CARNEGIE
ENDOWMENT FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

EGYPT'S SALAFISTS AT A CROSSROADS

Part 3 of a series on political Islam in Egypt

Ashraf El-Sherif

CARNEGIE
ENDOWMENT FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

EGYPT'S SALAFISTS AT A CROSSROADS

Part 3 of a series on political Islam in Egypt

Ashraf El-Sherif

Contents

About the Author

Ashraf El-Sherif is a lecturer in political science at the American University in Cairo. He is an expert in political Islam, state-religion relations, democratic transition, social movements, and state-society relations in the Middle East and North Africa.

Summary

Salafism has been one of the most dynamic movements in Egypt since 2011. Dealt a difficult hand when Hosni Mubarak was ousted from the presidency, Egyptian Salafists have skillfully navigated the transition. Their entry into the political marketplace marked a historic shift toward a new political Salafism and sheds light on whether an Islamist movement can integrate into pluralistic modern politics. The ouster of Mohamed Morsi by a popularly backed military coup in 2013, however, dealt a debilitating blow to the Islamist project—and left deep cleavages within the Salafist movement.

Key Moments

- Following the 2011 uprising, Salafists fell into three camps:

    1. Unorganized Salafists supported fellow Islamists against secularist competitors and allied with the Muslim Brotherhood.

    2. A formal, organized camp took the opposite approach, creating its own Salafist party to compete with the Brotherhood.

    3. Disaffected Islamist youths saw themselves as radical revolutionaries, shunning formal organizations and choosing actions ranging from violent jihadism to protest politics.

- After the 2013 coup, less-organized Salafists threw their weight behind the Brotherhood-led struggle, despite political subordination to the major Islamist group.

- Formal Salafist organizations accepted being co-opted by the state after the coup to secure their existence and bid for gradual political advances. Doing so, however, undermined their ideological character and credibility.

Challenges Ahead

- Egyptian Salafists have made little effort since 2011 to create a doctrinal framework to explain and guide their changing approach to political participation.

- Salafists remain unable to coalesce around a pluralistic ideology or to devise a minimalist program. They should become intellectually engaged in devising approaches to and positions on sectarianism, gender, censorship, minorities, secularism, and other controversial issues.

- Any Salafist shortcomings in delivering on their political mandate to preserve Islamic law and address socioeconomic concerns may undermine grassroots trust and squander social capital accumulated over decades among lower-income communities across Egypt.

- Whether Salafists succeed in preserving their key position within the Egyptian public religious sphere will depend on their pragmatic political maneuverability and positioning as functionaries within a domestic and regional balance of power rife with ideological and sectarian divisions. The Salafist Call in particular has been adept at this maneuvering.

- The long-term challenge facing Egyptian Salafists is ideological. Whether the Salafists will remain an Islamist movement depends on their ability to furnish a unique and workable political model distinct from authoritarian regimes and political modernity in general as well as from other failed Islamist models. This was difficult between 2011 and 2013; it may be close to impossible in 2015.

Introduction

Salafism has been one of the most dynamic sociopolitical and religious movements in Egypt since the 2011 uprising. Egypt's Salafists were dealt a difficult hand with the ouster of Hosni Mubarak from the presidency, and, though previously apolitical, they skillfully navigated the stages of the ensuing transition. These included new party formation after January 2011, the 2011 parliamentary elections, the 2012 presidential elections, and the 2012 constitution-drafting process. The ouster of President Mohamed Morsi by a popularly backed military coup in 2013, however, served a debilitating blow to the Islamist project, leaving deep cleavages within the Salafist movement in Egypt.

The current foray into politics by Egypt's Salafists is a case study on whether an Islamist utopia can be "normalized," with the integration of orthodox political Islamic movements into pluralistic national modern polities.

The ouster of President Mohamed Morsi served a debilitating blow to the Islamist project, leaving deep cleavages within the Salafist movement in Egypt.

Salafist entry to the Islamist political marketplace in Egypt after the 2011 uprising marked a historical shift toward a new political Salafism. The founding of the Nour Party, the political wing of the Salafist Call (al-Dawa al-Salafiyya) association based in Alexandria, signaled a shift from the classic methods of apolitical proselytizing and abstention from politics to a direct political role involving new tools now considered more feasible and religiously justifiable. These included electoral participation and a search for footholds in newly created political institutions. To safeguard cumulative social and cultural capital, Salafists needed political protection, legal facilitators, and media exposure. Such actions were seen as a launching pad for the gradual Islamization of laws and public policies.

This new political Salafism should not be considered a step toward liberalization or modernization. Salafists are careful to identify their mission as a return to a literal understanding of an Islamic worldview, one that changes the status quo and conforms it to centuries-old rulings of pious Muslim ancestral scholars.

Though democracy's instruments are to be adopted in the pursuit of applying Islamic sharia, democracy based on full popular sovereignty and equality in political rights regardless of religion, sect, ideology, and gender is considered *haram*—forbidden—and requiring restrictions by sharia-based authorities. This ideological trademark clearly leaves Salafists in opposition to liberal democracy.

This paper will try exploring questions such as, who are the Salafists and what do they stand for in the midst of post-Mubarak politics? Will the Salafists' fortunes be eclipsed in the post-Morsi political environment? Or are they

capable of reconfiguring a new Salafist politics to fit into the complicated new context of Egyptian politics and Islamism? Claiming pure Islamic authenticity, how can the Salafists construct an Islamic totalistic alternative to the existing system in Egypt? And how can this materialize while participating within the rules of that system and internalizing the same political power dynamics from an even weaker position?

Analysis will begin with the historical origins of the Salafist doctrine, its different sub-schools, its historical relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, and the question of politics and democracy. Special attention will be given to the Salafist Call as the main case study. Then, post-2011 developments, such as the creation of parties and their crises, and changing relations with the Brotherhood will be examined.

The current post-Morsi Salafist crisis is key to understanding the future of the movement and whether ongoing Salafist revisions can redress its previous shortcomings. At the heart of that is the weakening of the shared long-term ideology of *iqamat ad-din*, or the application in Egypt of Islamic sharia, in favor of a more realistic short-term vision. The greatest aspiration of that vision is for Salafists to monopolize the Islamic public sphere, disregarding all but their own religious authorities. At the very least, the short-term ambition is to politically secure the social, religious, and proselytizing networks developed during the Mubarak years.

> **Salafist have yet to resolve how to stay true to their Islamic sharia ideology and to address such real-time nationalist concerns as socioeconomic distress.**

The ideological coherence that long characterized Islamist movements has faded away in the wake of the political populism of the 2011 uprising. Political instrumentalism has deferred any serious intellectual deepening of Salafist ideology. Moreover, the current regime's crackdown on the Muslim Brothers and the political sphere—and the rise of angry waves of revolutionary Islamists—has left Salafists factionalized and drawn into the cauldron. The pro-Brotherhood Salafists diluted their differences with the Brothers and joined forces with their post-2013 confrontational politics out of ideological solidarity, while pro-regime Salafists feel compelled to engage in politics, if only to counter secularists and keep radical Islamist factions from gaining religious appeal. At the same time, they have yet to resolve how to stay true to their Islamic sharia ideology and to address such real-time nationalist concerns as socioeconomic distress. Their future, and to some extent, Egypt's future, is uncertain.

Salafists: Historical Origins and Doctrine

Salafism, like other movements, has a long and complicated history. In Arabic, "*salaf*" means "the past," and "Salafists" means "the ancestors or predecessors." Each school of Islamic thought has its own salaf that is venerated to the exclusion of the others. Moreover, the term has been used by different intellectual movements in the modern age. By the early twentieth century, influential

"national Salafist intellectual schools" were operating in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and North Africa. They endeavored to reexplore Islamic heritage through both conservative understandings (like those of Shehab al-Din al-Alousi, Muhammad Rashid Rida, Moheb al-Din al-Khateeb, Tahir al-Jazairi, Ahmed and Mahmoud Shaker, and others) and more modernist, rationalist ones (for example, Muhammad Abduh). Periodicals and publications carried Salafist labels.[1] Unlike the religious partisanship of Najdi Salafism (better known as Wahhabism outside the Arabian Peninsula), these reformist and conservative schools emphasized integrating within the modern urban society and engaging with its problems via culture, intellect, and education.

By the second half of the twentieth century, however, the term Salafism came to exclusively describe another religious revivalist doctrine that claimed lineage to a particular ancient school of Islamic theology, the Ahl al-Hadith, members of which described themselves as Ahl al-Sunna. This brand of Salafism prioritizes an orthodox literalist following of Islamic texts (including the Quran, valid sunna, and the Prophet's companions' heritage). Unlike more rationalist schools of law and theology, Salafism limits free reasoning, and it considers Muslim heterodox schools such as the Sufis, Gnostics, and philosophers to be full of *bidah*, or incorrect religious innovations.[2]

This new literalist return to the Islamic original scriptures is allegedly exactly how al-Salaf al-Salih interpreted these texts. Al-Salaf al-Salih, according to the Salafists, are the revered Muslim ancestors of the early centuries of Islamic history. They include the Prophet's companions, the companions' followers, and selected scholars (largely from the Ahl al-Hadith school, including Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah, and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya). Their body of teachings and rulings are considered the ultimate point of reference for deducing opinions on Islam as a religion, worldview, value system, legal order, culture, and social tradition.

Salafists consider spreading the word of Islam a religious duty.

Modern scholarly and ideological contributions have also been influential, particularly scholarship from contemporary Najdi Salafists, and the work of Nasr al-Din al-Albani and the radical, controversial theorist Sayyid Qutb. The Salafist mission, which is predicated on education and preaching, is to create an audience committed to Salafist teachings. Salafists consider spreading the word of Islam a religious duty. So, too, is creating a society of exclusive followers of the Salafist *manhaj* (system and method of action).

Contemporary Salafism has shared with other Islamic revivalist movements an antagonistic relationship with inherited Islamic scholarship and jurisprudence. Revivalists saw these traditions as too stagnant and outdated to bolster the role of Islam in contemporary Muslim societies. Instead, revivalism needed simpler, more relevant, and practical understandings of Islam. Three routes were possible in this context. The first was to create a modernized version of Islam through a rational historicist reinterpretation of the original scriptures. Muhammad Abduh and his disciples pioneered this intellectual school. The

second was adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood: to forgo intellectual debates and pursue action-oriented engagement with society to change it at all levels. The third route was to return to early ancestors' understandings of original scriptures and reproduce them literally, projecting them on reality as the ahistorical and correct monolithic practice of Islam. That last one was the Salafist option.

Salafism: Manhaj, Ideology, and Sub-Schools in Egypt

The current wave of Salafism in Egypt is an offspring of the Islamic Sahwa movement, or Islamic Awakening, that was started in the 1970s by a broad array of religiously inspired actors in Egyptian universities, civil society, politics, and other arenas of Egyptian public and private life. The Salafists share the fundamental goal of the Islamic Sahwa: the revival of the central role of Islam in Egyptian life according to a scriptualist approach to Islam. Salafist activity in Egypt has largely taken form as a loose movement, under which diverse activities are carried out independently in areas of proselytizing, education, charity, religious media, cyberspace, and social work.

With its doctrinal understanding of Islam, Salafism has arguably been anti-tradition. By returning to ancestral scripture, Salafists have tried surpassing the diverse heritage of Muslim law, jurisprudence, and theology developed cumulatively over the later centuries. This has placed Salafists in clear conflict with al-Azhar, the official religious institution and the representative of such traditions in Egypt, and its new master—the modern state of Egypt.[3]

> **Salafist activity in Egypt has largely taken form as a loose movement, under which diverse activities are carried out independently in areas of proselytizing, education, charity, religious media, cyberspace, and social work.**

Salafists have generally rejected democratic participation because it does not rest on God's sovereignty and is considered to foment divisive partisanship, endless opposition, and social strife.[4] Democracy is seen as equating men and women, Muslims and non-Muslims, Sunnis and non-Sunnis, Islamists and secularists, as well as promoting rule by demagogic masses instead of a sharia rule guarded by ulema (religious scholars). Parliaments are considered human-made creations that wrestle the right to legislation from God.[5]

Many Salafists believe that living under illegitimate rulers is a test of piety for Muslims. Political rebellion is discouraged; indeed, it is considered worse than the original evil of an un-Islamic ruler. Such political quietism generally fits with mainstream traditions of Sunni Islam, which has also discouraged revolt and political infighting.

Under Mubarak, favorable conditions such as intermittent toleration by the state, the regime's focus on combating a politically active Brotherhood, and dwindling jihadist popularity created opportunities for Salafists to grow in religious influence and secure considerable popularity. Even before the 2011

uprising, however, and apart from a general commitment to the purification of the Islamic creed and the general puritanical behavioral similarities, Salafists were intolerably divided on various lines. Different Salafist sub-schools have debated the detailed implementation of their manhaj, questioning how far variations in methods of change, standpoints on political participation, and gradualism in the application of sharia can be tolerated.

Different Salafist sub-schools include:

1. Scholastic Salafism (al-Salafiyya Almiyya), which believes in the primacy of religious education. Key manhaj is *al-tasfeya*, liquidating religious innovations, and *al-tarbeya*, raising people on monotheism or *tawhid* (the core of the Islamic creed, the oneness of God). This sub-school implicitly recognizes the Islamic illegitimacy of ruling regimes but does not believe in political engagement or collective action, instead exclusively focusing on scholasticism and proselytizing.[6] In Egypt, clusters of such scholarly communities have emerged in the last few decades, modeling Saudi scholastic icons.[7]

2. Madkhali Salafism, also referred to as Jameya Salafism,[8] disagrees with other schools' standpoint on rulers, hailing the religious legitimacy of current regimes via a minimalist definition of what is a legitimate political order in Islam. Obedience to ruling regimes, even if they are unjust and do not apply sharia, is a religious obligation as long as they are not committing a clear act of infidelity. The Madkhalis reject oppositional politics as a violation of sunna, viewing collective partisan action as religiously innovative, power-seeking, and evil. Their manhaj of change is exclusively an educational one. Madkhalis regard themselves as the guardians of true Salafism and aggressively debunk other Salafists. Extremely loyal to regimes but intolerant of other Salafists and any opposition, Madkhalis are responsible for the reputation of Salafists as submissive regime proxies.[9]

3. Jihadist Salafism equates monotheism with combatant transnational jihad against un-Islamic regimes to establish a purely Islamic state that upholds religious sovereignty and undoes injustices inflicted upon Muslims.

4. Traditional Salafism, including al-Jamiya al-Sharia (Sharia Association) and Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyyah (Guardians of Prophetic Sunna), dates back to the early twentieth century and is mainly occupied with religious pedagogy and charitable work. Closely screened by the state as early as Nasser's era, adherents have no political capital.

5. Like Scholastic Salafism, Haraki (active) Salafism considers the Islamic illegitimacy of ruling regimes clear, but it also considers organized collective action necessary to replace, albeit peacefully, any existing un-Islamic status quo. The Salafist Call, among other groups, represents this sub-school. Beginning in the late 1970s, these Salafists have adopted a unique

manhaj haraki, that is, a special method of change distinguishable from both the gradualist reformist politics of the Muslim Brotherhood and the violent insurgency plans of jihadists. Organized change, according to this thinking, should be peaceful, normative, and from below.[10] Haraki Salafism thus can be seen as a selective merging of the Salafist creed and the Brotherhood's manhaj of action.

The Salafist Call

The key proponent of the haraki manhaj in Egypt is the Salafist Call, originally founded as the Salafist School in the 1970s in Alexandria. It has become the most powerful Salafist group in Egypt over the past three decades. Though it shares general characteristics of the Salafist manhaj, the Call maintains considerable differences with other sub-schools: with Madkhalis on opposing rulers and methods of action; with *takfir* (excommunication) supporters and its conditions; with Cairo Haraki Salafists on issues of religious sovereignty and collective action; with jihadist groups on questions of belief and the use of force; and with the Muslim Brotherhood on methods of change.[11]

The Call's agenda focuses on four main stages[12]:

- Constructing a standardized Islamic doctrine according to the Salafist framework, methodology of inference on questions of theology and law, and dismantling existing heterodox Islamic beliefs

- Engaging in spiritual refinement of ethics and worship, and religious education through Islamic socialization

- Preaching the Salafist manhaj across society, trying to spread Salafist values peacefully and curb the ones deemed un-Islamic, including laws, habits, dress codes, and social, gender, and family relations

- Applying sharia and the rule of Islam when conditions have become ripe as a product of previous stages; collective action should bring together existing work on charity and social welfare, social and communal solidarities, initiatives for commanding good and forbidding evil, and sharia-based conflict resolution and alternatives to secularist financial transactions.

As for the most appropriate shape of this collective action, the Call favored the creation of a disciplined organization long before the 2011 uprising, probably under the influence of the literature by Brotherhood ideologues such as Sayyid Qutb and his brother Mohamed.[13]

The Call also spurned the notion of collective action within state-controlled religious structures and went on to establish its own independent organization

with key distinguishing conditions. Among them are publicity, peaceful action, and no secrecy in transparent collective action; no conflict with the regime to prevent any damage or costs; and—unlike the *murshid* (supreme guide) in the Brotherhood—no oaths of allegiance to top leaders. Also, decisions are to be justified through rigorous religious decisionmaking, rather than elite command; respect must be shown to sheikhs while keeping legitimate disagreements;[14] and pluralism of duties, tasks, programs, specializations, views, and cooperative integration are to be based on the same manhaj and fundamentals of al-Salaf al-Salih. There is to be no group fanaticism: the Call exists for administrative purposes not political leadership or power; loyalty to it is not a condition of Muslim faith.

This last description, however, it is worth questioning. The Call's literature often refers to itself as a microcosm of the state rather than simply an administrative institution.[15]

Pre-2011 Organization

The organization long predated the 2011 uprising. It made various attempts at legalization in 1985–1986 by creating al-Furqan Institute for preachers and *Sawt al-Dawa* (the Voice of the Call) magazine. Social committees became increasingly active after the 1992 Cairo earthquake, providing charity and relief until 1994. The regime initially left the apolitical Call alone. Indeed, the regime even benefited by the Call taking upon itself to combat jihadist and Qutbist influence.[16]

In 1994, however, the regime cracked down on the organization for security reasons. Its institute for preachers and its magazine were shut down. Many important sheikhs and activists were temporarily arrested and later banned from traveling without prior permission or appearing on religious TV channels. Some sheikhs were forbidden to give sermons except in a few mosques in Alexandria.

Afterward, some sheikhs called for suspending the Call's administrative structure. But Sheikh Yasser Borhami, a founding father of the Call, and his protégés decided instead to move the structure underground. By evading security forces, the Call's networks survived a 1994 official ban and subsequent waves of suppression in 1998 and 2002.

By 2004, all arrested sheikhs and activists had been released from prison. Between 2004 and 2011, the Call maintained a decentralized administrative structure with limited communications. During this period, Borhami engaged in exceptionally active networking and recruiting across the country—enabling his future domination over the Call.

In April 2011, the Call was finally legally licensed in Alexandria as al-Dawa Association. It followed national social associations laws, and its structure and budget became subject to legal oversight. In contrast to the Brotherhood, this was a distinguishing step toward normalized relations with the state.[17] The Call restructured its organization and formalized its register, incorporating several

local charities that were loosely affiliated with it and briefly considering business investments to finance the association.[18]

During this period, the Call has thrived in different spaces. Its significant social capital has been based on widespread mosque networks and its role in mediating local conflict resolution processes. Its inclusion of youth and women into a clear, singular educational and intellectual framework has been unique among Salafists.[19] Its organizational upward-mobility work with youth has also been notable.[20] The Call's scope of activities has stretched across Alexandria, Matrouh, Beheira, Beni Suef, Fayoum, and other Delta governorates.

The Amreya district west of Alexandria offers an example of the Call's organizational capabilities, developing popular trust by immersing itself in local culture and vernacular politics. In Amreya, the Call's most significant tool has been the sharia conflict resolution committee that has mediated conflicts over land, family feuds, crimes, financial quarrels, and sectarian strife. The committee's appeal stems from its rigorous methodologies for adjudication, impartiality, attention to local traditions and family networks, reputation of moral integrity of the Call's sheikhs, an incompetent state judiciary, and a lack of other nonstate alternatives.[21] Similar patterns were common in other zones.[22]

Current Official Organization

The association is structured according to governorate, sector, neighborhood, zone, and mosque levels. Three official bodies are particularly important:

1. A 220-member *shura* council acts as the Call's parliament and general assembly. It is elected by local governorate shura councils and is responsible for major decisions and the board of directors.

2. A sixteen-member board of directors acts as the executive body. Parallel structures are created at the local level in different governorates. After deliberation, decisions are made according to majorities.

3. A six-member board of trustees presides over the association and is authorized to call for a general assembly to change the board of directors. The board of trustees' membership is exclusive to the six founding fathers. Currently, the organization's head is Mohamed Abdel Fattah, commonly known as Abu Idris. Of the five other founders, Muhammad Ismail al-Muqaddim and Yasser Borhami act as deputies, and Said Abdel-Azim, Ahmed Farid, and Ahmed al-Houtaiba are members of the board. (A seventh founding father of the Call, Emad Abdel-Ghafour, left the country in the late 1980s.) The six are widely revered religious sheikhs and preachers. Individually and together, they act as the religious points of reference for the Call.

Unofficial Hierarchies

Notwithstanding this official structure, powerful hierarchies exist within each tier. Within the first tier, al-Muqaddim and Abdel-Azim have little real organizational clout. The rest enjoy both religious and organizational power. Borhami has the most significant support because he has been the main architect of the organizational networks of the movement since the 1980s. The sheikhs and leaders of key organizational portfolios who make up the second tier are largely his associates.[23] The third tier is mostly executive administrators and activists in charge of running the association's daily affairs.[24] Finally, groups of professionals in the business and private sector are also loyal to the Call's sheikhs. They act as effective liaisons with politicians and media in the interactive political sphere.[25] The key criteria for upward mobility within the movement are religious scholarship, personal trust, and organizational agility.

The Call's organizations in many ways attempted to mimic that of the Brotherhood's, but the Call was not as successful.[26] This could be attributed to the inadequacy of its networking methods on university campuses,[27] lack of strong allegiance to leaders, and comparably lower logistical, communication, and financial resources.[28] Furthermore, this "MBification" of the Salafist Call diverted the focus from initial Salafist concerns like scholarly production.[29]

Post-Uprising Transformations of the Egyptian Salafist Schools

A revolt that flouted the Salafists' expectations and even drew considerable participation among the Salafist grass roots left clerics in disarray. Madkhalis and many Scholastic Salafists preferred to resume their pre-2011 apolitical profiles. Harakis were initially reserved about electoral political participation,[30] but, out of fear of losing youths to other emerging Islamist parties, they agreed to immediate participation within the new democratic politics.[31] Reconfiguring the religious-political sphere was seen as a nightmare that needed to be countered by all possible means. Besides, participating within the newly established democratic system was clearly preferable to dictatorship. Democracy would provide for the public and private freedoms needed to allow for Salafist proselytizing, as well as an inclusion within national policy making processes to counter the influence of secularists.

Salafists were left with three recourses: First, rather than compete among each other, they could support fellow Islamists against secularist competitors. Unorganized Salafists in Cairo and the Delta region, with little organizational competency and meager resources, initially opted for this choice, allying with the Brotherhood for their political experience and competence. Second, they could welcome a role as Islamist transnational revolutionaries. Radicalized youth as well as ex-jihadists and Qutbists opted for actions ranging from violent jihadism to revolutionary protest politics, championing uncompromising

interpretations of "Islamist politics." (The most notable example was the popular campaign of ex-presidential hopeful Hazem Salah Abu Ismail. In the lead-up to the May 2012 presidential elections, an extremely popular Abu Ismail phenomenon—modern in tools, Salafist in appearance, populist in discourse—claimed to best appreciate the revolutionary potentials of the country and the capacities of Islamist mass mobilization to undermine the old state. While other key Islamist actors had opted for the electoral compromise as early as March 2011, Abu Ismail's campaign signaled a challenge to formal politics by young Islamist networks who shunned formal Islamist organizations.) Third, they could create a Salafist party and compete with the Brotherhood. Though the Call did not command the support of the Salafist majority, it was the only organization with the nationwide network, organizational leadership, and unified manhaj needed to create such a party.

A history of animosity and lack of trust between the Brotherhood and the Call led the latter to adopt the third option and create a political party, Nour, with a mission to: endorse sharia as an absolute framework of reference; gradually apply sharia according to local conditions, safeguard the Salafists' gains in society; defer to the old state and its institutions; and discredit the legitimacy of violent confrontations among Islamists and in society at large. Though substantive controversial issues—tolerance, pluralism, and religious and gender equality—remained taboo, to justify their political engagement, these Salafists argued for the many positive electoral, participatory, and checks and balances mechanisms of an inclusive procedural democracy.

The Call also argued that a modern party would be different from the Salafist understanding of a *hizb* (party) as corruptive and conflict-ridden; the creation of different Islamist parties would then be legitimate and even useful.[32] The Call then in many ways adopted the Brotherhood's strategy of using "necessity" to legitimize actions—temporarily suspending dogma rather than revising it. People might not be ready yet for the rule of sharia. Although Salafists believed that sharia should not be subject to popular opinion, they agreed to recognize this reality and act accordingly.[33] Any violations of Islamic sharia, according to the Salafist framework, such as the nomination of women on the Nour Party's lists (mandated by law), are justified as a lesser evil than nonparticipation and leaving the political stage open for the secularists.[34] By law, the Nour Party had to open its doors to Copts as well. The Call justified this, to the fury of many Scholastic Salafists.[35]

The Nour Party

The Nour Party was created in June 2011. Its initial affiliation with the Call was limited;[36] most of the burden fell on party founder Emad Abdel-Ghafour and his close advisers. As the party started receiving greater public attention and political command, however, the Call increasingly exerted meaningful control over

the party's structure. The party quickly established itself as the major Salafist party—and second-largest party—in Egypt, winning 24 percent of the seats in the 2011–2012 elections. Though the Call's experience with electoral politics was limited, the role of its preexisting informal networks was remarkable.[37]

Platform

The Nour Party's platform identifies six pillars for its political activities:

- Preserving the Islamic identity of Egypt against Westernization, corruption, and moral degradation

- Pursuing political, constitutional, and legal reforms necessary to secure foundations of a sharia-based political system[38]

- Spreading Islamic values against secularist distortion in society, economy, education, family life, and culture, and presenting alternative Islamic models

- Promoting national economic development, independence, and social justice through anti-poverty policies

- Safeguarding freedoms, rights, and diversities in accordance to sharia

- Creating parallel civil society organizations

The platform considered sharia a "public order and a regulative framework inclusive of all legal, political, economic, and social state decisions and policies."[39]

Competing Visions on the Party Structure

The 220,000-member party has developed two major viewpoints on questions of party discipline and relations with the Call. The first suggested that success would depend on horizontal expansion, bottom-up representation, and a capacity to be inclusive of a variety of Salafist actors.[40] The second viewpoint believed that the Nour Party should function as the political wing of the Call, having a vertically drawn structure with a clear hierarchical, decisionmaking apparatus. Each vision had supporting evidence.

Proponents of the first believed that a pluralist party was necessary given diverse and loosely organized Salafist networks; they argued that the Nour Party's 2011 electoral success was attainable through the mobilization of Salafist grass roots nationwide, not just supporters of the Call. And if conditions changed, these swing voters could support another Salafist party.[41]

Proponents of the second vision believed the 7 million votes for the party in 2011 came from the Call's power base—and that most other Salafists supported the Brotherhood. As a result, they argued that the political outlook of the party should conform to that of the Call. A broad Salafist outlook would render the party insignificant.[42] This second vision subscribed to the Brotherhood's model of relations between a political party and an Islamist

religious group: functional separation but political and ideological domination of the movement.[43]

The Nour Party ran candidates in the 2011 elections without resolving these differences. Within a year, beginning in September 2012, it was hit by a wave of internal conflicts over the party's chairmanship and the composition of its executive authority.[44] Proponents of the pluralist vision, led by Abdel-Ghafour, accused the Call's leadership, particularly Borhami, of undermining the party's autonomy and filling party echelons with the Call's trusted proxies in order to control the party's funds.[45] Historical hostilities between the two figures soured the tension even further.[46] Reconciliation attempts by sheikhs and the party ombudsman failed. Abdel-Ghafour's supporters, in a minority position, quit and formed a separate party in early 2013. Happy to see its major opponent weakened, the Brotherhood embraced the new Watan Party.

> **The Nour Party's lack of discipline was exposed during the first round of the 2012 presidential elections.**

The Nour Party's lack of discipline was exposed during the first round of the 2012 presidential elections. The party leadership supported presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh out of pragmatism—despite his liberal understandings of Islamism, he could counter Brotherhood hegemony and achieve national stability and consensus. But few in the grass roots voted for him.[47] Most either boycotted the election or voted for the allegedly more Islamist Morsi. Nevertheless, Nour Party leaders congratulated themselves on other political achievements.[48] And in January 2013, the party moved forward with internal elections; by electing loyal followers of Borhami and the Call as chairman and deputy chairmen, the party solidified itself as the exclusive political wing of the Salafist Call.

Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood

Salafists maintain an unbending conviction that they are the only trustworthy guardians of Islamic sharia and values in society. Their critiques of the Brotherhood are extensive, both in religious doctrine and in political understandings.[49] For example, they contend that the Brotherhood's focus on numbers and group loyalty in mobilization and recruitment has led to unorthodox innovations in its creed. Furthermore, they maintain that by embracing democracy in several countries and often endorsing secularist political understandings on gender and religious equality, the Brotherhood has failed to uphold the concept of *hakimiya* (divine sovereignty over human life).

The Brotherhood's jurisprudence is viewed by Salafists as often fragmented and lacking in rigor, a result of reformists' programs and the Brotherhood's priority of integration in the system.[50] Salafists regard the Brothers as having no real manhaj in religious inference; they refrain from documenting their heritage in political jurisprudence particularly on controversial matters. Also,

the Brotherhood does not heed sunna in regard to correct Muslim behavior and appearance,[51] and its relations with Shia and Copts are not conditioned by the injunctions of sharia.

The Call and the Brotherhood

The Call's perspective on the Brotherhood generally fits with the Salafist critique. In addition, the historical conditions of the groups' geographical proximity in Alexandria and a clash of influence on university campuses have made the relationship tenser. Among the Salafists, the Call is the closest intellectually to the Brotherhood. The Call was nonetheless critical of the Brotherhood's reformist vision and politics, which it believed had been politically compromising and inadequate in deterring regime repression and promoting the Islamist cause.

After Mubarak's downfall, the somewhat stable relationship between the Call and the Brotherhood that had lasted for decades gave way to a complex, often shifting pattern of mixed collaboration and competition. As Borhami explained: "The right way to have a good relationship with the Brotherhood is to develop our own powerful existence. Only then the relationship will be excellent. This will be better for us and them."[52]

The Nour Party and the Brotherhood

The Nour Party's bid to replace the Brotherhood after the 2011–2012 transitional period, as a superior Islamist alternative both religiously and politically, did not prevent the two organizations from collaborating on key strategic issues. Both opposed the candidacy of the controversial Abu Ismail. The parties worked together on the drafting of the 2012 constitution that would secure a dominant role for Islamists in the new political system and enshrine the "Islamic identity" articles in the constitution.[53] Both then mobilized their masses to back the constitution-drafting process in its final stages in late 2012. This collaboration ultimately alienated the Brotherhood from non-Islamist politicians, raising concerns that the Brotherhood was losing its long-held status as the moderate, key agenda-setter of Islamist politics.

At the same time, the Brotherhood and the Nour Party had notable disagreements. A possible electoral alliance during the 2011 parliamentary elections collapsed because of disagreement on power sharing, and the cutthroat competition between the Brotherhood and the Nour Party throughout the campaign made headlines. Wary of antagonizing the old establishment, the Nour Party refused to back a Brotherhood-proposed ban on politicians from the National Democratic Party, the former ruling party.

After the 2012 presidential elections, the Brotherhood reneged on its pre-election promises to offer Nour Party members key positions in the government.[54] Instead, Morsi's Ministry of Religious Endowments restricted the Salafists' abilities to deliver sermons and religious lessons. Salafists in general also had other propaganda issues with Morsi, questioning his reluctance

to apply sharia (such as his renewal of nightclub licenses), his acceptance of an International Monetary Fund loan (sharia bans payment of interest), his accommodation of Shia, and his renewed relations with Iran.

In the aftermath of the political polarization that almost paralyzed Egyptian politics in November 2012 following Morsi's controversial authoritarian presidential decrees, the Nour Party refused to stand by the Brotherhood-led government against the opposition. Instead, on January 28, 2013, the party presented its own initiative for conflict resolution. It reiterated respect for Morsi's legitimacy yet recognized the opposition's demands as legitimate and necessary. The list included demands for forming a new cabinet, investigating incidents of violence, replacing the Morsi-appointed attorney general, and introducing fairness protections for the upcoming parliamentary elections. The initiative was rebuffed by the Brotherhood.[55] In the months leading up to the 2013 ouster of Morsi, the Nour Party's calls for compromise were rejected by the Brotherhood.[56]

Post-Morsi Salafist Politics: Divisions

The old state–Brotherhood confrontation in the aftermath of Morsi's ouster left the Salafists with two options, neither of them fully desirable: join the Brotherhood's cause in a subordinate position or accept being co-opted by the state to secure their own existence. The first option meant political obscurity, while the second would undermine the Salafists' Islamist ideological character and credibility. Ultimately, organized Salafists—such as the Nour Party—opted for the latter, while less organized Salafists threw their weight behind the Brotherhood. Their support largely continued through Morsi's ouster and the anti-Islamist crackdown that followed. Caught between regime authoritarianism and the rise of revolutionary Islamists, both groups of Salafists face an uncertain future.

The Nour Party's Current Strategy

The party and the Call today face various challenges. They need to build new strategies for political participation and *dawa* (social and religious proselytizing) in an authoritarian context and before an anti-Islamic popular audience. They have to rebuild their organizational and institutional capacity and credibility among Salafists. The state's bid to nationalize the religious public sphere also offers a daunting threat to the Call.

> **The state's bid to nationalize the religious public sphere also offers a daunting threat to the Call.**

The Nour Party accepted the fait accompli of the coup. The party could not join the Brotherhood in its unaffordable and ultimately suicidal battle with the state for fear of weakening its bid to someday succeed the Brotherhood. The Nour Party brought forward both religious and political justifications for this controversial standpoint.[57] Party

leaders believed the ongoing "revolutionary Islamist protests" would inevitably be associated with abhorred takfir (excommunication) and destructive violence and that there was no Islamic state under Morsi to begin with. Hence, talk of protests that aimed to defend Morsi's Islamic order against the enemies of Islam is meaningless.

To defy the old state and its huge popular backing was imprudent; instead, they tried to secure what remained of footholds for Islamist recognition, legitimacy, and participation under the new military-dominated road map. Accordingly, the party took part in the constitutional drafting committee, and it worked laboriously to maintain articles on sharia and Islamic identity in the new 2014 constitution.[58]

The Nour Party has already broken the ideological solidarity of the Islamist bloc vis-à-vis the old state. The party's decision to participate in the new road map and sell out the "Islamist president" was seen as an act of unpardonable religious treachery. The party, however, maintains organizational comparative advantage over even non-Islamist parties. And it anticipates that since it is the only existing Islamist Salafist party, Salafists will bounce back to vote for the Nour Party, no matter how weak and co-opted it may be in opposition to secularists.

The Nour Party's capacity to achieve its goals is questionable given the current balance of power. Moreover, some political actors, encouraged by anti-Islamist media diatribes and slander, have been already pushing to ban religious parties altogether on a constitutional basis. The regime still maintains its functional use of the Call as an Islamist distraction from its authoritarian policies and more threatening conversations about democracy and a failing economy.

To maintain some semblance of legitimacy and to deflate charges of opportunism, Nour Party leaders have opted for a "loyal opposition" profile— accepting the legitimacy of the new road map set out by the regime while occasionally voicing critique. Though they supported the 2014 constitutional referendum and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's presidential election,[59] the party has criticized the regime on two important policies: freedom of religious preaching in mosques and proposed electoral laws and gerrymandering. The party has also condemned the regime's suppression of the Brotherhood and other Islamists and discouraged participating in the cabinet for the time being. Parliament and municipal politics, it seems, are enough.[60]

As for relations with the Brotherhood, despite internal disagreements, the party favors state-Brotherhood reconciliation, knowing that this would reopen the political sphere. Party leaders believe, however, that such reconciliation is dependent on a revision of the current Qutbist thought and confrontational Brotherhood strategic policy.[61]

The Nour Party's actual power base among Salafists will be tested in upcoming parliamentary elections, if held. The party is running independently and fielding candidates and party lists across the country (the only party able to field lists across the whole country), but it has pinned its hopes on its key

strongholds in Alexandria, Matrouh, Beheira, Fayoum, Kafr el-Sheikh, and other governorates such as Beni Suef, Giza, and Minya.

It is almost certain that the party will not do as well as it did in the 2011 elections, when it garnered an outstanding 7 million votes. The Nour Party has arguably lost the sympathy of a lot of the general Salafist and Islamist masses, pro-Brotherhood supporters, as well as politically indifferent rural communities that heeded the calls of the sheikhs and the "sharia cause" in 2011.[62] Enduring features of the Call in the eyes of its Salafist critics include favoring quantity over quality and trust over efficiency, a lack of institutionalism and qualified cadres, inadequate tarbeya programs, self-seeking partisanship, elite domination, and an instrumentalization of religious reasoning to justify past political decisions.[63] Critics imagine that the party will be even more exposed without the trust of Islamist masses,[64] and they expect it to receive about 8–15 percent of votes in future elections.[65] They argue for a replacement of the party or a change in Borhami's clerical type of leadership.[66] One of the founding fathers of the Salafist Call has already broken away, contemplating the creation of new, parallel organizations.[67]

In an internal opinion poll conducted by the party, 60 percent of the members disagreed with the official party position on Morsi's ouster and its aftermath. Some members of the Call have limited their activities to preaching, severing ties with the Call's politics. Post-coup resignations, the splintering of the group, and even suspensions of members were reported in Dakahlia and most notably in Matrouh,[68] which witnessed some wrangling with tribal-based local officials. The party branch in Matrouh was unfrozen later.[69] Also, there have been conflicting reports about the real turnout in the party's strongholds during the 2014 elections.[70]

Salafist Call leaders admit to these challenges, but the Call believes it can survive due to its distinctive character. "The very fact that we find hard times, nowadays, justifying our political decisions before our grass roots vindicate our claims of distinction in character from the Brotherhood," said Sheikh Abdel Moneim al-Shahat. "Our doctrine is very strict but our political behavior is flexible. The Brotherhood is the exact opposite."[71]

The Salafist Call is irreplaceable as long as it sticks to its distinguishable noncombative, flexible reformist status. Optimists argue that spread of jihadist and Qutbist thought among Islamist alternatives will again make the Call appealing to both the state and the national audience.[72] Regional political developments could play into the Call's hands as well. Sunni-Shia polarization in addition to the Saudi Arabian–Iranian duel and mobilization against the self-proclaimed Islamic State in the Arab East and North Africa could engender a role for Salafists in a Saudi-sponsored regional ideological crusade against both Shia and takfiri radicalism. In the words of a Salafist politician: "The role played by the type of a group like the Salafist Call, as a social supplement of the state, is too indispensable for the regime to eliminate it."[73] State-encouraged Sufism's limited Islamist audience, Scholastic Salafism's little relevance to

youth, and al-Azhar's outdated curricula and thought, scarce manpower, and lost credibility make them unviable alternatives to the Call.[74]

Despite the gloomy post-Morsi authoritarianism, the Call, then, is keeping up its activities. The party is planning a popular and regime-friendly campaign against "the four dangers on Egypt: takfir, atheism, Shiism, and corruption."[75] The Call leaders believe they will quit politics if electoral politics becomes totally meaningless as in the Mubarak days.[76] Their heavy investment in politics, however, makes a retreat unlikely.

The Future of Other Salafist Actors

Al-Watan's eclectic role within the Salafist field is similar to al-Wasat Party's relationship with the Brotherhood: heavily based on a desire for a "moderate" pro-democracy struggle against the military regime. Differentiating itself from undemocratic Islamists, al-Watan believes it can avoid militant and ill-advised protests.[77] Al-Watan participated within the Brotherhood-led National Alliance for Supporting Legitimacy until November 2014, when it quit over Brotherhood inflexibility. Its leaders are still willing to mediate between the Brotherhood and the regime,[78] but a lack of resources or Salafist constituency leaves the party with limited potential.

The Islamist masses that joined forces with the Brotherhood in anti-regime demonstrations fall into two categories. Some Salafists joined out of emotional solidarity with the hundreds of Islamist supporters of Morsi who were massacred by Egyptian security forces while forcibly clearing sit-ins at Rabaa al-Adawiya and al-Nahda Squares in Cairo in 2013,[79] but who were uncomfortable with Qutbism and jihadism and had lost faith in the potential for democratic political participation. Reconciliation with the regime, if it ever happens, would mean a refocus on social and religious activities and rejoining the Scholastic Salafists who refused political action from the beginning, claiming that Egyptian society is not ready for the rule of sharia.

Within Rabaa Islamists, there is also a critical mass of politically active and revolutionary Salafists whose fortunes are tied to Brotherhood inclusion or exclusion by the state. They point to the termination of the Islamist 2012 constitution, exclusion of Islamists from the 2013 constitution drafting process, and the bloody crackdown on the Islamists. All these, they say, prove the existence of a "war against Islam and Islamists" in Egypt and the urgency of revolutionary Islamist action.[80]

Radicals' standpoint on the Salafist Call is very bitter. For them, the Call's consistently pro-military positions were more than selling out to the anti-Islamic counterrevolution. The Call's policy exposed the limitations of the reformist preaching manhaj that was interested in slow but safe growth. This left the Call underappreciating the decisiveness of post-Mubarak political battles. The group's unwillingness to revise its unrealistic, preset plans and misreading of the balance of power led the overcautious Call to behind-closed-doors

settlements with the military. Yet, the radicals' organizational inability, their leaders' refraining from accountability (such as Abu Ismail), lack of workable political vision, and rigorous religious methodology limit their potentials. These revolutionized Salafists were active during the forty-six-day Rabaa sit-in and as members of the National Alliance for Supporting Legitimacy. Their actions suggest that ideological boundaries between these Salafists and jihadist, takfiri, and Qutbist groups will blur over time.

Salafists' Revisions

The 2011 uprising was a political earthquake in Egypt, and Salafism was no exception, exposing vulnerabilities of the Salafist manhaj. While Salafists agreed on old Islamic schools of thought, their assessments of the contemporary schools—such as al-Azhar, the Brotherhood, Islamic reformists, as well as liberal, nationalist, and leftist secularists—differed greatly.

Despite recent political attention, Salafists have not engaged in substantial intellectual revisionism on issues of sectarianism, women, the arts, censorship, state-religion relations, minorities, international relations, secularism, methods of religious inference, and Islamic behavior. Salafists thus continue to suffer from the inability of their fragments to coalesce around even a minimalist program.

New points of reference began to emerge after 2011. Among them were what can be termed "social sciences Salafists," who situate Salafist ideas within Western social sciences in deconstructing Western modern secularism.[81] Their attempt to furnish fresh intellectual resources to supplement the Salafist Islamist movement is an attempt at reconfiguring the Islamist movement at scholarly, intellectual, and social—rather than political—levels.

New Salafist revisionists have started questioning the type of Islamist consciousness and the merits of self-congratulatory assessments of success in al-tarbeya and dawa. Revisionists believe that Salafists, among other Islamists, had distorted priorities in the wake of the 2011 uprising. Islamists should have used politics in a minimal way to safeguard social activities, this thinking goes, but instead pursued political power, thereby eroding people's trust, maximizing hostilities, and exposing their incapacities. This strategic blunder rested on an illusion that the modern state could be Islamized if political power is seized.[82]

Salafist revisionists believe that the societal movement should no longer be instrumentalized as a means for political power. Instead, spreading Islam through community-oriented societal activism at ethical, educational, intellectual, cultural, rights, and communal levels should be the key objective in itself. This might offer a more effective and less risky Islamic policy.

Notwithstanding the depth of such revisions, Salafism still lacks a theory for social change or a cogent understanding of the current public sphere and civil society. Salafist theory has largely ignored challenges introduced by the modern nation-state and subsequent globalization, including failed processes

of economic modernization and urbanization that have left deep impacts on the correlation of class, market, finance, consumption, laws, public administration, ethics, identities, media, state-society relations, power imbalances, and resource allocation.

Islamist outreach is limited to hollow preaching and charity work. Islamist doctrine is still attached to abstract jargon about "justice," "reform," "Islamist government," and "struggle against secularism" without appreciation of the contexts and actors of this "secularism" and of how Islam became understood. Apparently, the Salafist revisionists' real interest is in diverting the religious masses away from the problematic modern political sphere issues (against which Islamists have proven to be clueless and unprepared and are doomed to fail) and keeping these masses within the bounds of the familiar and controllable domains of religious scholasticism and probably the new ones of Islamic social science intellectualism as well. Revisionist Salafists' critical arguments of politicized Islamists could have been more meaningful if they had worked at exploring a new creative and less state-centric type of Islamic politics, which has not been the case.

Conclusion: Hard Questions Ahead

Prior to the 2011 uprising, Salafists believed that political participation would inevitably compromise doctrine, maintaining heavy concerns about the Islamic legitimacy of democracy as a mode of political contestation. Salafist purification was aimed at creating community; there was no interest in conflict with the regime, and Salafists were content to be isolated from the larger society and the state establishment. Since the uprising, Salafists have renounced historic taboos over political participation within un-Islamic systems. They have reached out to the broader society and pursued undertakings necessary to persuade political consumers, win voters, and reach consensus with the state institutions.

While pragmatism might be politically expedient in the short term, it could be suicidal for an ideological movement like Salafism going forward. In pursuing an Islamist political system ruled by sharia in Egypt, Salafists have adopted an ambiguous populist discourse that shifted focus from the moral to the political. Salafists, through this ambiguity, sought to Islamicize the post-2011 political process while pursuing political stability, economic recovery, and restoration of public security and order. Mimicking the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafist Call has preached Islamist propaganda while at the same time dodging its application. Aside from raising Islamism on issues of public morality and in reference to sharia, the Call, like the Brotherhood, has come to terms with normal conservative politics. The

In pursuing an Islamist political system ruled by sharia in Egypt, Salafists have adopted an ambiguous populist discourse that shifted focus from the moral to the political.

gap between doctrine and performance will be a formidable challenge and an ideological deficit amid current state-Islamist relations.

The pivotal aspect that will determine the future of the Salafists is their ability to furnish a unique political model that distinguishes Salafism from the indefensible authoritarian Arab regimes, and also from other Islamists' failed models. If this was difficult between 2011 and 2013, it might be close to impossible since the coup that ousted Morsi.

Apart from shallow operational statements regarding necessity, little effort has been made to create intellectual frameworks for any of these behavioral transformations. Outreach to diverse and ever-changing audiences is intrinsically incongruent with the rigid Salafist frame. Salafists risk minimalizing their differences with the Brotherhood and undermining their ideological framework for an Islamist utopia. This may seriously call into question the Islamic validity of the Salafist manhaj. More radical actors are candidates to fill this vacuum.

Salafists' shortcomings in delivering on their political mandate—the preservation of Islamic identity and sharia and attention to socioeconomic concerns—would not be just an ideological loss but a social one as well. Frustration over these failures would undermine grassroots trust, squandering the social capital accumulated over decades of activism among rural and urban lower-class neighborhoods across Egypt.

How are mainstream political Salafists, notable for their peaceful profile, going to rein in mounting threats from radical Islamist factions that have shunned peaceful engagement altogether? A failure of mainstream political Salafism to implement stricter Islamist criteria (for instance, with regard to tourism, culture, finance, laws, and attaining an influential presence in government) may further compound this threat. So, too, will the hyper-authoritarian character of the current regime.

Finally, in a post-2011 context where dreams of democracy, egalitarian socioeconomic development, and freedoms have been shattered by state-Islamist confrontations, how could Salafist success remain relevant?[83] Salafists have been opposed or at best indifferent to ideals of democratic citizenship in public policy, institutional work, socioeconomic relations, and securing individual rights. Still bound by outdated jurisprudence, Salafists' political frameworks have not grown to appreciate the contemporary socioeconomic and political realities. Any serious revision to address this contradiction might practically launch a post-Salafist era, something the Salafists are unwilling to accept.

Notes

1   In 1917, there was a periodical under the title the *Salafeya*, for instance. Ironically, the Wahhabist school in Najd used to call itself al-Dawa al-Najdeya but was introduced to the Salafist label by the Egyptian school.

2   Though downplaying *al-tamadzohb* (or the imitation of one of the many *mazaheb*, or schools of law and thought found in Muslim tradition), in practice contemporary Salafism follows the line of the old Ahl al-Hadith school.

3   Interview by author with Sheikh Abdel Moneim al-Shahat, a member of the Salafist Call's board of directors, Alexandria, May 11, 2014.

4   Said Abdel-Azim, *Democracy and Theories of Reform in Perspective* (Alexandria: Dar al-Iman, 1996).

5   Salafist Call, "A Decisive Statement on the Issue of the Parliament and How It Abrogates God's Monotheism." Also, see the treatise issued by the Islamic group in 1986, which was popular among Salafists back then, titled "Is It Another God?"

6   The Ulama Shura Council, created after 2011, is not a real organization, but as a framework it expresses the viewpoints of the key Scholastic Salafists.

7   The list includes names such as Abu Ishaq al-Huwani, Muhammad Hussein Yaqoub, Muhammad Hassan, Mustafa al-Adawi, and others.

8   The names are attributed to the founders of this school in Saudi Arabia, Sheikhs Rabi al-Madkhali and Muhammad Aman al-Allah al-Jammi.

9   Examples of Madkhali sheikhs in Egypt include Muhammad Said Raslan, Hesham al-Beyali, Mahmoud Amer, and Osama al-Qousi.

10 Author interview with Salafist Call official Osama Rashad, Alexandria, May 6, 2014.

11 Yasser Borhami, "Salafism and Manhaj of Change?" *Sawt al-Da'wa*, 1994.

12 Ibid.

13 Abdel-Rahman Abdel-Khaleq, an Egyptian Haraki Salafist scholar in Kuwait, mediated Mohamed and Sayyid Qutb's notions to Salafist Call clerics during the early 1980s. Author interview with Muhammad Yousri Salama, ex-spokesman of the Nour Party, November 3, 2012.

14 Interview by author with Yasser Borhami, deputy chairman of the Salafist Call, Alexandria, May 7, 2014.

15 Yasser Borhami, "Collective Action Between Excessiveness and Negligence?" *Sawt al-Da'wa* 4 (1991).

16 The Call was credited with the limited spread of jihadists in Alexandria. Their popularity in Upper Egypt is due to the Call's weakness there. Author interview with Rashad, Alexandria, May 6, 2014.

17 Ibid.

18 Between 2011 and 2013, the Salafist-sponsored Bait al-Amal business association and consultative institution failed to deliver on its original promises. Its failure was due to little capital and incompetent professional management. Author interview with al-Shahat, Alexandria, May 11, 2014.

19 Author interview with Ahmed Hassan Kato, ex-member of the Salafist Call and the Nour Party, Alexandria, May 6, 2014. See also Alaa Bakr, *Key Features of the Salafist Manhaj (Lectures in Salafism)* (Al-'aqida Press, 2008).

20 For example: Ahmed Khalil (thirty-two years old) and Sherif Taha (twenty-six years old) entered the 2011 parliament on the Nour Party's lists. Nader Bakkar (twenty-six years old) became the party's official spokesperson. More than half of the Call's shura council members are under forty.

21 As a result, crime rates in Amreya are considerably very low. Copts in Amreya voted for Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh in gratitude to the Call's efforts. People from other towns have come to ask for help from the renowned sharia committee in Amreya. Author interview with Sheikh Sherif al-Hawari, a member of the Salafist Call's board of directors and the official in charge of executive work in the governorates, Amreya, May 7, 2014. This part is based on the author's field research and observation in the Amreya region of Alexandria, between November 2012 and May 2014.

22 Capitalizing on the same patterns, in Borg al-Arab and al-Dekheila in Alexandria, for example, Nour Party candidates spectacularly managed to defeat the popular Muslim Brotherhood candidates in the single-member district ballots in the 2011 elections.

23 That would include Moustafa Diab, in charge of juniors education; Sheikh Sherif al-Hawari, the uncrowned popular leader of Amreya and the areas west of Alexandria (including Borg al-Arab, al-Dekheila, and probably as far as Matrouh); Abdel Moneim al-Shahat, a key tactician and popular cleric in al-Muntazah; Mahmoud Abdel-Hamid, a key organizer; Sayyid Hussein al-Affani; Younes Makhyoun, from Beheira and the current Nour Party chairman; Ashraf Thabet, ex–deputy chairman of the Nour Party; Jalal al-Morra and al-Sayyid Moustafa, the current deputies for the Nour chairman; Ahmed Abdel Salam in West Muntazah; Mahmoud al-Agami; and others.

24 This tier includes Osama Rashad, Ahmed Abdel-Hamid (who was in charge of elections within the Nour Party), Gharib Abu al-Hassan (who was in charge of the party's membership committee), Muhammad Sherif, and others.

25 Such as Amr Mekky, Walid al-Sayyid, Nader Bakkar, and Mamdouh Gaber.

26 It copied the Brotherhood's outreach methods of *dawa fardeya* (required individual preaching) and *qawafel al-dawa* (preaching tours) as extracurricular activities on university campuses to spread religious morality. They were careful not to intimidate the police. Importantly, and unlike the Brotherhood, most of the Call's initiatives were spontaneous. Author interview with Ahmed Nagi, an ex–Salafist Call youth member, Alexandria, May 4, 2014.

27 Ibid.

28 The Call's funding is mainly through donations and subscriptions.

29 In the final analysis, the intellectual and scholarly literature of the Call is very limited compared to that of the Najdi Salafist school in Saudi Arabia, for example.

30 Some of them were still religiously uncomfortable with establishing parties, and others were obsessed with the nightmare of a comeback of the old regime. Author interview with Mahmoud Abbas, a Nour Party official and head of the "reform front," November 9, 2012.

31 Ibid.

32 Pluralism in Islam should be borne of diversity but not hostility. Yasser Borhami, "Jurisprudence of Differences." In a post-2011 fatwa, Borhami described Islamist party pluralism as healthy. But he sternly warned of conflictual partisanship that would invite fanaticism and hate politics. That kind of party politics is a deviation from the Islamic manhaj, even if it upholds Islamist banners.

33 Ibid.

34 Ahmed al-Shahat, "Women and Copts in the Next Parliament: A Sharii Vision," *Conquest*, February 17, 2015, www.fath-news.com/Art/812.

35 Besides the typical argument of political necessity, Borhami argued that admitting Copts to the party is not wrong because they do accept sharia, or else they wouldn't have joined the party in the first place.

36 The Call offered the party limited funding and manpower during its formation. Author interview with Mahmoud Abbas, November 9, 2012.

37 "We had political cadres, maybe not according to the western standards but according to the criteria of *al-seyasa al-sharia*, or Islamic political paradigm. Our political existence before the revolution could not be detected on a database, but it was existent largely in an informal way. To cite an example, we managed very quickly to collect the necessary number of signatures for the creation of the party in May 2011. For example, we got seven thousand signatures by one phone call." Author interview with Muhammad Moustafa, a member of the Nour Party supreme council and Muslim Brotherhood and the Beheira secretary-general, Kafr al-Dawar, October 11, 2012.

38 A "gradualist approach" to sharia should accommodate social reality and demands. According to Talat Marzouq, the chairman of the Nour Party's legal committee and of its complaints and suggestions committee, at the 2012 People's Assembly, society must be prepared for the application of sharia. It would be easier to start with the civic and commercial aspects before the penal codes. Islamists must seek alternatives to existing institutions and test their effectiveness patiently. "*Hisba* law and similar laws of social control are not a priority for us for the time being. And if we, for example, call for constitutionally criminalizing nonmarital sex, this is only to remain consistent with our beliefs, but of course we know practically, and also in accordance with the sharia criteria on adultery punishments, that criminalizing nonmarital sex is legally impossible. Neither we will be concerned about any new laws restricting tourism. Our top priorities are the laws of *sokouk*, minimal and maximum wages. In my capacity as the chairman of the complaints and suggestions committee in the 2012 parliament, I managed to pass all economic bills to the assembly's general deliberation." Author interview with Talat Marzouq, Cairo, January 20, 2013.

39 For instance, it refers to the "necessity of implementing democracy within sharia" and "the maintenance of the basic rights and public liberties within sharia." On economic issues, the platform argues for the "activation of the religious endowments and zakat institutions" and the "Islamic finance based on interest-free loans, collective production and profit-sharing." The platform admits the tragic conditions of Egyptian women, but it omits any mention of gender equality on a legal basis. Instead, it takes on cultural and educational reform, that is, women's conditions will be improved through a societal campaign of acculturation that educates people into the "Islamic understandings" of women's rights and duties. Finally, on the question of non-Muslims in Egyptian society, the party states that sharia ensures the religious freedom of Copts and their right to apply their own religious laws on their private and family affairs. But other than that, they should be subject to state laws on public affairs without any discrimination. The Call's sheikhs may consider shifting the status of Copts from *dhimmis* (protected people) to another sharia category—that of the people living under "*al-ahd wa al-solh*," which is closer to the constitutional notion of citizenship. Author interview with al-Shahat, May 11, 2014.

40 Author interview with Muhammad Nour, ex-member of the Nour Party's supreme council, ex–official spokesman of the party, and current member of the supreme council of al-Watan Party, Cairo, September 12, 2012.

41 Ibid.

42 Author interview with Ashraf Thabet, vice president of the Nour Party, supreme council member, and constitution-drafting committee member, September 19, 2012.

43 Author interview with Abbas, November 9, 2012.

44 Ibid.

45 Actually, the Call started intervention at an earlier stage when it meddled with the selection of candidates for the 2011 parliamentary lists. Author interview with Emad Abdel-Ghafour, chairman of al-Watan Party and first chairman of the Nour Party, Alexandria, May 7, 2014.

46 Ibid.

47 Some leaders of the Call deny these reports. It is hard to verify them.

48 According to the party's chairman, Salafists: reached out to a new audience that would have been impossible if they had remained apolitical; proved their caliber as statesmen; sought a central role for sharia in the parliamentary deliberations and the constitution-drafting process; and were providing political stability during the transition period as much as possible. Author interview with Younes Makhyoun, second chairman of the Nour Party, Cairo, September 5, 2013.

49 Abdel Moneim al-Shahat, *Full Essays* (Al-Nahg al-Ahmad Press, 2010), 366.

50 Abdel Moneim al-Shahat, "Brotherhood Crisis: Is It a Crisis of Generations or Manhaj or Bylaws?"

51 Author interview with Borhami, May 7, 2014.

52 Ibid.

53 Articles 2, 3, 4, and 219 in the 2012 constitution referred to the principles of sharia, defined according to al-Azhar and tied to Ahl al-Sunna's jurisprudence, as the source of legislation. In effect, this would restrict religious freedoms and rights, as well as liberties of expression and belief within the boundaries set by the sharia authoritatively defined.

54 After supporting the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate, Mohamed Morsi, in the second round of the presidential elections, the Nour Party expected to receive sound representation in the presidential team and cabinet. But it was represented by only one assistant (Emad Abdel-Ghafour) and two advisers (Bassam al-Zarqa and Khaled Alam al-Din). Moreover, the party was not consulted on the formation of the cabinet. Morsi offered only the Ministry of Environment.

55 Ironically, Morsi ended up recycling this initiative on July 2, 2013, in reaction to the June 30 protests. But it was too late.

56 The Brotherhood repeatedly underestimated the danger and bluffed the Nour Party in the June 16 joint meeting between the Brothers' guidance bureau and the Salafist Call's board of directors, as well as in Morsi's meeting with Islamist parties on June 29, 2013. Finally, on July 1, Morsi rejected the Nour Party's last-minute attempt to save him by asking for early presidential elections.

57 The Brotherhood and its Salafist allies argued that Morsi is *wali al-am*, the legitimate ruler according to sharia, and that it is religiously sinful to rise against him. Sheikh Abdel Rahman al-Barr, the Brothers' mufti (legal expert on religious matters) and guidance bureau member, issued a fatwa that demonstrations aimed at overthrowing Morsi were religiously invalid. Said Abdel-Azim concurred. Salafist Call clerics invoked a whole tradition of religious political jurisprudence that explains political legitimacy in terms of a powerful ruler's capacity to impose his will on the rest, that is, the military and the old state in this respect (although this argument contradicts an older argument by the Call, mentioned above). Also, the sharia that was used prefers the prevention of evil to the pursuit of good, and it weighs different realistic evils against each other, going for the lesser of the two evils. So, if the "good" cause of fighting against the injustice of the coup would incur the greater evil of national civil strife, then quitting this fight would be religiously commendable. Moreover, Borhami argued that religiously, Morsi is not a legitimate Islamic caliph or Islamic ruler whom everyone must obey. Rather, he is a political official who was elected according to a specific political contract that didn't fit with the terms of sharia. So, in other words, to disobey Morsi or not is a purely political matter that is subject to considerations of *masaleh* and *mafasid* (cost-benefit versus realistic political analysis).

58   First, the Nour Party insisted on disallowing the choice of the liberal Mohamed ElBaradei to the caretaker premiership. Also, despite the secularists' jubilance about the deletion of article 219 from the 2012 constitution detailing the specifics of the rule of sharia in the system, the Nour Party managed to gain some strides. First, al-Azhar was referred to as the "principal authority on Islamic affairs." Second, the constitution talked about the role of the state and society in protecting family values. Third, the constitution preamble interpreted the notion of the "principles of Islamic sharia as the main source of legislation," mentioned in article 2, in reference to the total rulings of the Supreme Constitutional Court. One of these rulings in 1985 was particularly close to the Salafist understanding of that notion. First, it said that Islamic sharia is inclusive of all of its historical big traditions and heritage and not just the *qati* (definitive) rulings. Second, all existing laws must be amended to conform with sharia. Third, the legislature should not look for laws from other legal systems except when sharia is clueless on the question involved. Author interview with Bassam al-Zarqa, member of the Nour Party's supreme council, Alexandria, May 2, 2014.

59   According to the Call, although boycotting elections would have been more face-saving for other Islamists, it voted for Sisi for the general interest, the need to have a "strong reformist president," and to prove the party's electoral capacities. Thus, it can have more leverage. Author interview with al-Shahat, May 11, 2014.

60   Author interview with Marzouq, January 20, 2013.

61   Author interview with Borhami, May 7, 2014.

62   Author interview with Sheikh Ahmed al-Sissi, a popular Salafist cleric and ex-activist in the Salafist Call, Alexandria, May 2, 2014.

63   Ibid.

64   Ibid.

65   Ibid.

66   Author interview with Abdel-Ghafour, May 7, 2014.

67   Sheikh Said Abdel-Azim. But Borhami and Abu Idris remain very effective. Farid and Houtaiba supported the Call's decisions. Al-Muqaddim preferred withdrawing from *al-fitna* (civil strife) as usual. Author interview with Yasser Metwally, Salafist Call activist, Alexandria, May 6, 2014.

68   One of the Nour Party activists differentiates between the Salafist Call's children by blood and its children by adoption. The latter are the other Salafists who joined forces with the strong Call in 2011. Lured by enthusiasm and unaware of the Call's *manhaj,* they were quick to quit after the ouster of Morsi. Author interview with Muhammad Badr, media official for the Nour Party, Alexandria, May 7, 2014.

69   According to Sherif al-Hawari, a primary reason is the low caliber of the *sharii* (legal) qualifications of the Call officials in Matrouh. Author interview with al-Hawari, May 7, 2014. Content analysis of the Sawt al-Salaf website reveals fewer questions for fatwa on religion. The Call's standpoint on Morsi, the coup, and the massacres are the utmost concerns.

70   Turnout was low in Matrouh. But turnout in Alexandria was among the highest in the country. The party claims credit for this participation especially because of its mobilization campaigns west of Alexandria on the second and third days of voting. Not to mention the party's pre-election campaign for Sisi. Author interview with Badr, May 7, 2014.

71   Author interview with al-Shahat, May 11, 2014.

72   Ibid.

73   Author interview with al-Zarqa, May 2, 2014.

74   Author interview with al-Sissi, May 2, 2014.

75   Author interview with al-Shahat, May 11, 2014.

76   Author interview with Borhami, May 7, 2014.

77   Author interview with Osama Abdel Fatah, chairman of the specialized committees in al-Watan Party, Alexandria, May 4, 2013.

78   Author interview with Abdel-Ghafour, May 7, 2014.

79   Author interview with al-Hawari, May 7, 2014.

80   Author interview with al-Sissi, May 2, 2014.

81   Groups such as the Model Organization of Islamic Cooperation, research centers like the Gulf-based Nama Center, and young intellectuals in Egypt and the Gulf such as Ahmed Salem, Amr Basyouni, Abdallah al-Hadlaq, Soltan al-Omar, Hossam Abu al-Boukari, Abdel Rahman Abu Zekri, Ibrahim al-Sakran, Fahd al-Aglan, Bashar al-Shehri, Abdallah al-Aglan, and others, all of whom are Salafist revisionists.

82   This debate intensified with the publishing of many recent writings on the issue by Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

83   See Ashraf El-Sherif, "Egypt's Post-Mubarak Political Predicament," Carnegie Paper, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 2014, http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/01/29/egypt-s-post-mubarak-predicament.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

The **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** is a unique global network of policy research centers in Russia, China, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. Our mission, dating back more than a century, is to advance the cause of peace through analysis and development of fresh policy ideas and direct engagement and collaboration with decisionmakers in government, business, and civil society. Working together, our centers bring the inestimable benefit of multiple national viewpoints to bilateral, regional, and global issues.

The **Carnegie Democracy and Rule of Law Program** rigorously examines the global state of democracy and the rule of law and international efforts to support their advance.

BEIJING   BEIRUT   BRUSSELS   MOSCOW   WASHINGTON

THE
GLOBAL
THINK TANK

CARNEGIE
ENDOWMENT FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

CarnegieEndowment.org