, "Differences in Verses of Names and Attributes does not deserve all this noise. What we should be engaged in is uniting the lines and gathering." The Brotherhood also believes that disagreements on side issues is permissible and necessary and lacks the rigidity of issues that Salafis consider fundamental such as the concept of Loyalty and Disavowal. Furthermore the Brotherhood is accused of not giving any attention to the *Sunna* of the Prophet. Finally, the Brotherhood's methodology with its focus on politics forces it to offer concessions on issues where no concessions are permissible.⁵⁰⁹

While secularists of all stripes have severely criticized the Muslim Brotherhood, that criticism is dwarfed by the criticism that Madkhalis level on the group.⁵¹⁰ For Madkhalis, the Muslim Brotherhood and especially Sayed Qutb are truly the worst enemies of Islam.⁵¹¹ As Mohamed Aman Al Jami declares, "The most dangerous of the heretics now on the Salafi methodology and its people are two groups: Tabligh and the Brotherhood with their groups. Their evil is widespread more than all other heretics. Their seduction does not leave a house without entering it."⁵¹² Former Egyptian Madkhali Osama El Qoussy blasts the Brotherhood with a number of shots. In his view, they are "the most dangerous group in Egypt," "a devilish idea", and "a cancer" that should be banned, since it is the source of all violent groups.⁵¹³ Though there is no Brotherhood apparatus in Saudi Arabia, Madkhalis are still obsessed with the group, "leveling accusations on their adversaries of being secret Brotherhood members or having Brotherhood leanings."⁵¹⁴ Their criticism of other Salafis is often simply that they are influenced by the Brotherhood.⁵¹⁵ More importantly, Madkhalis attack anyone who refuses to echo their position on the Brotherhood and Qutb.⁵¹⁶ Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali's book attacking Sheikh Safar Al Hawali criticizes him for his attack on Al Albani, but the book focuses primarily on El Hawali's praise for Sayed Qutb and his refusal to criticize the Brotherhood. Rabi' Ibn Hadi repeatedly asks in his book "what is your position on Sayed Qutb's statement that ..., " making the rejection of Sayed Qutb's

views a litmus test for true belonging to the Salafi methodology.⁵¹⁷ Mahmoud Lutfi Amer sums up the Madkhali position: “He who is silent on the Muslim Brotherhood is one of them, let alone he who praises them. He who is silent on the thought of Sayed Qutb is a Qutbist, let alone he who praises him or respects him. He who is silent on partisans is a partisan, let alone he who raise his followers on partisan origins.”⁵¹⁸

The list of Brotherhood flaws for Madkhalis is endless. “Brotherhood followers are innovators in religion.”⁵¹⁹ The Brotherhood is cursed for not taking a firm stand against Shi’a.⁵²⁰ Mahmoud Lutfi Amer “accused the Brotherhood of being a Kahirijite *Takfiri* group,” and accused Hassan El Banna of being a Sufi heretic.⁵²¹ The last accusation of Sufism is constant in all Madkhali attacks on the Brotherhood.⁵²² Mohamed Sa’id Raslan sums up many of the criticisms, writing that “They are one of the heretic groups, they are loyal to Shi’a, committed to democracy, have no clear doctrinal methodology,” and yet “claim that God’s methodology is the methodology of the Brotherhood.” He concludes: “If the Brotherhood took over power in Egypt, they will turn it into a Brotherhood fiefdom serving their interests with their Supreme Guide ruling. This will allow Shi’a to spread in Egypt.”⁵²³ Rabi’ Ibn Hadi attacks the Brotherhood for its soft position on Christians and holding conferences for uniting religions and for conferences attempting to unify Muslim sects.⁵²⁴

No matter how serious these flaws are in the eyes of Madkhalis, they are negligible compared to the hatred Madkhalis have for Sayed Qutb. Madkhalis have written tens of books attacking Sayed Qutb in the harshest terms.⁵²⁵ Rabi’ Ibn Hadi has written several of these books and he lists the following crimes by Qutb: declaring the Muslim nation unbelievers, criticizing Prophets (having called Moses rash and temperamental), attacking the Companions of the Prophet*, deviating in interpretation of there is no God but God by following Maududi† in interpreting it as *hakimiyya*, not understanding the three forms of monotheism, mixing their meanings by focusing on the *hakimiyya* concept, paying no attention to the heresies of Sufism on graves or those of the Shi’a on Ahl Al Bayt, deviating from the Attributes of God by stating that God does not talk but only wills, giving an abstract interpretation of the Quranic verse “God established himself above the throne”‡ (Al A’raf: 54), offering an abstract interpretation of the “scale” in the afterlife, believing that the Quran was created, believing that the human

* Qutb was highly critical of the third Caliph Uthman, considering his tenure as not on the same standards as others. He further accused him of favoritism towards his relatives and praised the revolt against him. Qutb also had harsh criticism for Amr Ibn El ‘Aas and the Umayyad Caliphate.

† Rabi’ Ibn Hadi claims Abul A’la El Maududi simply Islamized the concept which he took from Hegel.

‡ This Quranic verse is of great importance to Salafis who stress the literal meaning of it and is one of the bases of their long feud with Ash’aris. Rabi’ Ibn Hadi accused Qutb here of being a Jahmi: an early Islamic sect that denied the attributes of God mentioned in the Quran out of fear of anthropomorphism. The importance of the verse to Salafis can be seen in the story of Al Albani’s encounter with the leader of the Islamic Salvation Front Ali Belhadj. Belhadj met Al Albani seeking his blessings and told him that the Islamic Salvation Front had thousands of followers. Al Albani was silent throughout the talk, finally raising his head and asked Belhadj “and do all those with you know that God has established himself on the throne? Belhadj, completely dumb struck answered “we hope so” and finally admitted that they did not, to which Al Albani pointed out that they will not succeed. The conversation is vintage Al Albani with his methodology of purifying the beliefs of Muslims first and upbringing them on the right path before any political action is to be undertaken.

spirit is eternal, believing in reincarnation, believing like Sufis in the unity of existence*, rejecting some *hadiths*, questioning what is known from religion by necessity by not believing that believers will see God in the afterlife, writing that we do not know what the “throne of God” is, supporting socialism and attacking private property, denying many of the Prophet’s miracles by claiming that the Quran is his only miracle†, not adhering to the concept of Loyalty and Disavowal by allowing good treatment of Christians and Jews, and writing that “Islam calls for freedom of worship.”⁵²⁶ Qutb is also accused of accepting Shi’a mythologies regarding Ali Ibn Abi Taleb’s asceticism.⁵²⁷ Rabi’ Ibn Hadi quoted Mahmoud Shaker’s charge that Sayed Qutb insulted the Companions of the Prophet in his book “Social Justice in Islam” and warns that Qutb’s words are used by Shi’a and Ibadis to attack the Companions. He argued that “Qutb had grave deviations from the Salafi methodology and Islam’s tenets and doctrine,” and attributed this to Qutb’s early days as an unbeliever, which left a mark on his thought.⁵²⁸ Qutb is not only “following the belief of the Kharijites,”⁵²⁹ but he is “worse than the Kharijites in his heresies.”⁵³⁰ Sayed Qutb is in fact “a collection of heresies: Sufism, Shi’a, Kharijites, Marxism, and Free Masonry.”⁵³¹

What explains the Madkhali hatred of the Brotherhood? On the theological level, there is very little in common between the two on key questions such as the legitimacy of rulers, political participation and democracy, rebellion, collective action, other Islamic sects, and the methodology adopted.⁵³² On the practical level, the position the Brotherhood occupies within Islamism makes ignoring it impossible.⁵³³ The harshness of the criticism and attack is of course a Madkhali signature that is evident across all their commentaries. The Egyptian Madkhali position, however, has to be put in the context of the original environment in which the Madkhali current emerged: the Saudi Arabia of 1990. While cracks in the Brotherhood’s relationship with the Saudi state began to appear due to the Brotherhood’s support of the Iranian revolution, the Brotherhood soon changed course and the relationship experienced a renewed flourishing that was cemented in the hills and valleys of Afghanistan. The relationship was broken following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait after the Brotherhood refused to support the American liberation of Kuwait.⁵³⁴ That moment witnessed the birth of the Madkhali current as a response to the Sorouri criticism of the Saudi state and the Sorouri current was easily traceable to its Brotherhood origins. The Saudi state itself became highly critical of the Brotherhood from this point onward with Prince Nayef blaming the Brotherhood for the radicalization of Saudi society.⁵³⁵

The Madkhali position on the Muslim Brotherhood underwent a serious test when Hamas won the Palestinian parliamentary elections creating a terrible theological challenge for Madkhalis who were torn between their stress on obedience to rulers and their views of the Brotherhood. In his first sermon after the Hamas victory, Osama El Qoussy declared Hamas the legitimate rulers that had to be obeyed no matter what one thought of their religiosity and heresies, but in the next sermon, he backtracked, explaining that Mahmoud Abbas was still the head of the Palestinian Authority and hence he and not them was the legitimate ruler. Later on, Mohamed Saed Raslan

* The belief that only God exists, nature and God are one.

† Qutb gave Isra and Mi’raj an abstract interpretation and in general argued that God wanted to speak to man’s mind and not convince him with miracles.

attacked Hamas as Kharijites for their Gaza coup.⁵³⁶ The story would serve as a precursor of the Madkhali predicament after Mohamed Morsi's victory in the Egyptian presidential elections.

Though Scholarly Salafis share many of the criticisms of the Brotherhood that Madkhalis voice, their position on the Brotherhood is much more restrained. Scholarly Salafis generally do not engage in the kind of fights for which Madkhalis are known. Historically, many Scholarly Salafis who were contemporaries of Hassan El Banna criticized what they viewed as his deviation from the Salafi methodology. The founder of Ansar El Sunna criticized El Banna for his lack of attention to monotheism and doctrinal issues in general. Ahmed Shaker attacked the Brotherhood for its assassination of Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud Fahmy El Nuqrashi in 1948, calling them Kharijites and calling him a martyr, and his brother Mahmoud Shaker clashed with young Brotherhood members attending his sermons in the 1970's.⁵³⁷

Al Albani criticized the Brotherhood on several fronts: having an oath of allegiance, dividing Muslims, transforming the concept of Loyalty and Disavowal to the group instead of to Islam, accepting innovators and heretics in their midst, and lacking a clear discourse.⁵³⁸ On the Brotherhood's lack of any scholarship, Al Albani says "And I say a truthful comment, you cannot find among the Muslim Brotherhood a scholar. Why? Because that scholar will call people to the right *da'wah* and the right *da'wah* will divide the ranks. They want to build a bloc, to gather. The difference between our *da'wah* and the *da'wah* of others is that our *da'wah* is based on the basis of educate then gather, while the *da'wah* of others is based on gather then educate which results in no education in the end." Al Albani furiously points out that Brotherhood members do not even know the "*Hadith* of the slave girl".⁵³⁹ Madyan Ibrahim criticized the Brotherhood for what he saw as their pro-Christian stances, and their acceptance of pagan democracy, while Mustafa El 'Adawy accused them of offering concessions on fundamentals of religion.⁵⁴⁰ Ibn Baz has similarly advised the Brotherhood to abandon its ways and implement the Quran and the *Sunna*.⁵⁴¹

Many of the Scholarly Salafis' criticism of the Brotherhood have focused on individual members. Madyan Ibrahim called El Banna a Sufi and attacked him for calling for close relations with Shi'a.⁵⁴² Similarly, Ansar El Sunna produced a book attacking El Banna for reaching out to Shi'a and adopting aspects of Sufism. They also produced books attacking El Mohamed El Ghazali and Yusuf El Qaradawi.⁵⁴³ Abu Ishaq El Howeiny criticized Qutb⁵⁴⁴ and attacked El Qaradawi⁵⁴⁵. Mustafa El 'Adawy urged people not to read the works of Qutb.⁵⁴⁶ Nonetheless, after the Egyptian revolution, Ahmed El Naqeeb argued that Egyptians should vote for the Brotherhood. "People should vote for the Brotherhood. We allowed our brothers to vote for them in syndicates before but not in parliament. We prefer the shoe of the smallest Brotherhood member to secularists."⁵⁴⁷

* The Hadith of the slave girl is the story of a slave girl whom the Prophet asked "Where is God?" to which she replied "In the sky". The Hadith is one of the most important Hadiths for Salafis who understand it with its literal meaning that God is in the Sky and do not accept any interpretations and metaphors used by other Islamic sects that God is everywhere.

The position of Activist Salafis on the Muslim Brotherhood varies considerably among their various currents. The Salafi Call's position on the Brotherhood is guided by their historical feuds in Alexandria University in 1980, which was the very reason for the founding of the Salafi Call in the first place. Salafi Call founders felt tricked when their Cairo colleagues gave their oath of allegiance and joined the Brotherhood without telling them. As a result, the Salafi Call holds a deep suspicion of the Brotherhood. Yasser Burhami betrays this paranoia, "If the Brotherhood is empowered they will destroy the Salafi Call. The right way to have a good relationship with the Brotherhood is a strong presence."⁵⁴⁸ The Salafi Call greatly fears a powerful Brotherhood. Outside of the historical feud, a key reason for the strong clash between the two organizations is precisely that both are unique among other Islamist currents in having a strong organizational aspect to their work, which makes the clash between them and the competition inevitable. Furthermore, both consider Alexandria and the Delta as their traditional stronghold, which fuels an unavoidable competition.⁵⁴⁹ The silent simmering volcano between the Salafi Call and the Brotherhood would finally erupt after the Egyptian revolution. The Salafi Call established the Nour Party, competed against the Brotherhood in the parliamentary elections, supported Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh as a presidential candidate, opposed Mohamed Morsi during his tenure as President, and endorsed the 3rd of July 2013 military coup overthrowing the Brotherhood.

The Salafi Call criticizes the Brotherhood on several fronts. El Banna is accused of having "deviated from the Salafi path of Rashid Reda and Moheb El Din El Khateeb."⁵⁵⁰ The Salafi Call views the Brotherhood's "long history of participation as evidence that they sacrificed Islamic principles in return for political gain" and "that the Brotherhood is simply too political, and that its primary goal is political success,"⁵⁵¹ arguing that it offered concessions in order to reach power.⁵⁵² Abdel Monem El Shahat offers the following advice to the Brotherhood: "the Brotherhood needs to develop a clear doctrinal methodology that they follow, develop a tradition on controversial issues, reframe its relationship with the rest of the Islamist movement, rethink their position on democracy, have a clear Islamist discourse, reexamine its position on political participation and concessions, declare the concept of Loyalty and Disavowal to Christians instead of just on Jews, and reexamine position on Shi'a and the threat they pose."⁵⁵³

Despite this, the Salafi Call has a mixed discourse on the Brotherhood, arguing that although some of its members are innovators and heretics, others are Sunnis. As Yasser Burhami states, "Those who want to pass general judgments on these groups that have both the Sunni and the innovator, and include both the good and the bad, so he generalizes his judgment and says they are from the people of hell, is mistaken. They have not adopted a complete basic that is contrary to the basics of *Ahl El Sunna*. There are among them those who deviate, but among them there are found those who call for cooperation with *Ahl El Sunna* because they are the closest of the existing groups to right. The innovator, we warn of his innovation." He adds that anyone from "*Ahl El Sunna* we refuse to pass judgment on them with fire, we love them for their *Sunna*, and reject them for their innovation. This is from the words of Sheikh Al Islam Ibn Taymiyyah so cooperating with them on right is not banned. The issue for us is not adopting names, but it is based on belief, behavior, and work. Based on this we love or

hate.”⁵⁵⁴ On Sayed Qutb, the Salafi Call does not accept his works completely nor reject them completely.⁵⁵⁵ Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem defended Qutb arguing that “he wrote his books with a complete passion for Islam.” He praises him for standing against tyranny and for contributing a lot to the Islamic revival, though that does not mean accepting his mistakes. El Mokadem states that “Qutb’s books and those of his brother Mohamed Qutb are intellectual works and not works of doctrine,” and acknowledges that “there are concerns with his overall methodology.”⁵⁵⁶ As Burhami argues, “God ordered us to accept from the Devil if he says what is right. The “Verse of the Chair” was taught to Abu Hurairah by the Devil*. Qutb did not commit unabashed unbelief as they claim. If we take Qutb’s words on Loyalty and Disavowal we will find his words in agreement with the Quran and the *Sunna*.”⁵⁵⁷

Cairo’s Activist Salafis, though much more radical than the Brotherhood on the question of the unbelief of he who rules with other than what God has revealed, take a much less critical approach to the Brotherhood because of the Brotherhood’s opposition to rulers. This approach comes despite Cairo’s Activist Salafis’ highlighting the Brotherhood’s theological mistakes and viewing them as generally too lenient on numerous theological issues falling into heresies.⁵⁵⁸ That approach is the same as that adopted by Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek, who in his reponse to Rabi’ Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali’s attack on him wrote, “I view these groups as *da’wah* to God, he views them as heretics.” He further argues that not everyone who falls in a heresy is a heretic and pointed out that Rabi’ Ibn Hadi himself, who was his classmate for four years and his friend for 30 years, was himself a member of the Brotherhood for thirteen years.⁵⁵⁹

The Egyptian Sorouri position on the Brotherhood is quite distinct from that adopted by the current’s founder, Mohamed Sorour Zein Al Abidin. A former member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, Sorour was highly critical of his former colleagues. Sorour belonged to the Damascus branch of the organization, which was more Salafized and Qutbist than the overall group, and often found himself clashing with other Syrian Brotherhood leaders. Working in Saudi Arabia as a school teacher, Sorour founded his current “mixing Salafi tenets with Brotherhood activism.”⁵⁶⁰ In Saudi Arabia a great rivalry ensued between the two groups with each of them often creating rival student clubs and magazines. The extreme rivalry between the two groups was a function of how close they were in ideology, which made them all the more focused on the areas of disagreement.⁵⁶¹ In Egypt, such a rivalry does not exist and the Sorouri current is generally too small to engage in a fight with the Brotherhood. As a result, the Egyptian Sorouri current has had a very positive discourse towards the Brotherhood and forged close ties with the group. After the Egyptian revolution, Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim created the Shari’a Association for Rights and Reform as an umbrella organization for all Egyptian Islamists with the exception of Madkhalis and Jihadis and worked closely

* The Companion Abu Hurairah encountered a man stealing from the charity food for three nights in a row releasing him out of pity on the first two days. On the third day he refused to release him until the man promised to teach him something that would benefit him. The man told him that before going to bed he should read “The Verse of the Chair” in the Quran and God will send a guardian over him and the Devil will not be able to approach him till morning. When told the story, the Prophet told Abu Hurairah that “He has told you the truth although he is a liar” and informed him that the man had indeed been the Devil himself.

with the Brotherhood's Deputy General Guide Khairat Al Shater. As a result, the Brotherhood did not run a candidate against Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim in his quest for a parliamentary seat representing Cairo's Madinat Nasr district and attempted, though unsuccessfully, to appoint him as Minister of Religious Endowments in the first government formed by President Mohamed Morsi.

The Jihadi position on the Muslim Brotherhood is highly critical of the group. If the Brotherhood's association with the works and thoughts of Sayed Qutb forms a huge portion of the Salafis' criticism of the group, it is the Brotherhood renunciation of Qutb's methodology that forms the bases of the Jihadi criticism of them. However, the break between the Brotherhood and those who espoused Qutb's ideas did not take place until after his death. Qutbists, as they would be later called, included among their most prominent ranks Mohamed Qutb, Abdel Meguid El Shazly and initially Shukri Mustafa before his adoption of the wholesale declaration of unbelief of the entire society. The clash between Jihadis and the Brotherhood intensified in the 1970's and 1980's. Jihadi criticisms of the Brotherhood's methodology are numerous. The Brotherhood is criticized for its acceptance of democracy and the concessions it offers as a result.⁵⁶² Tarek Abdel Halim criticized them for their gathering approach, for their lack of scholarship and their focus on *da'wah*. Moreover, he bemoans their "lack of ability of forming a strong intellectual base," and argues that "the Brotherhood's methodology does not give much attention to following the *Sunna*. Instead *da'wah* and action is their primary goal," putting "loyalty to the organization before competence."⁵⁶³ The Brotherhood is especially attacked for its declarations against violence and for its attempt to offer itself as an alternative to violent Islamist groups. Jihadis often accuse the Brotherhood of being the alternative that the United States prefers.⁵⁶⁴ The ruthlessness of the Jihadi attack on the Brotherhood is evident in Tarek Abdel Halim's book titled "Get Rid of the Brotherhood and Egypt will be Yours". In his book, he declares that "The Brotherhood is the cancer to Islam in our nation, there is no victory for Islam in it without their disappearance." He argues that "the Muslim Brotherhood is a political liberal group that has an Islamist history from which it diverted in the 70's." Furthermore he adds that "their insistence on worshiping Banna's letters is not out of love and appreciation but out of their failure in offering intellectual *da'wah* alternatives that replaces them and expands them."⁵⁶⁵

One exception in the Jihadi attack on the Brotherhood was Gama'a Islamiya. From prison, 'Abboud El Zomor praised the group for surviving and flourishing in the face of state repression.⁵⁶⁶ After the revolution, Gama'a Islamiya and its political party, the Building and Development Party, closely allied themselves with the Brotherhood despite running in the parliamentary elections under the banner of the Nour Party. Later, they supported the Brotherhood against the military coup.

The Brotherhood also faced strong criticism from some of its members who were either expelled from its ranks or chose to leave and form political parties and group that have taken a more "moderate" position on key Islamist questions. Many of those members belonged to the young generation that had belonged to the umbrella student organization Gama'a Islamiya in the early 1970's and who chose to join the older members newly released from prison. Initially the divisions did not appear on the

surface as the General Guide at the time, Umar Al Tilmisani, was highly welcoming of the young recruits, taking many as his protégés, since they provided the group with a bloodline. Even during Al Tilmisani's tenure, however, the old members who had belonged to the Special Apparatus of the Brotherhood in the 1940's were re-exerting their control of the group. After an initial period in which a secret General Guide was chosen, the Special Apparatus chose Al Tilmisani only as a front man with no real power.⁵⁶⁷ The young members were initially successful during the early 1980's in pushing the Brotherhood to participate in the 1984 parliamentary elections through its alliance with the Wafd Party and in running and winning professional syndicate elections, but they were less successful in pushing their proposals for organizational reform, which the leadership shelved.⁵⁶⁸ Indeed, the 1980's witnessed repeated attempts by the old guard to contain those young members.⁵⁶⁹

In December 1995, the generation that had joined the Brotherhood in the 1970's and was active in professional syndicates in the 1980's announced the Wasat Party. The Brotherhood not only rejected the move but expelled those who continued and prohibited its members from even greeting them. The social and financial isolation that was enforced created strong resentment and soon what started as a half-cooked attempt by the leadership to test the regime's willingness to open the political space turned into a strong disagreement with some members of the so-called middle generation. As to those who continued with the Brotherhood, they soon discovered the limits of possible reform. While these members experienced a flourishing in their media profiles in 2005, the reality was that they were only free to offer nontraditional views given international pressure for change. Once pressure subsided, they were crushed by conservatives, who internally had informed members of the Brotherhood that the reform wing's view did not represent the Brotherhood. Tawfik El Shawy had predicted the futility of their efforts, noting that "reformers cannot breathe within the Brotherhood. Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh believes he can reform and is trying to gather the middle generation like Ibrahim El Zaafarany and others all of them living in an illusion that will never be achieved. The group that has stolen the Brotherhood is doing its task successfully in withdrawing all the files that Aboul Fetouh was responsible for and Aboul Fetouh now sits in the Brotherhood without any task, I think he will wake up one day from the dream of reform to discover that the Brotherhood train has left him and left him alone."⁵⁷⁰ In 2009 Mohamed Habib and Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh were not reelected to the Guidance Council as the Mahmoud Ezzat and Khairat Al Shater alliance took complete control of the movement with Saad El Katatni and Mohamed Morsi serving as their enforcers.⁵⁷¹ After the revolution, Aboul Fetouh would be expelled from the Brotherhood.

Was the fight over theological disagreements, political choices or organizational control? All three theories have their supporters. It is certainly true that the bitterness of the fight with their former colleagues has created over time numerous political disagreements and a few theological ones. Those who left highlight a number of problems they had with the Brotherhood: the method of choosing its General Guide, the question of forming a political party, the relationship with the International Muslim Brotherhood, the control of the Special Apparatus over the organization, its position on women, its position on democracy, its lack of acceptance of others, its secrecy, its lack of any self criticism or

assessment despite its record of failure, its lack of any internal mechanisms of democracy, its exclusive claim to representing Islam, its state of stagnation, the weakness of its internal upbringing and teaching, its lack of ability to produce qualified members instead resorting to enforcers and obedient weak members, its weakness in addressing non-members, its lack of transparency, its obsession with what benefits the organization, and its tendency to drive any of its members with serious intellect outside its ranks.⁵⁷²

Given the treatment he endured at the hands of his former colleagues, Abu El'ela Mady offered a severe criticism of the Brotherhood. Among his long list of Brotherhood problems, he criticized its failure in dealing with Gamal Abdel Nasser and for knowing what it did not want but not what it wanted. He also complained of the group's lack of long-term strategic thinking and its reactive approach to events and circumstances as they emerged. He accused the group of mixing what serves Islam with what serves the organization, and complained that it operated under the assumption that the world was devoid of any idea and living in emptiness that Islam would fill and thus failed to grasp the complexity of the world. Lastly, Mady attacked the Brotherhood for failing to acknowledge that it was a political party, its lack of institutionalization of leadership, and its failure to open up to other political currents.⁵⁷³ As Hassan Hathout summed up, "another issue is the role of power in implementing the *da'wah* ... many believe ... that taking over power is enough to reach the desired goal. The government would issue orders and decree laws and everything will be as best as it can. This belief is utterly wrong for the government cannot issue a law for love or chastity or honesty in doing the job. The government can declare that the rule is Islamic and people are in one place and Islam is in another People have to be in a state of Islam for us to expect that the laws of Islam would succeed in them."⁵⁷⁴

The Wasat Party's relationship with the Brotherhood underwent a transformation after the Egyptian revolution. After years of contentious struggle, the Wasat Party allied itself completely with the Brotherhood during Mohamed Morsi short presidency and after the military coup.⁵⁷⁵

The Egyptian Revolution

The outbreak of the Egyptian revolution and its quick success came as a complete surprise to all of the country's political forces and especially its Islamists. Of all the methodologies adopted by Islamists to change the status quo, not one Islamist current, with the exception of Rifa'i Sorour, had contemplated the idea of a mass uprising as a means for change. It is a testimony to the strength of Egyptian Islamism that it not only managed to develop a response quickly but more importantly to dominate the revolution's aftermath. This does not mean that Islamists of various stripes did not take part in the 18 days that brought the end to Hosni Mubarak's 30-year rule. On the contrary, Islamists were at the forefront of those demonstrating at Tahrir Square. The Muslim Brotherhood played an instrumental role in defending the square from pro-Mubarak attackers. Many young Salafis, already radicalized and having rejected their Sheikhs' cautious approach, were in Tahrir Square from the inception of the revolution.⁵⁷⁶

The Islamist response to the revolution varied considerably among Islamist currents. After its initial hesitation to endorse what appeared to all observers and even participants as a risky adventure, the Muslim Brotherhood fully endorsed the uprising and used its extensive organization to help it succeed. On the other hand, Jihadis were completely absent from the scene. They neither supported the uprising nor condemned it. Instead they were simply taken aback by the power of street protests to bring about change. In between these two poles stood the various Salafi currents, divided in their response between those who condemned the uprising, those who switched from rejection to supporting the revolution as events unfolded, those who were completely silent, those who took half steps, and those who completely endorsed it.

Probably the most enthusiastic Islamist current that participated in the revolution from its inception was Cairo's Activist Salafis⁵⁷⁷ and the small circle of Revolutionary Salafis forming around Sheikh Rifa'i Sorour. Not only were these Salafi youth in Tahrir Square from the outset, but so were their Sheikhs, lending support to demonstrators and encouraging people to come out.

In a book whose introduction was written by Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, Cairo's Activist Salafis attempted to justify their support for the revolution in response to criticism by other Salafis, especially Madkhalis. While many of the Salafis advocated patience in the face of injustice, "the line that separates between the obligation to be patient on injustice and the obligation to rebel against it is if the negatives of the injustice outweigh the negatives of rebellion." Moreover, the situation should be judged by ability. The rejection of rebellion by scholars is limited to rebellion by the sword. "The word rebelling as used by scholars means rebelling with the sword and what is meant by the word ruler is he who protects *shari'a* and the borders of Muslims and implements *shari'a* punishments and not he who works against these." Hence, "demonstrations are not considered rebellion because they fall under the topic of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong with the tongue and this is permitted, no disagreement about it." In all cases, Mubarak is not the legitimate ruler that scholars warned of rebelling against. "Peaceful demonstrations are not considered a rebellion against the ruler and the tyrant

(Mubarak) is not the legitimate ruler that scholars had talked about,” so “the criteria of a legitimate ruler do not apply to the deposed president, on which disagreement may be had on rebelling against him, for he has no oath, and has adopted secularism.” Mubarak was an unbeliever because he ruled by other than what God has revealed and hence the revolution against him was justified. “Among the issues on which there is a consensus, is that rebellion against a Muslim ruler if he becomes an apostate is an obligation, and that permitting what there is a consensus on prohibiting such as adultery or drunkenness, and legislating what God has not permitted is an act of unbelief and apostasy, and that if in the world there is a just government that implements *shari’a* and an unjust government that does not implement it, a Muslim is obligated to support the first as much as he can.” Mohamed Abdel Maksoud was adamant that “the tyrant did not derive his rule from an Islamic *shari’a* basis and did not derive his legitimacy from the people choosing him.” In response to Madkhali and Scholarly criticisms of the sins committed by revolutionaries, the author argued that “the fact that there are sins among the protestors and that they have not come out raising the banner of Islam is not a cause for not supporting the revolution for people will be judged according to their intention.”⁵⁷⁸

The author also attempted to justify the support for the revolution by citing historical examples. He argued that “rebellious against rulers is an issue on which *Ahl El Sunna* disagreed.” “Objecting to something that is wrong by raising one’s voice is the practice of the Companions.” Zubayr Ibn Al Awam, Talha Ibn Obaidullah, and Aisha went out on the day of the battle of the camel in a demonstration demanding punishment for the murderers of Uthman.* Both Hussein Ibn Ali and Abdallah Ibn Al Zubayr rebelled against an unjust ruler, and no scholar had ever dared to declare Imam Hussein an unbeliever for his rebellion. The author pointed out that this was not limited to the Companions. Abdel Rahman Ibn El Ash’ath and Sa’id Ibn Jubayr rebelled against Al Hajjaj, and Imam Abu Hanifa collected money for Zayd Ibn Ali’s revolt and issued a fatwa that people had to support him and fight with him. Moreover, Imam Malik Ibn Anas† permitted people to give an oath to Mohamed Ibn Abdallah (El Nafs El Zakeya) although they had given an oath to Al Mansur. He faults Madkhalis for taking the words of El Nawawy, Ibn Hojr, and El Tahawy and claiming that it is the consensus of *Ahl El Sunna*, although El Tahawy was a Hanafi‡. Ibn Hanbal argued that changing by the hand is not necessary through the sword or weapons.⁵⁷⁹

The Salafi Call’s position toward the revolution has been described as active engagement.⁵⁸⁰ The Salafi Call has traditionally been wary of demonstrations. Yasser Burhami argued that “demonstrations are born in environments and societies that are drastically different from our environment and society,” and that “they usually have a negative result on Islamists.” The results of rebellion are usually strife and violence with “people moved by false slogans that do not comply with *shari’a*.”⁵⁸¹ Salafis rejected the calls for change initiated by Mohamed El Baradei and other political leaders, pointing out that these initiatives for change have an un-Islamic nature. The

* The claim follows the traditional Sunni view that neither side in the Battle of the Camel wanted to fight the other.

† Founder of Maliki School of jurisprudence. Dominant school in North Africa and Sub Saharan Africa

‡ One of the four schools of jurisprudence. Founded by Abu Hanifa (699-767). Dominant school in the Levant, Turkey, Pakistan and former Soviet Union. In Egypt it is widespread in the Delta.

Salafi Call rejected “calls for change for the sake of change,” as change “has to have *shari’a* constraints on the process.” “Democracy is not the solution, *shari’a* is.”⁵⁸² The Salafi Call was particularly concerned by Mohamed El Baradei, who indicated his willingness to change article two of the Egyptian Constitution*, his statements that a state should have no religion, his visits to churches, and the supposed support he enjoyed among expatriate Copts. As Sa’id Abdel ‘Azeem argued, “They all vary in how bad they are as long as they do not raise Islam as a methodology of life.”⁵⁸³

The Salafi Call’s “position towards the revolution developed and progressed as events changed.”⁵⁸⁴ Before the revolution, the Salafi Call issued an official statement urging its followers not to take part in the January 25 demonstrations.⁵⁸⁵ The fatwa was written by Yasser Burhami.⁵⁸⁶ His call was ignored by many rank and file members who participated in the revolution in its first days, especially after January 28. In the immediate years preceding the revolution, many young Salafis were beginning to defy their Sheikhs and take part in demonstrations in support of Christian women whom they claimed had converted to Islam but were kidnapped by the Church.⁵⁸⁷ The Salafi Movement for Reform (HAFS) issued a statement on the January 18 urging Salafis to join the planned demonstrations.⁵⁸⁸

As the revolution unfolded, the Salafi Call began organizing popular street committees to protect property from thieves and fill the security vacuum. By the first days of February, the Salafi Call indicated its support for the idea of change while warning of chaos.⁵⁸⁹ Finally on February 8, just three days before Mubarak’s resignation, and in anticipation of the upcoming battle, the Salafi Call organized a massive gathering attended by tens of thousands in which it warned against any attempt to touch Egypt’s Islamic identity.⁵⁹⁰ After the revolution’s success, the Salafi Call attempted to defend its position by arguing that the demonstrations were unplanned and without a clear agenda. The Salafi Call also contended that had Salafis participated, the Mubarak regime would have used them as a scarecrow to frighten the West and remove any international pressure against the regime’s crackdown on demonstrators.⁵⁹¹ The Salafi Call was thus not only claiming to have acted wisely but also claiming that the success of the revolution was in large part due to its restraint.

Given the lack of a collective organization in Scholarly Salafism, the various Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs adopted strikingly different positions toward the revolution. First, there were those entirely opposed to the revolution, such as Ansar El Sunna, Mustafa El ‘Adawy, and Mahmoud El Masry. Moreover, Mohamed Hussein Yacoub publicly urged the protestors to leave Tahrir Square. By contrast, Abu Ishaq El Howeiny chose to remain silent throughout the 18 days.⁵⁹² Lastly, Mohamed Hassan’s position toward the revolution could at best be described as confused.⁵⁹³ Before the revolution started on January 22, 2011, Hassan rejected the calls for revolution.⁵⁹⁴ He had argued in 2003 that protests should not be conflated with a methodology for change for the nation.⁵⁹⁵ During the revolution, Hassan initially asked protestors to leave the square.⁵⁹⁶ However, by February 9, as the Mubarak regimetottered, Hassan and his family joined the

* Article Two states that Islam is the religion of the State and Arabic its official language. The Principles of Islamic Shari’a are the primary source of legislation.

protestors in Tahrir Square.⁵⁹⁷ Later, he would defend the revolution, arguing that “what happened in the revolution is not rebellion against the ruler, because what is meant by rebellion against the ruler is rebellion with weapons.”⁵⁹⁸ Hassan’s shifting position would open him for attack by other Islamists, most notably by Wagdi Ghoneim.⁵⁹⁹

The contradictory positions adopted by Scholarly Salafis towards the revolution would become quite evident in a book written by Atef Abdel Moaz Al Fayoumi in 2013. On the one hand, the author acknowledges that “people asking for their rights is legitimate.” On the other hand, he contends that demanding rights has taken place “with illegitimate means” and that they “should have instead demanded *shari’a*.” For him “change requires a complete Islamic consciousness because we see in these revolutions banners, parties, and methodologies which rebelled for change and reform but at the same time, it does not want it to be an Islamic reform.” “This revolution will not result in any meaningful benefit or effective change in the lives of people and their reality because the people raising those banners and parties have not taken the right path.” “The Islamic revival is everywhere and its seeds have been planted but it still needs nurturing and care, it needs refinement and upbringing,” but “some people are just too hasty.” The revolution has resulted in disasters such as women demonstrating, the public manifestations of Christianity in the square, and calling all those who died at the hands of the regime martyrs. All in all, the revolution has been planned by the enemies of Islam to divide the nation.⁶⁰⁰

The Madkhali reaction to the revolution was one of complete opposition.⁶⁰¹ The very idea of a rebellion against the ruler is rejected by Madkhalis, who view the ruler as legitimate. The fundamental belief of Madkhalis is that it is forbidden to rebel against unjust rulers for a number of reasons: fear of dividing the Muslim nation, fear of strife and destruction in life and property, and a general distrust of mob action.⁶⁰² As Mohamed Sa’id Raslan argued, “The concept of revolution is not from Islam.”⁶⁰³ Given that rebellion against rulers does not serve the interests of Islam but instead its enemies, the only explanation for the revolution for Madkhalis could be that “the revolution is made by Jews and Freemasons.”⁶⁰⁴

The Madkhali position toward the revolution was articulated in a 500-page book written by Mahmoud Abdel Hamid El Khouli. As is always the case with Madkhali writings, the book is distinguished by its sharp tone and insults toward all those who do not adopt the same position as Madkhalis. It says not one of the other Salafis “is a divine scholar or a Salafi student of knowledge on the methodology of Salafism.” The book attempts to answer 52 points raised by other Salafis in support of the revolution. These points include that the revolution is a new phenomenon and hence the Salaf have no position on it; demonstrations are not a form of rebellion since they are peaceful; demonstrations are a means of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong; the ruler himself allowed demonstrations; what happened was God’s will; demonstrations are legitimate means to end injustice; demonstrations resulted in great results; and, that the ruler is an unbeliever for ruling by other than what God has revealed.⁶⁰⁵

The author responds to each claim systematically and point by point. He argues that the revolution is not a new phenomenon; whether demonstrations are peaceful or not does

not change *shari'a's* position toward them; the ruler allowing something does not change its religious prohibition; and God's will has nothing to do with these events. Furthermore, if demonstrations were permissible, the Salaf would have done it, but the Salaf have never demonstrated. The Salaf's response to injustice is patience, and they have prescribed for us means by which to deal with unjust rulers (offering private advice). Answering other Salafis who cite the examples of Ali Ibn Abi Taleb and Al Hussein's rebellion, he answers that while some of the Companions were involved in *el fetna al kobra**, most of the Companions were not, and both Ibn Omar and Ibn Al Abbas advised Al Hussein not to rebel. He highlights the prohibited things that took place during the revolution and its aftermath such as the mixing of the sexes, Christian participation in the revolution, demonstrators playing music, chaos, anarchy, loss of life and property, destruction, and lack of security. The book cites the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as proof that all these things are planned by Jews. The author further argues that demonstrations and revolutions are heresies and are an imitation of unbelievers and hence in conflict with the concept of Loyalty and Disavowal. Those demonstrations have taken place under un-Islamic banners and slogans. Finally, he argues that there is nothing in Islam called a legitimate and an illegitimate ruler. Islam only knows two kinds of rulers: a Muslim ruler and an unbeliever. Islam has clear rules on allowing a rebellion against an unbelieving ruler: that clear unbelief is proven, that there is an ability to remove him, that there is an ability to replace him with a Muslim, that the rebellion does not result in a worse evil than the evil of keeping him in place, and finally that the rebels are personally self-sufficient. All other Salafis have deviated from the right path due to their desire to gather instead of to divide, while clear lines and divisions over who truly belongs to the Salafis methodology are required.⁶⁰⁶

* The Islamic term used to describe the first civil war in Islam that followed the assassination of the third Caliph Uthman.

The Aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution

The fall of the Mubarak regime unleashed unprecedented changes in Egypt as the open political and media environment allowed all previously non-participatory political forces to compete. To a large extent, just as the outside world and Egypt's non-Islamist political groups were discovering the complexity of the Islamist scene for the first time, the various Islamist currents were discovering themselves, their fellow Islamists, and the rest of the country. A wall of separation between two separate universes—Islamist and non-Islamist—had finally collapsed, and the two universes in which the Egyptian people lived side by side clashed in a dramatic manner.

The country witnessed an upheaval the likes of which it has not seen in its modern history as a President went from palace to prison and his replacement from prison to palace and back to prison again. The three years of excitement and disappointment would leave a lasting impact not only on the country, but on its Islamist currents. During this period, Islamists were confronted with numerous challenges and questions that further complicated their relationships with yesterday's allies, becoming today's enemies, and tomorrow's allies. The debate was a replay of pre-revolution inter-Islamist fights over the question of ruling by other than what God has revealed, the correct methodology for change, political participation, and their view of the Muslim Brotherhood. But this time, these issues were not just intellectual abstractions but had profound practical implications for the future of Egypt. Intra-Islamist warfare, while hardly calm in the preceding years, took a turn for the worse as Islamist currents found themselves in heated competition for power in an open public space.

The March Referendum

Two immediate tasks confronted the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which was entrusted by the departing president with managing the country: returning the country to a state of normalcy and charting a plan for the transitional phase. On the second question, the issue boiled down to two options: move quickly with elections, leaving the task of writing the new constitution to the elected parliament, or write a new constitution first and then hold elections. Uninterested in governing the country for a prolonged turbulent period, SCAF opted for the first option. It formed a constitutional committee, which included a Muslim Brotherhood member and was headed by independent Islamist thinker Tarek El Bishry. The committee came up with a few amendments to the 1971 constitution that increased democratic safeguards and left the process of writing the new constitution to the elected parliament. The proposed amendments to the existing constitution were scheduled for a vote on March 19.

While there were no substantial disagreements on the amendments, the referendum turned into the first full scale war between Islamists and non-Islamists and broke apart the revolutionary coalition that brought down Hosni Mubarak. Non-Islamists greatly feared that a quick transition that left the task of writing the new constitution to the elected parliament would greatly favor the Muslim Brotherhood and thus opposed the roadmap. The Brotherhood naturally favored the referendum and the quick transition.

However, the force that would lead the battle over the referendum and emerge as a leading political force, much to the shock of non-Islamists, was the awakening giant: Salafis.

Even prior to the fall of Mubarak, as the revolution was still battling to topple the dictator, Salafis had begun to mobilize their respective bases for the coming battle over the constitution. The Salafi Call led the charge, organizing a massive rally on February 8, 2011 that included its founding Sheikhs leading more than 100,000 people. During the rally, Salafi Sheikhs expressed their fear that Copts and secularists would use the revolution to remove the second article of the Egyptian constitution.⁶⁰⁷ While the Salafi Call led the charge, even Sheikhs not known for their political engagement participated, including the Scholarly Salafi Sheikh Mohamed El Debiessy. During the rally, he stressed Egypt's identity as an Islamic state and *shari'a* as a reference point for its constitution.⁶⁰⁸

The Salafi Call's battle rally was soon adopted by others. Scholarly Salafi Sheikh Mohamed Hussein Yacoub on February 13 warned anyone who dared touch article two of the constitution that it would be over his dead body.⁶⁰⁹ On February 18, another massive rally was held in Mansoura in which Mohamed Hassan spoke. Hassan encouraged Salafis to become politically active⁶¹⁰ and promoted the constitutional referendum.⁶¹¹ The newly formed Ulama Shura Council released its first statement on March 10 urging people to vote yes on the referendum and warning of attempts to touch article two.⁶¹² But not all Salafis were completely behind the rousing call to action. While supporting the yes vote, Cairo Activist Salafi Sheikh Mohamed Abdel Maksoud criticized the Salafi Call for waging a battle over a nonexistent issue, as no one was actually trying to remove article two.⁶¹³ Abu Ishaq El Howeiny declared that he would not be voting on the referendum but that those who were voting yes were not sinning.⁶¹⁴ Both Madkhalis and Jihadis did not take part in what amounted to full scale war. The result of the referendum, a 77% yes vote, was an impressive demonstration of Salafi mobilization powers, and an indication of their electoral potential. The day the results were announced, Mohamed Hussin Yacoub called them Ghazwat El Sanadeeq (The Invasion of the Boxes).⁶¹⁵

Political Participation

Even before the referendum battle had taken shape, Islamists were confronted with the question of their future role in a changing Egypt. The Wasat Party finally received its official recognition on February 19 and by that date both the Muslim Brotherhood and Gama'a Islamiya had indicated their intention to form political parties.⁶¹⁶ While the Brotherhood and Wasat's decisions were a natural development of their political inclinations before the revolution, Gama'a Islamiya's decision was the only option available for a group that had renounced violence and was still intent on playing a role in politics. An early foreshadowing of this development, missed by most observers, was the imprisoned 'Abboud El Zomor's praise of the Brotherhood as a group that survived and flourished despite state repression.⁶¹⁷ The real question, however, was how the largest pool of Egyptian Islamists, the Salafis, envisioned their future role.

In the massive rally held in Mansoura on February 18, Mohamed Hassan made a striking statement. He demanded that Sheikhs come out of their isolation and guide the youth. "We should not be passive. I ask our Sheikhs to come together and theorize to bring our youth out of the strife and confusion that they have lived through in the past days. If we are not now present on the ground of the arena to guide our youth and sons, then when will we be present?"⁶¹⁸ Furthermore, Hassan called upon his fellow Salafi Sheikhs to review many of their previous positions on political participation⁶¹⁹ and running for office.⁶²⁰

Such a major decision required discussion among Salafi Sheikhs and collaboration to chart their future role. This became especially necessary in the first weeks after the revolution and especially in the immediate aftermath of the referendum, which witnessed a media offensive against Salafis who were accused of destroying Sufi tombs and attacking Christians.⁶²¹ Yacoub's "Invasion of the Boxes" comments and old videos of Abu Ishaq El Howeiny suggesting that Jihad and taking female slaves and concubines could be a suitable means to solving Egypt's economic crisis were immediately seized upon in a now more open media environment.⁶²² Two initiatives were immediately undertaken. The Sorouri current, represented by Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim, formed an umbrella organization called the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform. It gathered Islamists of all stripes except Jihadis and Madkhalis, and included among its members the Muslim Brotherhood's Khairat Al Shater, Gama'a Islamiya's Tarek El Zomor, Ansar El Sunna's Abdallah Shaker and Gamal El Marakby, Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs Mohamed Hassan, Ahmed El Naqeeb, Wahid Bali, Mazen El Sersawy, and Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, Cairo Activist Salafi Sheikhs Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, Sayed El 'Araby, and Nashaat Ibrahim, Damanhour Activist Salafi Sheikhs 'Atiya 'Adlan and Hesham El Okda, the Salafi Call's Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, Ahmed Farid and Yasser Burhami, and Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, Rifa'i Sorour, Safwat Hegazi and Ragheb El Sirgany.⁶²³ The second initiative at creating a unified front was more homogenous. Initiated by Ansar El Sunna, the Ulama Shura Council included nine Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs and the Salafi Call's Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem.⁶²⁴ Its first statement on March 10 argued that while Sheikhs should not themselves run in elections, political participation was permitted, and voters should pick the presidential candidate closest to *shari'a*.⁶²⁵

Political participation in general and supporting Islamist candidates is one thing; running for office and forming political parties is an entirely different issue. After the revolution, Salafis were confronted with a tough choice: either support the Brotherhood's party or form their own.⁶²⁶ Both options were hard to swallow. On the one hand, Salafis did not view the Brotherhood as one of their own and were highly critical of the Brotherhood's theological concessions. They feared if left to its own devices, it would be tempted into even more theological compromises.⁶²⁷ On the other hand, Salafis were adamant in their rejection of democracy.⁶²⁸ Initially, Mohamed Hassan had argued in March that Salafis should vote for Brotherhood candidates in parliament,⁶²⁹ a view that Ahmed El Naqeeb continued to espouse. Eventually, the openness of the public square⁶³⁰ and the fear of secularists attempting to turn Egypt into a secular country⁶³¹ led Salafis to form their own parties. A number of Salafi parties sprang from the ground, including Nour (Light), Asala (Authenticity), Fadila (Virtue),

Islah (Reform), Masr El Bena'a (Egypt Building), and Al Islah wa Al Nahda (Reform and Renaissance).⁶³²

The Salafi decision displeased the Brotherhood, which greatly feared both the Salafi's power and the antagonism the Salafi discourse created among Egypt's non-Islamists. The latter greatly complicated the Brotherhood's plans and the Salafi relationship with the Brotherhood, since it added political competition to their already intense theological disputes.⁶³³ This heated competition developed the most in the Brotherhood's relationship with the largest organized Salafi body: the Salafi Call and its Nour Party. In contrast, the Brotherhood's relationship with Cairo's Activist Salafis improved dramatically,⁶³⁴ as they tried to bridge the gap between the Brotherhood and Salafis.⁶³⁵ As Cairo's Activist Salafis argued, "We are confronted with enormous challenges that require the unity of all Muslim ranks on top of which are the Muslim Brotherhood that are the men of this phase and Salafis that are the conscious of the nation and Sufis that have carried the banner of Jihad before in Libya represented in Omar El Mokhtar."⁶³⁶

The decision by Activist Salafis to form political parties ignited a fierce debate among Salafi currents and individuals in which many of the old criticisms of democracy were reiterated. The fiercest criticism of the decision came from the two ends of the Salafi spectrum: Madkhalis and Jihadis.

Mohamed Sa'id Raslan did not mince words in his attack on Salafi political parties and especially Nour. "They have torn the nation apart, became analogous to idolaters, divided the nation, and called for partisanship, which leads to hatred and competition in things other than the afterlife. Then comes the interest of the *da'wah*, as if it is an idol that is worshiped instead of God for them to give up all the constants of the nation, even the constants of tenets, with the excuse that this is in the interest of *da'wah* and to establish religion." Talaat Zahran argued that the very implementation of *shari'a* was not possible, given international circumstances. He rhetorically asked: "Can you cancel the peace treaty with Israel? Can you cut the hands of a Western thief?" According to Hesham El Beialy, the decision to participate actually helped secularists. "All you did is that you gave the secular, liberal, and democratic scene an Islamist cover ... Your harm is more than them (secularists) because they used to call for these beliefs without dressing them in *shari'a*. Hence all people knew that it was secular, but you now by participating with their laws have given it an Islamic cover." Instead, as Talaat Zahran argued, "It was better for you to remain in your mosque and continue with your *da'wah* and leave this. This talk is not permissible and against *shari'a*. There is no one in Egypt who will implement *shari'a* because in truth the Egyptian people, in their majority, do not want to implement God's *shari'a* ... People have to be brought up on *shari'a* through a long term continuous *da'wah*."⁶³⁷

On the Jihadi end of the spectrum, Mohamed El Zawahiri and Ahmed 'Ashoush led the attack on Salafi political parties. Al Zawahiri declared, "We believe that working within this secular constitution that exists in the country is not permitted and entering those parties and elections we believe has many *shari'a* violations."⁶³⁸ In his tract, *The Bitter Harvest of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis*, 'Ashoush restates the Jihadi position on democracy and political participation, arguing: "Elections in principle are prohibited,

and one is not permitted to participate in them because they are based on an idolatry foundation.” “Any Muslim ruler, no matter how pure his intention, will not be able to remove the idolatry of legislation and laws and change the political system that is based on the concept of the social contract.” He thus concludes, “The road of democracy and elections is a closed avenue in the face of Islam and only produces idolatry that Islam cannot affirm.” He attacks those Salafis who formed political parties for fooling the people. “We can accuse in this specific people who took advantage of their religious influence and the trust of the youth of the Islamic movement in them ... Those people have wasted the opportunity of implementing the Islamic *shari’a*, bringing down the secular system, and establishing the state of Islam. For they worked on stopping the revolution and activated political work by calling for voting on the constitutional amendments and calling for parliamentary and presidential elections.”⁶³⁹

‘Ashoush does not accept their claims of being forced to enter politics to write an Islamic constitution. “They justified it at the time claiming that you could not leave politics and ruling to the secularists and that they would form a committee to write an Islamic constitution. We told them at the time that they will not be able to do so and that they were not being honest in what they claimed and time has proven us right.”⁶⁴⁰ He countered their claims of seeking to implement *shari’a* gradually by arguing that for them, gradually meant delaying implementation. In reality, it meant obstructing implementation, as they accepted a secular constitution and included secularists in the constitutional committee. In all cases, the political process has not achieved any tangible results as the constitutional committee and parliament were disbanded, and both Khairat Al Shater and Hazem Salah Abu Ismail were barred from running for the presidential elections.⁶⁴¹ ‘Ashoush reserves most of his anger for his former friend, Yasser Burhami, “The grave crime of Sheikh Burhami and his party is their acceptance of political work through parties based on the conditions that the constitution and the parties’ law have set. The most important of these is forbidding political action on a religious basis and forbidding establishing a religious state, hence the party has nothing left but a secular state.”⁶⁴²

Not all Jihadis shared that critique. Not only did the Gama’a Islamiya put its internal house in order by kicking out Nageh Ibrahim and Karam Zohdi from its leadership and forming a political party⁶⁴³, but even some former members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad began considering forming parties of their own. In an interview, released Jihadi leader Osama Kassem acknowledged that “Jihadis are divided. Most of them reject political participation as it will force them to offer concessions on fundamental theological issues such as democracy and subject *shari’a* to the ballot box.” Yet he argued that “We have to participate because revolution created a vacuum. If we don’t act, liberals and secularists will fill it.”⁶⁴⁴ The Jihadi decision was complicated by the fact that while Gama’a Islamiya was a unified organization, Egyptian Islamic Jihad had been historically divided into cells and groups that were often antagonistic to one another. That made their ability to take a unified stance impossible. Kamel offered his support for the Fadila Party and a reluctant endorsement of presidential candidate Hazem Salah Abu Ismail for the lack of any better option.⁶⁴⁵

The theological problems for Jihadis were evident as Kamel stated that “there are some issues that we can be silent about, but we should not attribute them to religion,” such as accepting Coptic members in a party or not stating that it is a religious party.⁶⁴⁶ Those Jihadis who rejected the political route were left lamenting the fate of their fallen comrades. As Galal Aboul Fetouh writes: “Karam Zohdi used to say, ‘Blessed is he who carried the gun and did not go to the ballot boxes.’ Today he has become a preacher for the ballot boxes and forgot the road of the gun. Sheikh Mohamed Abdel Maksoud used to say, ‘If *shari’a* is implemented because a majority in parliament has approved its implementation and the constitution states that the rule is for the majority, this means that the constitution is now ruling over God’s *shari’a* and this is clear unbelief by the consensus of Muslims.’ Today the Sheikh has become a religious godfather for the Asala Party and entered into what he yesterday was calling a clear unbelief by the consensus of Muslims. Sheikh Yasser Burhami yesterday was saying, ‘It is not permitted to offer the Islamic *shari’a* to the people for them to say whether it is to be implemented or not.’ Today the sheikh became a guide to the Nour Party, calling on believers to vote for the party members to enter the parliament to which *shari’a* will be presented for them to vote on whether to implement it or not. Oh Sheikhs, return to your senses, return to speaking what is right.”⁶⁴⁷

While the criticism by Madkhalis and Jihadis was the harshest in its rejection of forming political parties, the wide gap that separated them from Activist Salafis meant that their followers were not greatly impacted by such criticism. More problematic was the rejection that came from some Scholarly Salafis. The Ulama Shura Council declared that “Political participation is one of the means of empowering *da’wah* and spreading it among the segments of society,”⁶⁴⁸ and many Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs supported Islamist candidates and parties.⁶⁴⁹ But other Sheikhs were less enthusiastic about party politics, with some adopting a strong rejectionist position. Abu Ishaq El Howeiny shied away from criticizing the Nour Party and allowed his disciple Mohamed Saad Al Azhary to be appointed to the constitutional committee by the Nour Party. But he insisted that “the preacher should not join a political party.”⁶⁵⁰ Osama Abdel ‘Azeem urged his followers not to join political parties,⁶⁵¹ arguing that democracy is contradictory to religion and that anyone who voted was sinning.⁶⁵² He insisted that the methodology of change remained to change oneself.⁶⁵³ Samy El ‘Araby argued that democracy is apostasy⁶⁵⁴ and attacked the very idea of forming political parties.⁶⁵⁵ He attacked the Nour Party⁶⁵⁶ and called them innovators and heretics and no longer Salafis for nominating women on their electoral lists.⁶⁵⁷

He was not alone. Mustafa El ‘Adawy similarly urged his followers not to join Islamist parties, though he added that those who did were not sinning.⁶⁵⁸ “After looking into the parties’ law in Egypt, I found that the parties’ law includes many violations of Islamic *shari’a*, including respect for the democratic system. That democratic system is a system of unbelief that came to us from the unbelieving West ... so I advise my brothers to stay away from those parties.”⁶⁵⁹ Madyan Ibrahim argued that “those who are in the idolatry councils now that claim to be Salafis, Sunnis, Qutbists, Jihad, and the Gama’a Islamiya and their likes—most of what they talk about now is implementing some of the *Hudood*, and we have not heard that any of them said we want to destroy the idolatry graves and implement the apostasy verdict on apostates ... Because they have not reached this

idolatry parliament except through the idolatry religion of Obama, which is democracy. Their empowerment in practice and not through *shari'a* is strife and punishment from God so that He distinguishes between the good and the bad." He simply called them secularists. "The devil has tricked the people of this non-religious party and made them take a good beautiful name for their secular party to fool the masses ... and lead them to fall into idolatry and unbelief and fall out of Islam."⁶⁶⁰

The most critical of the decisions to form political parties was Ahmed El Naqeeb, who devoted dozens of lectures to arguing against political participation⁶⁶¹ and attacking the Nour Party for its concessions and acceptance of democracy.⁶⁶² Naqeeb even argued that if one had to choose between Salafis and secularists, they should choose secularists because that would mean clarity in distinguishing between the two camps and force Salafis to return to God and the right methodology of change,⁶⁶³ purification and upbringing.⁶⁶⁴ Mostly, however, he preferred leaving politics to the Muslim Brotherhood. "Why all of this? Because we are afraid that secularists would control the country and write a constitution that puts restrictions on *da'wah*? The answer: give your vote to those who are older than the Salafi partisans in the door of concessions and intellectual fall (Brotherhood). Imagine that this happens. What is the harm? God has willed so. Let us be patient and continue as we were before January's events, even if we are jailed or killed. The nation will rise to defend us, and we will be the nation's leaders who did not surrender their religion or their *da'wah*."⁶⁶⁵ He goes through the long list of mistakes committed by the Nour Party: "a series of concessions; accepting the parties' law; ignoring the issue of the Christian sisters; ignoring the issue of building churches in the land of Islam; accepting democracy and praising it; accepting Christians in the Salafi party; accepting women; nominating women; giving a fatwa that the women in Niqab can show their faces if circumstances require; calling on forming a coalition in parliament on other than religious lines." He rhetorically asks, "Is this your Salafism? No, oh God, we do not know this Salafism ... the Salafism of partisan fanaticism that implements loyalty and disavowal on the party."⁶⁶⁶

A Scholarly Salafi author summed up their criticism of forming political parties: it was a violation of the Quran and *Sunna*; it is an innovation; the concept of Loyalty and Disavowal is implemented over the party; it forces concessions; it is contrary to *shari'a*, and the legitimate and right way to establish the State of Islam; parties are the creation of the enemies of Islam; and the parties law forbids religious parties and forces them to include non-Muslims among their ranks. Given the nature of Scholarly Salafism, the author stated clearly that criticizing the choice of some Salafis to form parties does not mean insulting them. Participation as a concept was permissible, as Ibn Baz, Ibn Al Uthaymeen, and Al Albani allowed it. In the Egyptian context, participation may be permissible under certain conditions such as: "the intention of working to counter the secular onslaught on Egypt's Islamic identity; clear unbelief in democracy as a principle; attempting to establish the rule of Islam through parliaments and standing against issuing any law that is contradictory to the rules of Islam; party members having a clear religious authority whom they follow; and finally the immediate withdrawal from parliament if participation proved to be useless."⁶⁶⁷

Confronted with such criticism, Activist Salafis who chose to endorse forming political parties had to defend their position theologically. Abdel Monem El Shahat argued that the Nour Party was not like any other party since it was an ideological party. He summed up its ideology as “the obligation of *shari’a* reference in all matters of life; working with what is possible from *shari’a* while working to remove the obstacles on what is not possible; and explaining that working with what is possible does not mean being silent on the rest of what is demanded (the full *shari’a*) or changing it or stating it is not from religion contrary to those (Brotherhood) who make the possible and the demanded one thing and thus claim that what they could not achieve is not from religion, besides volunteering to do prohibited things as a courtesy to others.”⁶⁶⁸

He highlighted that the last point was “what distinguishes the Salafi political discourse.”⁶⁶⁹ This point would be repeatedly stressed and used as effective campaign rhetoric by the Nour Party against the Brotherhood.⁶⁷⁰ As Yousry Hammad summed up: “We want a state that connects earth with heaven.”⁶⁷¹ That argument however hardly answered the critics. Yasser Burhami offered his rebuttal to those who criticized the acceptance of democracy by arguing that “the democracy whose mechanisms we accepted is disciplined by *shari’a*. We do not accept that the rule is to anyone but Allah.”⁶⁷² Burhami attempted to create a distinction between democracy as a philosophy and as a means. “We accept the democratic means but not the democratic ideology and theory as the governing theory of politics.” “We do not accept the philosophical idea behind democracy that the people are the source of legislation. We do not accept the unbelief in democracy.” He noted that “We accept elections despite the wrongs in them because they are less evil than leaving the scene for secularists and liberals.”⁶⁷³ Cairo’s Activist Salafis echoed the last sentiment, arguing that they accepted forming parties “to confront secularism that does not retain anything from Islam, for it does not implement *shari’a* and does not give the God of *shari’a* any appreciation or respect, that seeks to separate men from their God’s *shari’a*, and that takes the nation outside of their servitude to their God to the servitude of man.”⁶⁷⁴

The burden of defending the decision theologically fell on the shoulders of Sorouris. In three books, Sorouri authors offered the most concise defense of the idea of political participation after the revolution and forming political parties. Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim emphasized the jurisprudence of reality, arguing that participation brings benefits to *da’wah*.⁶⁷⁵ Another Sorouri similarly argued that Islamists have to deal with reality and not theory and that “dealing with this procedure in this phase without acknowledging all its details is part of the genus of balancing between benefits and evils and choosing the less evil option.” Likewise, he argued that “entering parliaments is one of the most important ways of changing *Jahiliyyah* regimes into an Islamic regime.” “Parliament is a larger platform than mosques to call people to religion,” and “it gives us an opportunity to change people’s hearts and minds.”⁶⁷⁶

Ibrahim raised the practical argument that “by not entering parliament, we allow secularists to control them, which creates a worse outcome and great evil.”⁶⁷⁷ He cited the historical examples of the Prophet Joseph, who accepted participation in a regime that was not based on God’s law, and the ruler of Ethiopia at the time of the Prophet who was a secret Muslim but did not rule with *shari’a*.⁶⁷⁸ Mohamed Kamel added

practical arguments, stating that “if secularism is a fact that we cannot change in this phase and we have no ability to implement the pure Islamic system, then secular democracy is better than secular dictatorship.”⁶⁷⁹ “It wasn’t democracy that changed God’s *shari’a* and enforced manmade laws.” He further noted “as to the practical procedures of democracy, we have no major objection to them.” Democracy is not stagnant as its understanding changed throughout time, he said, citing the examples of Athens, where slaves were barred from voting, the enfranchisement of women worldwide, and African-Americans in the United States. He defended the decision to engage in politics on the basis that refusing to do so is a heresy separating religion from politics. “There is no doubt that removing religion from governing and limiting it to spiritual issues and one’s relationship with God is invalid and contradictory to Islam, and this is known by necessity from religion.” He noted that “calling for establishing political parties that call for the banishment of *shari’a* is forbidden even if the state of Muslims had many wrongs. But if the political system was originally based on these parties and the Islamic *da’wah* was forced to enter the political arena through the door of committing the least evil and it cannot do so unless it enters through the system of parties, our judgment then is based on looking at the balance of benefits versus evils and this differs depending on countries and circumstances.” In addition, it is important to look at the intentions of those who made the decision to form parties.⁶⁸⁰

Kamel stressed that “dealing with reality does not mean acknowledging it or approving of it,”⁶⁸¹ a view that was echoed by Ibrahim. “Joining parliament does not mean agreeing with ruling with other than what God revealed just as joining university does not mean agreeing with absence of separation of the sexes.”⁶⁸² The endorsement of forming a political party is thus not a blank check. Ibrahim stresses that Salafis are not permitted to vote and enter parliament if the goal is to work with other than what God revealed. But if the goal is to change it (man-made laws) through parliament, then it is permissible.⁶⁸³ Ibrahim stressed a number of conditions for participation: refusing the forbidden proposition of man’s right to legislate; stressing that the right to legislate belongs to God’s revelation; showing that participation does not mean approving the institutions and laws that are not based on *shari’a*; participating based on clear benefits outweighing its negatives; commitment to the concept of Loyalty and Disavowal; participating not being an alternative to the Prophetic methodology of establishing Islam; participating not resulting in the dominance of political work over *da’wah*; participating not resulting in theological concessions; and finally, that while taking the oath on the constitution adding that this is as long as it does not contradict God’s *shari’a*.⁶⁸⁴ On the other hand, Kamel argued that it is permissible to lie to get around the oath on the constitution.⁶⁸⁵ Lastly, Ibrahim stressed that those participating and those against should accept that this is a matter where disagreements are permissible and that the prohibition on forming political parties was conditioned on the state being the state of Islam.⁶⁸⁶

Dealing With the Military

For the Muslim Brotherhood, the revolution came as a welcome surprise, destroying the Mubarak regime and opening the political system. This allowed the Brotherhood for the

first time in decades not only to operate freely, but also to dream of and eventually take over the reins of the presidency and power. It also put the Brotherhood in direct confrontation with its historical nemesis, the Egyptian military.* The Brotherhood's behavior in the first period of the revolution was largely guided by its historical fears of a repetition of the 1954 scenario, where after an initial period in which it thought it could grab power, it was ruthlessly crushed by the military. The result was the development of a strategy that aimed at appeasing the military and ensuring that the crackdown would not take place. On the other hand, the Brotherhood was also aware that if left alone in the open, it would eventually be crushed by the military. As a result, the Brotherhood attempted during the first year of the revolution to keep the revolutionary coalition that had brought down Mubarak intact. The outcome of those two, seemingly conflicting objectives, was the adoption of a dual strategy of siding with the non-Islamist revolutionaries at times and joining them in their continued protests while at the same time backing off just before crossing the military's red lines. The strategy aimed at using the non-Islamists revolutionaries to pressure the military while portraying itself to the military as the only responsible and reliable partner in the country. The strategy was complicated by the emergence of Salafis as a serious threat to the Brotherhood's domination of Egyptian politics, further frightening non-Islamists in the country and forcing the Brotherhood to eventually go for broke and run a presidential candidate. This move went against its better judgment and eventually recreated the historical experience it most feared: a 1954-like military crackdown.

For different reasons, the Salafis who decided to take part in the political process such as the Nour, Asala, and Building and Development parties followed a similar approach toward the military during the transitional period. Their position was predictable given both practical considerations as new forces entering the political sphere for the first time and the non-Islamist nature of the anti-military demonstrations. More importantly, theologically, Salafis feared strife, civil conflict, and the possibility of state collapse the most. In that context, the Salafi political parties were often more averse than even the Brotherhood to endless street demonstrations. The only exception was when the military seemed to side with non-Islamists and endorsed the idea of super-constitutional principles that would protect the non-Islamist nature of the state, in which case Salafis flexed their muscles and forced the military to back off.

For Madkhalis, obedience to the current rulers, in this case the military, was a foregone conclusion.⁶⁸⁷ Similarly, Scholarly Salafis time and again condemned continuing demonstrations. Samy El 'Araby declared demonstrations impermissible,⁶⁸⁸ while Mohamed Hassan urged Egyptians to support the military.⁶⁸⁹ Ansar El Sunna called on people to stop demonstrating,⁶⁹⁰ Mustafa El 'Adawy took a public stance against strikes,⁶⁹¹ and Osama Abdel 'Azeem rejected the concept of demonstrations⁶⁹² by declaring them forbidden.⁶⁹³ Meanwhile, the Ulama Shura Council issued many statements calling on people to support the military during the transitional period⁶⁹⁴

* For an analysis of the Brotherhood's behavior during the first year of the revolution check Tadros, Samuel. "The Muslim Brotherhood after the Revolution", *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Volume 12, October 2011, available at: <http://www.hudson.org/research/8431-egypt-s-muslim-brotherhood-after-the-revolution>

and against civil disobedience.⁶⁹⁵ Like Activist Salafis, the Council only criticized the military when it endorsed the concept of super-constitutional principles.⁶⁹⁶

Other Islamists disagreed. For Jihadis, the military was the historical enemy that had to be confronted and defeated if the regime was to be brought down. Ahmed 'Ashoush stated, "We declare it, oh you Egyptian unbelieving government, you have your religion, and we ours. Your religion is democracy, and ours is Islam. We do not worship what you worship. We worship Allah, and you worship the constitution, manmade laws, and paper gods. Hatred is between us until you believe in Allah alone and follow his *shari'a* or else we will bring you and force you to follow Him under the shadow of swords." He also threatened to punish officers responsible for torturing Jihadis in prison.⁶⁹⁷

The position many Salafis took and the middle-of-the-road position the Brotherhood adopted led Jihadis to criticize them for bowing to the military. Tarek Abdel Halim argued, "The Brotherhood takes the side of the military against the people and against Islam by spreading their liberalism, which fits with the Americanization of Islam." He called the Brotherhood "agents of anyone in power. They do not work except for personal benefit" and do "not operate on a religious methodology but a political one." He attacked them (and Salafis) for abandoning the revolution. "The parliament does not represent a revolution but must represent the end of a revolution." "The problem increases when the majority in parliament and the opposition both belong to groups which rejected the concept of revolution and did not participate in creating it."⁶⁹⁸ Abdel Halim similarly attacked Mohamed Hassan for his support for the military.⁶⁹⁹

A similar position was adopted by the emerging Revolutionary Salafi current. The first signs of the Revolutionary Salafi current appeared before the revolution in demonstrations in support of Christian women whom they claimed had converted to Islam, and were found in the works of Sheikh Rifa'i Sorour. The revolution liberated those young Salafis from any constraints and helped shape them into a new current within Salafism. Many individuals and groups composed of young Salafis eager for action began appearing after the revolution. The Salafi Front was composed of young disgruntled Salafis such as Ahmed Mowlana, Khaled Sa'id, Ashraf Abdel Monem, Mohamed Galal El Qassas, and Saad Fayad. The General Salafi Current gathered around Rifa'i Sorour and included Hossam Abu Al Bukhari, Khaled Harbi and Mahmoud Fathy, the founder of the Virtue Party. It also included Nedal Hammad and his Egypt Building Party and the Renaissance and Reform Association formed by Mohamed Elhamy and Khaled Khattab.⁷⁰⁰

The Salafi Front's goals included increasing the presence of *shari'a* in Egypt; defending the legitimate rights of Muslims and especially Islamists; presenting an Islamist Salafi renewal discourse that adheres to the constants while not separated from reality; fighting media attacks on Islamists; and achieving these objectives by continued protests and demonstrations. Similarly the General Islamist Current aimed to gather all revolutionary Salafis into one bloc. Its objective: "to determine the issue that everyone agreed on without any disagreements, which is the issue of *shari'a* as an original commitment that one has to adhere to and a launch to the necessary consciousness to achieve the conscious Islamic unity." They adopted a complete revolutionary discourse

that aimed to overhaul the status quo, arguing that it was necessary to “maintain the revolutionary state of the people with all its social groups to use the available opportunity after the revolution and the collapse of the repression and terrorism organ.” While attacking the military, they viewed it merely as a tool of the real enemy that controls its adversaries: “the American Embassy.”⁷⁰¹

They found a charismatic leader in the person of Hazem Salah Abu Ismail and his revolutionary discourse. In reality, Abu Ismail was more a symbol than an actual entity. His charisma enabled him to become a phenomenon that would take Egyptian politics by storm, appealing to youth seeking action because of his extreme revolutionary positions. His appeal was enormous. He was in Tahrir Square from the first day. He refused to leave the square after Mubarak’s resignation until the position of the military toward the revolution became clear. He refused to engage in parliamentary elections, instead advocating a revolutionary approach attacking the military and criticizing the Brotherhood and Salafis for caving. While other Islamists refused to support street clashes with the military and police, Hazem endorsed those clashes, using them to form his current and distinguish himself from other Islamists. He was thus able to form a discourse that mixed Salafism with revolutionary action under a strong anti-American and anti-Israeli umbrella.⁷⁰²

The Revolutionary Salafi current attacked other Islamists for their position toward the military and abandonment of the revolutionary fight. Their indictment of other Salafis for allegedly appeasing the military was especially harsh. In fact, the Salafi Front accused other Salafis who allied with the military of being agents.⁷⁰³ It attacked Mohamed Hassan for his support for the military.⁷⁰⁴ Khaled Harbi went so far as to call Yasser Burhami “the *Sahwa* Sheikh.”⁷⁰⁵ He alleged Burhami “prohibited the youth from participating in the revolution and announced on the 25th the longest sermon in history to make sure that none of the youth would participate in the revolution You were the first to break the revolutionary ranks when you came out immediately after the resignation, cursing the secularists who will change article two that was not even up to amendments You offered the families of the martyrs of the revolution to accept blood money so that the killers of their sons are not put on trial.”⁷⁰⁶ The Revolutionary Salafi criticism lamented that “*da’wah* to God has receded in a clear way ... Many of the political positions were confused to a large degree They contributed to wasting opportunities to win gains ... They appeared as an ally of repression ... They stood against people who came out carrying the torch of their project ... They appeared as contradictory and seekers of power.” In addition, “They failed to separate between *da’wah* and political work, [there was] extreme poverty in intellectual theorizing for this new road which they took, extreme poverty in theorizing for the Islamist project which they advocate. The slow reform *da’wah* approach overshadowed their political behavior, refusing to accept any Islamist project besides the one they advocated, extreme cautiousness, one-man show intervening in all details.”⁷⁰⁷

* Sahwa is the Arabic word for Awakening and while the term is used positively to describe the Saudi Islamist Awakening led by Sheikhs Safar El Hawali and Salman Al Ouda, in this case it is used in a derogatory manner referring to the Sunni Awakening in Iraq that accompanied the Surge.

The Revolutionary Salafi attack on the military was not limited to words. They led the march on the Ministry of Defense headquarters in Abbasiya in May 2012. Hassan Aboul Ashbal went so far as to call on demonstrators to carry arms, call for Jihad, and follow the Libyan example.⁷⁰⁸ Naturally, Jihadis welcomed this discourse, with Tarek Abdel Halim praising Hassan Aboul Ashbal for his strong opposition to the military.⁷⁰⁹

The Presidential Elections

The Muslim Brotherhood had initially declared its decision not to field a candidate in the presidential elections. That decision was guided both by a realization of the antagonism an Islamist candidate would encounter internally and internationally and the likely failure of the first president after the revolution to fulfill the people's huge expectations. Instead it preferred to find a candidate who would be beholden to its voting machine while adopting a parliamentary system in the new constitution to ensure it had actual control of the country. When Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh declared his candidacy, the Brotherhood expelled him from its ranks. The Brotherhood's strategy came under serious pressure with the candidacy of both Aboul Fetouh and Hazem Salah Abu Ismail. Without a candidate of its own, the Brotherhood feared many of its youth would vote for either Islamist candidate. An Aboul Fetouh presidency would mean the end of the Brotherhood, as he would crush his old enemies within the group. The increasing prospect of an Abu Ismail presidency frightened the Brotherhood, which feared that his victory would destroy all of its plans, as the military would go the Algerian way. In addition, the Brotherhood realized that the United States was not antagonistic to a Brotherhood presidency. Power had its appeal. And the Brotherhood concluded that the military under Field Marshall Tantawi was no match for the movement. All of this led the Brotherhood to change course and nominate its strongman, Khairat Al Shater, with Mohamed Morsi as a replacement in case Al Shater was disqualified.

Abu Ismail's candidacy was even more threatening to the Nour Party, as his charisma and revolutionary discourse threatened the Salafi Call's control over its youth. He was intellectually independent from the Nour leadership, and they had fundamental disagreements over his methodology of change.⁷¹⁰ Moreover, they had serious doubts about his ability to manage the state. Like the Brotherhood, they understood that his victory would mean possible military intervention.⁷¹¹ For the Nour Party, the problem was amplified by the support Abu Ismail received from Revolutionary Salafis, with Hassan Aboul Ashbal giving his oath publicly to him during Rifa'i Sorour's funeral.⁷¹² Several Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs backed him as well. The list of endorsements Abu Ismail received was endless. It included Mohamed Hussein Yacoub,⁷¹³ Mazen El Sersawy,⁷¹⁴ and the Ulama Shura Council.⁷¹⁵ Even the Zawahiri brothers, Ayman⁷¹⁶ and Mohamed,⁷¹⁷ praised Abu Ismail, though they remained against the concept of political participation in democratic elections. The Salafi Call refused to take any action after Abu Ismail's disqualification due to the dual nationality of his mother.⁷¹⁸ The Salafi Call and Asala Party's refusal to support Abu Ismail's presidential candidacy gave Jihadis ammunition to go on the attack.⁷¹⁹

After the elimination of Khairat Al Shater and Hazem Salah Abu Ismail from the presidential race, there remained three Islamist candidates vying for support; the Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi, former Brotherhood leader Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh, and independent Islamist thinker Selim El 'Awwa. The Salafi Call surprised observers by endorsing Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh.

It shouldn't have been a surprise. Although in terms of theological positions, Aboul Fetouh was less conservative than Morsi, and 'Awwa's views and closeness to Shi'a made endorsing him highly unlikely,⁷²⁰ there was never a chance that the Salafi Call would endorse a Brotherhood candidate given the historical scars that its founders carried from their campus battles with the Brotherhood in 1980. The heated competition between both groups in the parliamentary elections and the Salafi Call's emergence as the main competitor of the Brotherhood strained an already tense relationship. The Salafi Call's strongman, Yasser Burhami, in particular greatly feared Brotherhood control of both parliament and the presidency. "If the Brotherhood is empowered they will destroy the Salafi Call. The right way to have a good relationship with the Brotherhood is a strong presence."⁷²¹ Another important consideration in Aboul Fetouh's favor were the historical ties that connected him to the founders of the Salafi Call. He was the Emir of the umbrella Gama'a Islamiya in Egyptian universities, while Mohamed Morsi was an unknown to Alexandria's Salafis.

The decision left the Salafi base in turmoil, especially after the Abu Ismail fiasco.⁷²² The Brotherhood was furious. The Brotherhood's Deputy General Guide, Mahmoud Ghozlan, published a detailed theological letter to the Salafi Call attacking the decision and reminding them that their criticism of the Brotherhood for its lenient theological stances before the revolution was largely built on the positions of Aboul Fetouh.⁷²³ Not wanting to worsen things and realizing that it would need the Salafi Call's support if its candidate reached the second round of the elections, the Brotherhood resorted to using surrogates, most notably Safwat Hegazi, in its attacks on the Salafi Call.⁷²⁴ Other Salafis, especially Cairo's Activist Salafis, attacked the Salafi Call's decision. Mohamed Abdel Maksoud criticized the decision as one driven by an irrational fear of the Brotherhood, arguing that "you will be sinning if you vote for him, for Aboul Fetouh wants to teach the books of unbelief in schools such as the novel *The Children of the Alley* by Naguib Mahfouz," adding that "Aboul Fetouh is a man who is antagonistic to *shari'a* because he allows a Muslim to convert to Christianity."⁷²⁵

Confronted with such criticism, the Salafi Call published a number of articles by its leaders in defense of its choice. Abdel Monem El Shahat reiterated the story of the year since the revolution with the various discussions on nominating an Islamist for president as he attempted to prove that at every juncture, it was the Salafi Call that aimed to unite Islamist ranks. He admits that Salafis were fearful of an Islamist candidate who belonged organizationally to an Islamist group, though they were willing to make an exception for Al Shater given his openness to other Islamist currents. He then went through a list of Aboul Fetouh's positive attributes: not a member of a particular organization and thus has no allegiance to one group; enjoys a broad coalition; was one of the founders of Gama'a Islamiya in the 70's; has an excellent team of assistants and advisors; enjoys the trust of all political currents; has great personal

experience and skills; and is close to the youth.⁷²⁶ In response to criticism that they broke the Salafi ranks and that the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform endorsed Morsi, Yasser Burhami states that the Shari'a Association was not established to be a decision-making body but a consultative one.⁷²⁷

Burhami responds to those criticizing Aboul Fetouh as insufficiently conservative, by highlighting that there is no Salafi candidate anyway in the race,⁷²⁸ an argument echoed by El Shahat, who points out that both candidates belong to the Brotherhood theological school, which Salafis reject.⁷²⁹ El Shahat further defends Burhami from accusations that he pushed for this decision, claiming that eight percent of the Salafi Call's Shura Council voted for Aboul Fetouh.⁷³⁰ The Salafi Call feared "that one group (Brotherhood) would exclusively control all governing bodies, creating a new authoritarianism."⁷³¹ Moreover, he argued that the Salafi Call did not break the unity of Islamists as there were three Islamist candidates in the race anyway, and the Salafi Call's endorsement of Aboul Fetouh serves the Islamists' image by proving that they do not fix everything behind closed doors. Lastly, he noted that Morsi was only a second choice for the Brotherhood itself.⁷³²

Other Islamist currents and individuals took a variety of positions in the elections. Madkhalis naturally boycotted the whole process, viewing it as idolatry. Ahmed El Naqeeb urged his supporters not to vote for either candidate,⁷³³ and Osama Abdel 'Azeem refused to endorse Morsi because as President of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, he had a Christian Vice President.⁷³⁴ Mos'ad Anwar chose to write broadly about what was expected from the president regardless of the name. "You are a Muslim and we are Muslims, rule us with God's *shari'a*, rule us with the Quran and *Sunna*, do not import for us the trash of ideas and minds from east and west, do not rule us with manmade laws." He urged the winner to cleanse the media, to cleanse the country from sins, and to get close to religious scholars.⁷³⁵ The Ulama Shura Council informed people that they should choose between Islamist candidates in the first round⁷³⁶ and then supported Morsi in the second round.⁷³⁷ Cairo and Damanhur's Activist Salafis supported the Brotherhood as did Sorouris.⁷³⁸ Jihadis rejected the whole process, with Ahmed 'Ashoush writing, "Political idolatry means making humans into Gods by making the supremacy for the people and putting the right to permit and prohibit in the hands of parliaments and renouncing Islam and its *shari'a* from ruling, governing and legislating."⁷³⁹ He declared his opposition to Morsi on two grounds. One was his acceptance of the democratic process and working with man-made laws and constitutions. The other was his questionable faith because he stated in an interview that there were no differences between Christianity and Islam, and he agreed that non-Muslims could be appointed to positions of authority and even the presidency. He was no less critical of Aboul Fetouh, who he argued denied what is known by necessity from religion such as the apostasy punishment and his equating Muslims and unbelievers by accepting in theory the possibility of a non-Muslim president added to his acceptance of the supremacy of the people.⁷⁴⁰

The presidential elections would leave two lasting impacts on the intra-Islamist spectrum: a worsened relationship between the Brotherhood and the Salafi Call, putting them on the road to confrontation and open hostility, and forcing the Brotherhood to

ally itself with other Salafi currents and Jihadi elements in an attempt to counter the Salafi Call.⁷⁴¹

The 2012 Constitution

The process of writing the Egyptian constitution was marred by controversy and conflict from its inception. * As the document that would shape the country's future and system of government, the constitution became a focal point in the identity war raging between Islamists and non-Islamists and internally between the Brotherhood and Salafis. Fights over who would write it were repeated after the Constitutional Court dissolved the first constitutional writing assembly. As the hot summer months of Cairo went by, it seemed an explosion was imminent as non-Islamists withdrew from the assembly, and the Brotherhood and the Salafi Call engaged in open warfare. The Brotherhood had a top-down approach, believing that Islamizing life can take place only through the state, and focused on building the Islamic state. So the Brotherhood approached the process with a focus on strengthening its rule and co-opting its historical adversary, the Egyptian military.

In contrast, for the Salafi Call, changing the constitution was the very reason for its decision to participate in politics. Yasser Burhami declared: "Our decision to participate in politics had among its most important goals participating in writing a constitution that represents the truth of the Islamic identity of our nation."⁷⁴² Only by changing the very basis of the constitution and making it an Islamic one could the Salafi Call defend its position and answer its Salafi critics. In the end, the Brotherhood caved to the Salafi Call, after the latter used a successful combination of a coherent agenda, deep knowledge of the texts, and mobilization of the Salafi masses in demonstrations against the Brotherhood. The result was a constitution that included numerous dangerous articles for the future of freedom in Egypt.

After some hesitation, most Salafis supported the document and called on their supporters to vote yes in the referendum. Supporters included Abu Ishaq El Howeiny;⁷⁴³ Osama Abdel 'Azeem, who argued that one should never side with secularists and that if rejected there would be chaos in the country;⁷⁴⁴ Mohamed El Debiessy, who pointed out that those against it were secularists and Christians and that its positives outweigh its negatives;⁷⁴⁵ and Cairo's Activist Salafis, Sorouris, and Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek.⁷⁴⁶ Not everyone was satisfied, however. The Ulama Shura Council struck a middle ground and noted that "We mention, for example, our rejection of democracy as a belief and our rejection of what they call the sovereignty of the people and it as the source of legislation, for God's *shari'a* is above the people and above powers and everyone must subjugate himself to God's *shari'a*. Also our rejection of freedoms that are contrary to *shari'a* ... all the members of the council believe that the constitution has to be amended to satisfy God and his *shari'a* at the soonest time." "As to whether people should vote yes or no, the majority have argued that they should say yes to limit the great negatives and

* For an analysis of the battle over the Egyptian Constitution check Tadros, Samuel. "What is a Constitution Anyway?" *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Volume 14, January 2013, available at: <http://www.hudson.org/research/9905-what-is-a-constitution-anyway->

some argued for abstaining on this constitution until it is amended.” Those against the constitution included Madkhalis, Jihadis, Mustafa El ‘Adawy, and Ahmed El Naqeeb.⁷⁴⁷

Those arguing against the constitution raised numerous objections. Madkhalis and Jihadis naturally rejected the whole process out of principle, with Madkhalis arguing that “The text of the constitution except a few articles is all in complete violation of Islam’s *shari’a*. If all is wrong, why don’t you go out and vote no? Because the road is wrong, the whole basis is wrong; this is not the way to do it by voting for the masses and the mob that say their opinion. Where are the men of authority?”⁷⁴⁸ Jihadi leader Ahmed ‘Ashoush raised a number of objections to the constitution such as: the concept of the sovereignty of the people; its ban on political parties based on religious discrimination; the concept of democracy; the basing of legal punishments on laws or a constitutional article; the provision of equality between believers and unbelievers; and the enshrinement of personal freedoms.⁷⁴⁹ Voting for the constitution was thus an act of unbelief, Morsi was deemed an illegitimate ruler; and democracy was cast as a form of idolatry. ‘Ashoush concluded that “the struggle now is between secularists and secularists.”⁷⁵⁰

Others focused on specific complaints. A Scholarly Salafi author noted that the outcome of political participation was a complete failure as Islamists failed to write an Islamic constitution. He argued that “all they managed to do was preserve article two and add an explanatory article.”⁷⁵¹ Mustafa El ‘Adawy took a strong position against the constitution,⁷⁵² noting that God’s name was mentioned only once or twice in the constitution and that it allowed absolute freedoms, which contradict *shari’a*.⁷⁵³ He attacked Islamists who participated in the process, arguing that “it is very sad that the parties that people chose, they did not choose them for any personal gain, but instead to implement God’s orders, they have betrayed their trust, we will put them to trial and stand against them in front of God.”⁷⁵⁴

The most important critic of the constitutional draft was Ahmed El Naqeeb,⁷⁵⁵ who wrote a book detailing his objections. According to him, there were numerous problems with the constitution such as: mentioning the Egyptian people before God, praising the Pharaohs, claiming Pharaohs were monotheists, praising democracy, including the word citizenship in the constitution, giving Christians and Jews the right to appeal to their own legislation, using the word Christians instead of the Islamic term *Nasara*, allowing Christians to build churches, banning parties based on discrimination in religion, removing *zakat* from the initial draft, making Al Azhar, which is Ash’ari, responsible for Islamic *da’wah*, freedom of expression, not including God or the Companions in the blasphemy clause, organizing impermissible taxes, and finally attributing sovereignty to the people and making them the source of authority, which removed the sovereignty of God.⁷⁵⁶

El Naqeeb notes that the *Shura* has no relationship to democracy. One is Islamic, the other unbelief. He argued that “It is known that there is a huge difference between Islam and democracy for they are contradictory methodologies, unbelief and Islam.” Pluralism is not permissible as “pluralism is a branch of democracy and it has two parts: political pluralism and intellectual doctrinal pluralism ... which allows people to believe what

they wish and can leave Islam. Political pluralism opens the door to all parties no matter their ideas and doctrines to rule Muslims through elections and this is equalizing Muslims and others.” Elections themselves are not permissible. “Political elections in the democratic way is prohibited because it does not require that the elected and voter have the *shari’a* attributes for those who deserve to occupy positions of public or private authority.” El Naqeeb views the explanatory article on *shari’a* as irrelevant and believes that secularists and Christians secretly want people to vote yes as this constitution is a gift to them. His harshest words are reserved for the Nour Party, which he calls Selfocrats.⁷⁵⁷

Supporters of the constitution had theological and practical arguments of their own. Salafi Call leader Abu Idris declared that “this constitution is the real savior for the nation from the road of chaos and constitutional and legal void. It is the road to continue building the institutions of the state.” Burhami argued that “The constitution draft presented for a referendum is the best constitution ever written for Egypt” and insisted that “We did not accept democracy and citizenship on their philosophical meaning.” Abu Ishaq El Howeiny declared his reluctant approval: “I support the constitution and approve it out of choosing the least worse option,” urging people to “say yes to the constitution for it is the least worse option and it is the available though not the hoped for.” Mohamed Abdel Maksoud argued that this opportunity had to be grabbed. “If we lose this opportunity in our hands, it might not come again for many years.” Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim painted the objections as unfounded. “Without a doubt if the word principles was removed from article two that would be better, but the question remains: Will *shari’a* be implemented if it was removed? And how will this happen? If the word principles remains and was interpreted in a way that strengthens its meaning, will implementing *shari’a* be stopped?” Finally, Burhami blamed those who had objected to political participation for the current text. “Most of those who criticize contributed to us not gaining a majority by refusing to participate in backing the Nour Party in elections or their participation in supporting others, so these are the natural fruits today.”⁷⁵⁸

During Morsi’s short tenure, Islamists continued to fight as each faction sought to monopolize the representation of true Islam and fought over political space. Attempts at uniting various Islamist currents coincided with further divisions within them. Hazem Salah Abu Ismail attempted to form a political party to unite his supporters, though his efforts were marred by the same haphazardness that was a distinct feature of the man and his followers.⁷⁵⁹ Qutbists finally decided to take a shot at political participation with Abdel Meguid El Shazly’s Da’wah of Ahl El Sunna wa Al Gama’a forming a coalition with the Arab Tawhid Party composed of former members of Al ‘Amal Party and the Jihadi formed Safety and Development Party.⁷⁶⁰ Jihadis used Morsi’s year in power to rebuild their organization and recruit,⁷⁶¹ with Sinai Jihadi groups flourishing. Meanwhile, the Brotherhood continued to ally itself closely with Salafis and Jihadis in order to outflank the Salafi Call. Cairo Activist Salafis became the public face of attacks on their former friends in Alexandria as the relationship between them deteriorated to unprecedented levels. Fawzy El Sa’id and Mohamed Abdel Maksoud attacked the Nour Party for its middle position between the non-Islamist National Salvation Front and the Brotherhood, and El Sa’id accused them of being loyal

to the unbelievers.⁷⁶² Mohamed Abdel Maksoud attacked Nour Party spokesperson Nader Bakkar, describing him as “this kid who appeared on TV screens saying that the Brotherhood wants to take control of the state to rule Egypt forever ... I know this is a historical hostility. This hostility is because the state security has allowed him to preach to counter the Brotherhood so it became a doctrine and an interest.”⁷⁶³ The tensions within the Nour Party finally exploded in the open, with its President, Emad Abdel Ghaffour, leaving it and forming his own Watan Party, which received backing from Mohamed Abdel Maksoud,⁷⁶⁴ Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, and reputedly the Brotherhood.

New questions and fights between Islamists emerged during Morsi’s tenure. Mustafa El ‘Adawy attacked Morsi for his failure to implement *shari’a*,⁷⁶⁵ as did Mohamed Hussein Yacoub.⁷⁶⁶ Ahmed El Naqeeb even refused to meet the president.⁷⁶⁷ The question of the position of bearded police officers whom the Interior Minister had dismissed became a hot button issue for Salafis attacking Morsi. Not only did the Nour Party champion their cause, but so did Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, who demanded that Morsi fire his Interior Minister.⁷⁶⁸ The Ulama Shura Council declared its support for the officers.⁷⁶⁹ Egypt’s relationship with Iran and the spread of Shi’a in Egypt became a rallying cry for Salafis, leading to accusations by Mohamed Hassan that Morsi and the Brotherhood were soft on Shi’a.⁷⁷⁰ Mazen El Sersawy⁷⁷¹ and the Ulama Shura Council⁷⁷² leveled the same charge. Attempting to outflank its critics, the Brotherhood organized a massive rally in support of Syria’s Sunnis and against President Assad. The Brotherhood allowed Islamist preachers to attack Shi’a vigorously and called for Jihad in Syria, to the horror of most Egyptians. The heated campaign against the Shi’a threat reached its natural conclusion with the brutal murder of Shi’a Sheikh Hassan Shehata and three of his followers on June 23, 2013, 10 days before the military coup and Morsi’s fall.

Conclusion

The Muslim Brotherhood's reign came to a sudden end as massive demonstrations on June 30, 2013, against their rule were followed by a military coup three days later. Completely caught off guard by the military's move, the Brotherhood's universe suddenly shrunk to two squares in greater Cairo, Rab'a and Al Nahda, as it sought to regain its balance and find a way out of its predicament. Various Islamist currents and individuals joined what became a permanent camp in the busy streets.

A permanent divide was created in the Islamist universe as lines were drawn over the coup. The Salafi Call threw in its lot with the military. Its historical feud with the Brotherhood and political savviness were equaled only by its desire to replace its competitor as the main Islamist force in the country and more important to control the mosques. It did pay a price in its historical cohesiveness as Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem broke ranks with his former comrades and Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem chose to isolate himself with his books and scholarship. Reportedly unhappy with what the organization he started had become under Yasser Burhami's iron fist, he nonetheless promised his old colleagues that he would not attack the organization and destroy what he has built. The various Islamist currents, groups, and individuals approached the question from their various theological vantage points, sticking to their natural positions. Madkhali supported the military as the legitimate ruler, though curiously Hesham El Beialy argued that what General Sisi did was a rebellion against the legitimate ruler, a position that led other Madkhali Sheikhs to renounce him.⁷⁷³

Scholarly Salafis were torn between their fear of strife and bloodshed and their support for Morsi and Islamist protestors. Ansar El Sunna called on both sides to stop fighting.⁷⁷⁴ Mustafa El 'Adawy urged Islamists to stop demonstrating.⁷⁷⁵ Mohamed Hussein Yacoub went to Rab'a to support its protestors⁷⁷⁶ and joined another protest along with Mohamed Hassan the day of the massacre.⁷⁷⁷ Abu Ishaq El Howeiny first allowed pro-Morsi protests before reversing himself and prohibiting them out of fear of strife.⁷⁷⁸ Mohamed Hassan attempted to mediate between the Brotherhood and the military,⁷⁷⁹ his efforts later becoming a source of controversy over what transpired⁷⁸⁰ and leading to harsh attacks by Wagdi Ghoneim.⁷⁸¹ Ahmed El Naqeeb condemned the massacre.⁷⁸² But he stuck to his anti-political participation position, refused to allow his followers to join the pro-Morsi demonstrations, and cursed the Nour Party and its position.⁷⁸³ The Ulama Shura Council in its July 7th statement demanded the return of Morsi and the release of arrested Islamists while refusing to condemn the military,⁷⁸⁴ the fear of violence guiding their statements.⁷⁸⁵ Mazen El Sersawy was the only Scholarly Salafi Sheikh to take part in Al Nahda demonstrations.⁷⁸⁶

Most would eventually come to regret the whole revolutionary episode and their political experience, viewing it as taking them away from their *da'wah*.⁷⁸⁷ Osama Abdel 'Azeem blamed Islamists for the crisis, arguing that they had become drunk with power and that the coup was a wakeup call for them to abandon politics and return to their true mission, bringing people to God.⁷⁸⁸ Mohamed El Debiessy declared the coup God's punishment for people who had been away from Him. Yacoub similarly joined the ranks of those calling for abandoning politics.⁷⁸⁹ Their return to their natural positions

became most evident in their reactions to the 2014 constitutional referendum with Howeiny,⁷⁹⁰ El 'Adawy,⁷⁹¹ and El Naqeeb⁷⁹² asking their followers to boycott it, though none of them devoted much attention to it.

On the other side, Cairo's Activist Salafis and Sorouris threw in their lot with the Brotherhood, as did Gama'a Islamiya. On the stage at the Rab'a street camp, Hassan Aboul Ashbal publicly described the struggle as between Islam and unbelief.⁷⁹³ He was not alone. Day after day, with the Brotherhood caught completely off balance and desperate to build an Islamist alliance, it allowed other more radical Islamists to take over the Rab'a stage.⁷⁹⁴ With wholesale declarations on the unbelief of the other side, a radical discourse on the establishment of the Islamic state, threats of violence and killing,⁷⁹⁵ and incitement against Christians, Rab'a was becoming indistinguishable from a Jihadi rally. Jihadis were in turn making overtures to Islamists and especially young Brotherhood members to abandon the democratic idolatry and join their ranks.⁷⁹⁶

But something more important took place at Rab'a. The street camp was not only the Brotherhood's remaining negotiation card but soon was transformed into something else, an Islamist City of God. Previous differences among Islamists gathered there no longer mattered. Islamists of all stripes shared tents and lived and prayed together in their Utopia. The massacre of the protestors a month and a half later would help transform Rab'a into something beyond even the four finger sign popularized by Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a symbol. Instead it became a place akin to Karbala, a place of mourning but also of the birth of something new. The divide within Islamism and between Islamists and non-Islamists was now cemented in blood. Islamists speak today of those who were with us in Rab'a and those who were not. Videos of the first Islamist demonstration after the massacre to break security ranks and reach the square on October 5 depict scenes of people dancing hysterically,⁷⁹⁷ with others weeping and kissing the ground.⁷⁹⁸ "Take off your shoes while entering Rab'a for its ground is soaked with the blood of martyrs," are words that are often heard among the survivors.

Egyptian Islamism is entering a new phase in its journey. The question of Rab'a and the position toward the coup will take its place next to the questions of ruling with other than what God has revealed, the methodology of change, collective action, and other key theological questions that divide the Islamist universe. In the future, we may even discuss events as pre-Rab'a and post-Rab'a. Two contradictory phenomenon, fragmentation and unity, will take shape as the Egyptian Islamist universe attempts to find its balance. As has been the case throughout its history, new currents will emerge within Islamism, as the continued failure of its existing ones to come closer to achieving the dream opens the space for newer currents. But this will be only half the story. The bonds that were created in Rab'a tents, that were covered in blood during the massacre and that have been strengthened during the past year in protests, street fights, prisons, and escapes are likely to transform Islamism. Rab'a became a melting pot, where old currents were amalgamated and new ones will eventually form.

Today the Brotherhood continues its aimless drift, stuck to resisting the coup in forms that even for its diehard supporters can no longer be described as a strategy. It is facing

a crackdown like no other in its history, the brutality of the new regime exceeding anything the group endured under Gamal Abdel Nasser. It is not unimaginable to project a crushed Brotherhood, one that will no longer exist in the future. The Brotherhood's possible demise has led many observers to predict its replacement with a Jihadi organization.

Perhaps. Certainly some Brotherhood members will become perfect recruits for existing groups and newly formed ones. The lure of Jihad has already attracted hundreds of Egyptians to fight in Syria. These are young men with no prior history of radicalization. Few of them were ever jailed under Mubarak. They are better educated than previous generations and are moved by scenes of brutality in Syria,⁷⁹⁹ with the vast majority of them lacking anything resembling deep theological knowledge. The fall of Mosul into the hands of ISIS has provided Islamists worldwide with something that they never had before, a model resembling success in the heart of the nation. The attraction of the Islamic State's model is growing, but so is the attraction of local Jihadi groups. Ansar Bayt Al Maqdis, Ajnad Masr, and a host of other smaller groups are finding easy recruits in frustrated young Islamists.⁸⁰⁰ Nageh Ibrahim sums up the reasons for the growth of Al Qaeda style groups in Egypt as: leadership available in released Jihadis, open space for activities in Sinai, coalition with Gaza-based Jihadi groups, security collapse following the 2011 revolution, availability of weapons from Libya, spread of *takfir* thought, and alliance between the Brotherhood and former Jihadi groups during Morsi's reign.⁸⁰¹ And all of this was before the coup.

But hundreds of thousands of Brotherhood members will not become Jihadis. While the Egyptian state will be fighting a Jihadi-organized threat in Sinai and an emerging one on the Libyan border, it will also be fighting a low-level insurgency in the cities, an insurgency that will take shape with kids throwing Molotov cocktails at police cars and officers being shot in front of their houses in small towns. Jihad for the sake of a caliphate may be replaced with violence for the sake of revenge.

In the pages of Rifa'i Sorour's books, Revolutionary Salafism was born before the revolution. In the revolutionary moment and gathering around the charismatic though ineffective leadership of Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, it took shape. Like other Salafi currents born before it, it claims sole representation and authenticity. Sorour died just after the revolution, leaving the movement without a theoretician and Abu Ismail found himself after the coup jailed, likely for a long time. The gap left by their absence is huge and will impact the fortunes of Revolutionary Salafism.

Today a new generation of Islamists of all stripes has risen. Anas Hassan attempts to provide a strategic view for the ideology, though like other Islamists, the conspiracy theory fills his horizon. Ibrahim Abaza leads Salafi Call members on social media in their efforts to defend their Godfather Burhami. Rifa'i Sorour's sons and daughters keep the legacy of their father alive with their activism on social media. Mahmoud Fathy, Amr Farrag, and Abdel Rahman Ezz continue their rants from the safety of Qatar and Turkey, exhorting the necessity and desirability of using violence against the regime. Ammar Motawe' devotes his energy and time to the cause of arrested female Islamist protestors, while Ahmed Salem focuses on scholarship. Hundreds of thousands of others remain

below our radar, some of them intentionally in the scholarly circles surrounding their Sheikhs, or in the deserts accompanied by weapons. How this new generation will answer the same question that faced their fathers and grandfathers, the crisis of modernity, remains an open question.

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