

Revolutionary fallout

Egypt faces early security challenges

As post-revolutionary Egypt slowly shapes a new political landscape, the country faces a resurgent security challenge from extremist groups. **David Schenker** examines recent incidents, security force capabilities, and the extent to which the Islamist political blocs in Egypt might influence the country's domestic and regional security posture

KEY POINTS

- Internal security in Egypt has deteriorated in the past year, with elements of the state security apparatus degraded or distracted by the country's recent political turmoil.
- Of particular concern is the situation in the Sinai Peninsula, where at least one Al-Qaeda-inspired organization has coalesced.
- Egypt's ascendant Islamist political forces will focus initially on stabilizing the country's economy rather than seeking to influence domestic or regional security matters. Responsibility for these functions will remain with the Egyptian armed forces and security establishment.

Political upheaval in Egypt since the Arab Spring uprisings has been accompanied by resurgent internal security threats and the emergence of a new generation of Al-Qaeda-inspired extremists in the Sinai Peninsula.

The release of incarcerated extremists jailed under the regime of Hosni Mubarak – including members of groups such as El-Gihad – and the escape of many others from Egyptian prisons, has raised concerns about whether a caucus of committed extremists is now at large who may be intent on returning to violence. At present, the disposition of this constituency toward resumption of their former activities, or support for that already occurring, is unclear.

Armed groups claiming allegiance to Al-Qaeda's ideology and agenda are increasingly active in Egypt, although their attacks have so far been largely confined to the Sinai, in contrast to groups such as El-Gihad or El-Gamaa el-Islamiyya (GAI), which was traditionally rooted in Nile Bank towns and cities.

On 9 April 2012, a section of the Sinai-based pipeline that transports natural gas from Egypt to Israel and Jordan was destroyed in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack carried out by militants on the outskirts of El-Arish. The explosion was the 14th attack on the pipeline since the February 2011 revolt that toppled the Mubarak regime. The state has typically blamed such attacks on Islamist extremists, whom they claim have taken advantage of a temporary erosion of state security that has accompanied the recent political turmoil.

During the revolution, Egypt's once omnipotent police and security services were degraded and have yet to be reconstituted by the new government. Police and state security forces burned important files in an effort to avoid post-revolt accountability for Mubarak-era excesses. Hundreds of senior police officers – including 505 major-generals, 82 brigadier-generals and 82 colonels – were sacked in mid-July 2011, with several accused of involvement in the repression, according to figures cited by *The Washington Post*.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian military, led by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), a group of 20 senior officers headed by Minister of Defense Mohammed Tantawi that assumed power after Mubarak's resignation ostensibly to stabilize Egypt and manage the political transition, lacks the capacity and inclination to ensure the state's internal security. Significant sums have been spent by the Egyptian military in recent years on large, trophy weapons systems and equipment designed to fight conventional conflicts. However, Western government and defense officials familiar with Egyptian military capabilities have told *IHS* that the armed forces are currently not well suited to low-intensity counter-terrorism or counter-insurgency mis-

sions, in most cases lacking the necessary skills, training, equipment and leadership.

This may seem surprising, given Egypt's experiences countering terrorism by extremist groups such as El-Gihad in the 1990s. However, with the attention of the military and internal security apparatus having been diverted by political developments, extremists have been able to escalate their activities. One of these new groups, Supporters of Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula (Ansar al-Jihad fi Jazirat Sina) was established in December 2011 as the military arm of Al-Qaeda in the Sinai, and formally pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in a statement released on 23 January 2012. The group is thought to have been responsible for the repeated sabotage of gas pipelines in the Sinai region as well as attacks on law enforcement targets, and continues to threaten Egyptian, Israeli and US interests.

Security begins at home

Since the start of the Egypt revolution in January 2011, the nation has struggled to re-establish domestic security. In addition to Mubarak's removal, the revolution was a referendum on reforming Egypt's repressive security apparatus. The immediate aftermath of the revolt saw a significant deterioration in security, including a series of widely reported prison escapes and a surge in violent crime, including carjackings, armed robberies and kidnappings. Despite Mubarak's resignation and promises to reform the police service, the security situation has failed to improve.

Once seen as brutal and feared local enforcers of the regime, today Egyptian police are treated with little respect and viewed as remnants of the Mubarak regime. After violently cracking down on protestors during the revolu-



On 8 September 2011, Islamist and secularist politicians signed a petition demanding the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to Egypt, the withdrawal of the Egyptian envoy in Tel Aviv, the barring of Israeli ships from transiting the Suez Canal, and the extradition to Egypt of the Israeli soldiers involved in the border skirmish. The following day, large protests converged on the Israeli embassy in Cairo, which culminated in the storming of the diplomatic mission.

tion, Egyptian police became a focus of popular anger and many were pulled off the streets. Today, the police have redeployed and are trying to reshape their role in a post-Mubarak Egypt, according to a June 2011 article by the *Christian Science Monitor*. Rebuilding public trust in the Egyptian police service may prove to be a long-term challenge.

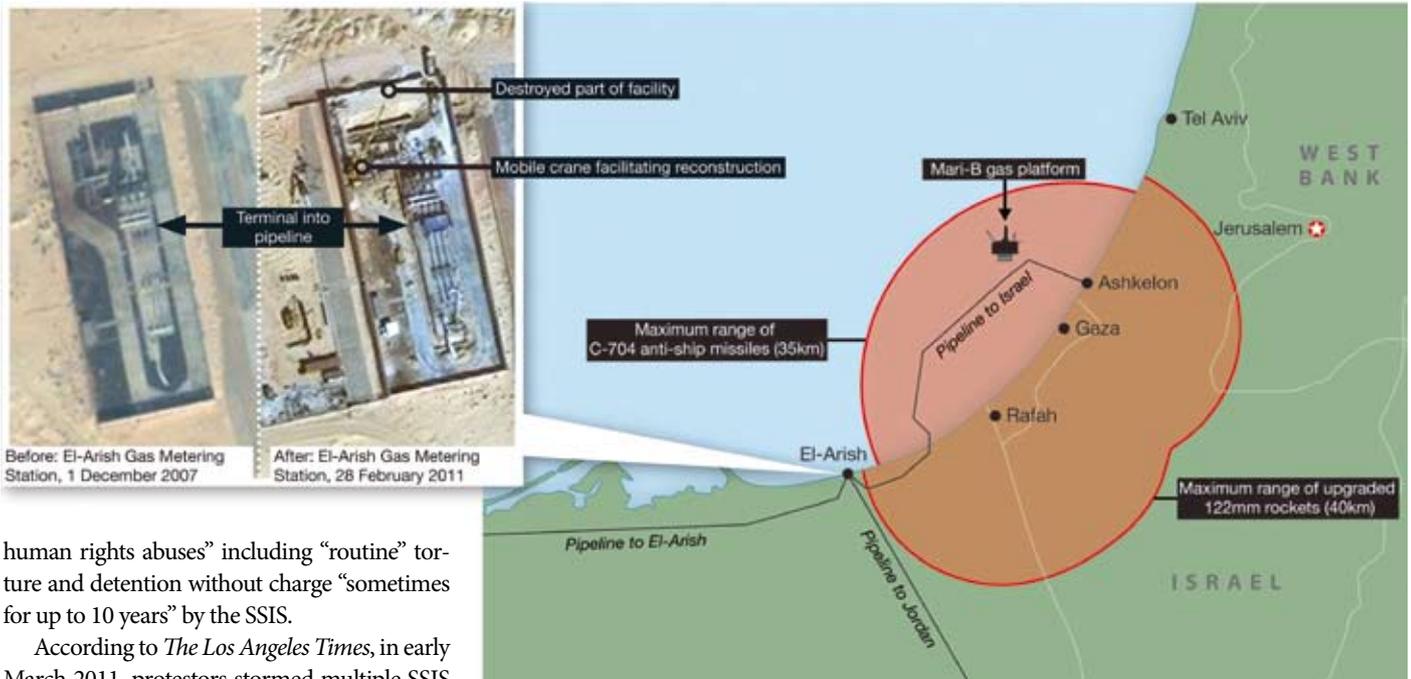
A year later, Egyptian police officers remain demoralized, underpaid and no longer encouraged to subsidize paltry incomes through corruption. Absenteeism is reportedly a significant problem. As one retired police brigadier, and now whistleblower, Mahmoud Qutri, told the *BBC* in March 2012: “Egyptian police ruled the country from behind an iron curtain. They controlled all aspects of life.” But the June 2010 extra-judicial police killing of an unarmed

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youth, Khaled Said, generated widespread popular outrage and ultimately led to their tarnished image and lack of presence on Egyptian streets. In an effort to mend ties, the Ministry of the Interior, which has jurisdiction over the police, launched a community partnership in June between civilians and the police, but it has

done little to sway people’s opinions. Decades of corrupt, politicized and under-supervised Egyptian policing – and the almost universally negative perception of the force – will take years to reverse. Security sector reform in Egypt will entail not only retraining and significant personnel changes, but a transformation of police culture. Accountability to civilians will not come naturally to the Egyptian police.

Meanwhile, the State Security Investigative Service (SSIS), which served as the Mubarak regime’s primary internal security, has lost much of its capacity. Like the police, the state security’s 100,000-strong force operated autonomously and without oversight, intimidating Islamist and secular opposition alike, according to Amnesty International, which has documented numerous cases of alleged “gross



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human rights abuses” including “routine” torture and detention without charge “sometimes for up to 10 years” by the SSIS.

According to *The Los Angeles Times*, in early March 2011, protestors stormed multiple SSIS offices as word spread that security officers were destroying documents to shield the service from investigation and accountability. On 15 March, the Minister of the Interior succumbed to popular demand and dissolved the SSIS, which has been replaced with a new agency, Homeland Security. However, no information is available on what, if any, significant reforms this successor organization has implemented.

Persistent inter-service rivalries may also complicate efforts to improve domestic security. With SSIS disbanded, police capacity and capabilities severely degraded and the service lacking public support, the SCAF has offered few reforms to re-establish an effective domestic counter-terrorism and security apparatus. A pre-revolution rivalry between the interior ministry and the military – reportedly as a result of the Mubarak regime’s increasing reliance on the SSIS to insulate his regime from domestic challenges – persists, hampering the sort of co-operation crucial to effective counter-terrorism and homeland security operations. This rivalry appears to have played out during the revolution, when the military did little to prevent the routing of SSIS.

Small-arms and light weapons

Against this backdrop, the reported flow of small-arms and light weapons into Egypt from nearby conflict zones, such as Libya, is of par-

On 9 April 2012, a section of the Sinai-based pipeline that transports natural gas from Egypt to Israel and Jordan was destroyed in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack carried out by militants on the outskirts of El-Arish. This satellite imagery shows the aftermath of an explosion at a gas metering station, and an IHS map indicating the potential range of damage that could be caused by Hamas weapons.

ticular concern. In October 2011, Egyptian Ministry of Interior officials confirmed to the *New York Times* that they had apprehended five groups of smugglers transporting weapons from Libya – including anti-aircraft missile launchers – into the Sinai. More recently, in March, authorities announced that over the previous three months, they had seized 576 weapons originating from Libya, including “modern sniper rifles”. Unnamed Egyptian security officials cited by the *Associated Press* on 5 March 2012 said that for every weapons shipment seized, five more arrive undetected.

It is unclear whether the influx of weapons, the escape of thousands of inmates – including seasoned criminals – from jails, an absence of effective law enforcement, or the heightened sense of economic desperation is responsible, but violent crime rates in Egypt have risen sharply since the uprising. Although few reliable statistics are available on nationwide crime rates, state-run *Al-Ahram* newspaper reported a significant increase during 2011.

Among the more spectacular examples of this trend has been the unprecedented spate of bank and armored car robberies in Cairo and

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the Sinai during January and February 2012. According to a February 2012 article in *The Los Angeles Times*, arms smuggled from Libya and Sudan have also “fueled tribal clashes in southern Egypt.” In addition to common criminals, upper middle class private citizens are purchasing AK-47s for personal protection. But judging from the dozens of media reports on the subject, a significant amount of these weapons – including advanced Russian SA-14, SA-16, and SA-18 anti-aircraft missiles – appear destined for the Sinai. Much of the weaponry will continue on via tunnels to Gaza, while other military materiel will remain in Egyptian territory.

Sinai security challenge

Relations between the Bedouin of the Sinai – a sparsely populated 23,000 square mile territory – and the Egyptian government have traditionally been very poor. The Sinai has benefited from very little government largesse, and state influence is in some cases very limited, particularly in northern Sinai.

Responsibility for security in the Sinai has traditionally fallen to the Egyptian mukhabarat, also known as the General Intelligence Service (GIS), Egypt's intelligence agency and one of the agencies responsible for national security. So long as the Sinai remained relatively quiet, Egyptian authorities permitted the territory's 500,000 mostly Bedouins to continue their activities, including their lucrative smuggling operations to Israel, Jordan and Gaza. After Mubarak's ouster, the military replaced the mukhabarat as lead agency for security in the Sinai. However, to date there is little information in open sources to suggest the security policy in Sinai has changed significantly; the military does not appear to have engaged in any significant new operations against Bedouin smuggling operations, for instance.

The Sinai has also seen a number of terrorist incidents in recent years targeting Egyptian security forces, foreign nationals and even the United Nations observer contingent. Among the most high-profile incidents have been terrorist attacks on tourist resorts in the Red Sea.

Between 2004-06 terrorist networks comprising Sinai Bedouin and a small number of Palestinian militants carried out a series of high-profile attacks on Sinai's top Red Sea resort destinations – Sharm el-Sheikh, Taba, and Dahab – killing more than 100 foreigners and Egyptians. In a complex attack on 7 October 2004, terrorists killed 31 people in a vehicle bomb and suicide attack on the Taba Hilton. The attack began with a car bomb left under one of the key load-bearing structures at the front of the building; the blast sheared part of the front from the hotel, and as survivors fled from the back of the building toward a guest emergency rally point they were targeted by a suicide bomber. In July 2005, 88 people were killed and 150 wounded during a co-ordinated bomb attack on tourist sites in Sharm el-Sheikh. The attack was claimed by the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, the same group believed responsible for the October 2004 Taba attack.

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Al-Qaeda-inspired extremists are not the only armed groups operating in the Sinai. In 2009, Egyptian security forces arrested 25 members of a Sinai-based Hizbullah cell, which was allegedly smuggling weapons to Hamas in Gaza, targeting Israeli tourists and conducting preoperational planning against Suez Canal shipping. Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah admitted the presence of his operatives on Egyptian soil during a speech on 11 April 2009 that remains posted on the organization's website. While Nasrallah denied targeting Egypt, he was unrepentant about the violation of Egyptian sovereignty and claimed Hizbullah was "proud and dignified" by the accusation. "If helping our Palestinian brothers... is a crime," he boasted, "then today I formally admit to this crime."

Operations by Gaza-based terrorists against Israel emanating from the Sinai are also on the rise, with once infrequent cross-border rocket strikes becoming a routine occurrence, as are cross-border attacks. In August 2011, the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), a Palestinian organization, launched a cross-border raid on Israel from Egypt that killed eight Israelis, including two soldiers. While in pursuit of the attackers – some dressed in Egyptian military fatigues, according to the leading Israeli daily *Yediot Ahronot* – Israeli forces killed six Egyptian soldiers, a development that sparked a bilateral crisis. In response to the increased militant activity and cross-border operations into Israel, Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak agreed to allow Egypt to deploy thousands of troops in the Sinai, according to a 26 August

EXTREMISM AND THE NEW LANDSCAPE OF POLITICAL ISLAMISM IN EGYPT

The removal of the Hosni Mubarak regime has offered the country's Islamist groups a historic opportunity to demonstrate to Egyptians that they are fit and able to govern the country. Analysts are now trying to determine whether or not nascent extremist and terrorist networks in parts of Egypt will find the new environment a more permissive one. Elizabeth Iskander profiles the new Islamist political actors and their positions on Islamist extremist violence.

Despite the prominence of Islamist extremist terrorism in Egypt's recent history, its diverse Islamist landscape has been dominated not by jihadist groups but by the social and political activism of the Muslim Brotherhood movement.

However, the 2011 uprising accelerated the re-entry of more conservative Islamist streams into Egyptian politics, with Western media devoting significant attention to the seemingly meteoric rise of the Salafist political confederation, Al-Nour. In the immediate aftermath of Mubarak's ouster and the withdrawal of the police force there was an upsurge in violence, largely targeted against churches and Copts. The Coalition for Supporting New Muslims quickly emerged and focused on the alleged detention of formerly Christian women who had converted to Islam. This campaign could have inspired an attack on two churches in Imbaba in May 2011 in which both buildings were burned down and 12 people killed. A Salafist Sheikh known as Abu Yehia, is on trial on charges of inciting the attack.

Despite this initial surge in violence and the long absence of visible political activity, some Salafist-aligned groups have appeared to quickly re-organize

themselves into political parties. Reacting to the shifting ground of Egyptian politics and public opinion, the main figures of the Salafist movements took the initiative to lead these parties.

To understand the potential for Salafism or Islamism to be a social, political or a militant force requires close observation of the key figures within the movement and to monitor developments in their speech regarding the interpretation of and interaction with the political context. The following is an overview of Islamic groups linked with political parties, showing some of the historical shifts that occurred among Islamic activists and how they relate to the present.

Al-Jama'a al-Islamiya / Building and Development Party

Al-Jama'a al-Islamiya (JI) emerged in the 1970s as a student movement. The Anwar Sadat regime encouraged this trend as a counter-balance to the leftist politics that were then popular at universities. In 1978, the Muslim Brotherhood instituted a campaign to merge these disparate groups under its umbrella, but the JI at Assiut University was one of those that refused this call.

The transformation of this group began in 1980 when they adopted Muhammed Farag's "Jihad Strategy". This legitimized attacking the government and conducting terrorist operations until the regime approved sharia (Islamic law), leading the group to begin a campaign of violence that lasted into the late-1990s. JI's trajectory altered dramatically again after an infamous attack on foreign tourists at Hatshepsut temple in 1997, in which 62 people were killed. The regime, by then headed by Mubarak, initiated a crackdown and public opinion shifted dramatically and against the terrorists. In response, JI

2011 article by Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*. (The 1979 Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty declared the Sinai Peninsula a demilitarized zone unless amended by both parties.)

However, the deployment has not improved security, as evidenced by repeated attacks against the Sinai gas pipeline. The border – staffed by Central Security Forces policemen – remains inadequately patrolled. Indeed, Israeli journalist and analyst Ehud Yaari said the 300 outposts along the Israeli border have no electricity or running water, and are so poorly supplied that the Israeli military has been offering Egyptian border guards basic provisions. At the same time, the Gaza border remains permeable, via dozens of underground tunnels that are used to smuggle goods, weapons and personnel.

Heavily armed Sinai Bedouin have been involved in a number of significant security incidents in the past year. On 29 July 2011, hundreds of Bedouin shouting Islamic slogans exchanged fire with security services and attacked the El-Arish police station in northern Sinai, killing three civilians and two security officers. A group identifying itself as



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The Al-Nour Party is the strongest Salafist party and it managed to win around 20 per cent of the seats in parliament in elections held between November 2011 and March 2012. In the May 2012 presidential elections, Al-Nour endorsed Abul Fotouh (pictured).

underwent another ideological shift and re-considered their religious position on jihadist violence. The JI was not dissolved but officially changed its character to a “Da’awa” group focused on educational and missionary activities, and announced a ceasefire in an agreement between JI and Egyptian authorities.

Since 2011, the group has re-entered the political scene by establishing a political arm; the Building and Development Party. The leading members of the party include Abboud al-Zumour, and his cousin Tarek – both of whom were involved in Sadat’s assassination in 1981 – as well as other JI figures Safwat Abdul Ghany, Shazly al-Sagheer and Ashraf Tawfeek.

The party’s manifesto indicates an uncompromising view towards implementing sharia, but has not established itself as a major political force so far. In fact, JI’s involvement in politics appears to have caused a split between those who want to stick to the ceasefire and those who threaten the regime with a return to violence. Five days after the release of Tarek and Zumour, several

figures from JI, including Zumour and Ghany, said they are ready to face the army and alluded to an end of the ceasefire. The JI eventually excluded Safwat because they were unable to reach an agreement with him, which suggests the party rejects the concept of political violence, for the time being.

Tanzim al-Jihad

Tanzim al-Jihad, also known as Egyptian Islamic Jihad or Al-Jihad al-Islami, has shared origins with Al-Jama’a al-Islamiya and for a time they operated together. The group also adopted Muhammed Farag’s “Jihad Strategy” document in 1980 and together these groups planned and carried out the assassination of Sadat in 1981.

The group has been led by Abboud al-Zomour and Ayman al-Zawahiri, now leader of Al-Qaeda. Zawahiri’s brother Mohammed, who has been released from prison since the uprising, was also a member of this group and took part in protests in support of excluded Salafist presidential candidate Hazem Salah Abu Ismail.

In an interview recorded in April 2012 during the protests at Abbessya Square, Mohammed Zawahiri said violent jihad is necessary if the SCAF does not hand over power. He also called for the application of sharia, rejected democracy and stated that he was there to represent the jihadists who aim to overthrow military rule, dissolve security establishments that are against Islam and to release prisoners held in military custody. Interestingly, he also said that he does not represent a sect or group but that “we are the Muslims”.

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“Al-Qaeda Network in the Sinai Peninsula” subsequently released a statement demanding the province be turned into an Islamic caliphate. International media reports claimed local Salafists intended to set up courts implementing Islamist law run by their leaders and deploy armed militia to enforce their decisions.

Several recent reports of kidnappings have also emerged, and during the first three months of 2012, two Americans, two Brazilians, and a dozen Chinese nationals were abducted for ransom. While those kidnapped were released unharmed, as of May 2012, the threat remained considerable, so much so that the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office posted an advisory urging tourists in the Sinai to “exercise caution when travelling outside resorts”.

In March 2012, a group of armed tribesmen surrounded the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) camp at El Gorah for eight days, demanding the release of Bedouin imprisoned for the 2004 bombings in Taba and the 2005 attack in Sharm el-Sheikh. The unit, which was deployed to the Sinai in 1981 to “supervise the implementation of the security provisions of

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the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of Peace and employ best efforts to prevent any violation of its terms”, is vulnerable to attack. In 2005, militants targeted an MFO vehicle with an improvised explosive device; and then a year later, a suicide bomber – reportedly of Bedouin origin – detonated his explosives alongside an MFO truck.

Implications of Egypt-Israel relations

The August 2011 border incident, as well as subsequent Israeli retaliation in Gaza, was condemned by Egyptian politicians across the political spectrum. On 8 September, Islamist and secularist politicians signed a petition

demanding, among other things, the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to Egypt, withdrawal of the Egyptian envoy in Tel Aviv, the barring of Israeli ships from transiting the Suez Canal, and the extradition to Egypt of the Israeli soldiers involved in the border skirmish. The following day, large protests converged on the Israeli embassy in Cairo, which culminated in the storming of the diplomatic mission.

However, while the events on the border caused public outrage, the SCAF sought to de-escalate the situation. The military ignored popular demands and the political petition for punitive action. After Minister of Defense Mohammed Tantawi reportedly met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the SCAF agreed to participate in a joint inquiry with the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). Since then, however, the dynamic has changed. Seated in January 2012, the new Islamist-dominated parliament – with 46 per cent of the seats controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood and an additional 27 per cent by the ultra-conservative Salafist Islamists – is articulating its own views of Israel and Hamas. Following another round of Israeli

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These comments and his presence at the protests, perhaps indicate that the jihadist-oriented activists realize their loss of appeal and may be trying to harness the momentum of the Salafist trend.

Tanzim al-Jihad has not set up any political body as an alternative and Usama Qasem, a member of the group's council, indicated that it is prepared for large operations targeting the new president if either Amr Moussa or Ahmed Shafik were elected through vote-fixing. Nabil Na'im, one of the founders of Al-Jihad in Egypt, had earlier threatened an assassination attempt on Omar Suleiman, the country's intelligence chief, if he stood for president. Such statements indicate that this stream still sees itself outside of the political process, but is probably aware that to disrupt the transition would undermine its popularity.

Al-Da'awa al-Salafyia (DS) / Al-Nour Party

DS is an umbrella body for a number of Salafist clerics. It is led by the Majlis Shura al-Ulama' (the Shura Council of Clerics), consultative council that decides the political steps of Salafists. The head of the council is Abdullah Shaker and the two other most significant figures are Hussein Yaqoub (who played a vital role for the Salafists in the 'Yes' campaign for the referendum on the constitutional amendments in March 2011) and Muhammed Hassan, a well-known Salafist preacher.

To achieve their aim of applying sharia, they formed the political party called Al-Nour. This is the strongest Salafist party and it managed to win around 20

per cent of the seats in parliament in elections held between November 2011 and March 2012. Although they have not advocated violence, there is strong rhetoric against ignoring sharia in the constitution and the future of Egypt. This includes rejecting the term "civil" and sometimes "democratic" when it is associated with Egypt's identity and statements by Yaqoub suggest they believe that the Christian minority should not receive the same rights as Muslims. In the May 2012 presidential elections, Al-Nour endorsed Abdul Mon'em Abul Fotouh who, according to Yasser al-Burhamy (a prominent Salafist leader), gave them promises to impose full sharia law. This gave the first indication of tensions between Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood.

In addition to Al-Nour, Salafists have a second less-influential party, Hizb al-Asala. It works under the umbrella of the Salafist parliamentary coalition. There are no indications that either party has any leanings towards supporting violence to achieve its aims or secure power.

Muslim Brotherhood / Al-Hurriya wa al-Adala Party

The Muslim Brotherhood is the strongest and most organized political body in Egypt. After the revolution they launched a political party called the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP or Al-Hurriya wa al-Adala). The party gained the majority of seats in the parliament and elected a Brotherhood speaker of the parliament, Saad al-Katatny. Under Mubarak, the movement had been portrayed as the antithesis of a modern, stable civil state, yet in the scramble to gain political prominence after the uprising, the Brotherhood has often been



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(Left) A group carrying black jihadist banners drives through El-Arish in July 2011. On 29 July, hundreds of militants shouting Islamic slogans exchanged fire with security services and attacked the El-Arish police station in northern Sinai, killing three civilians and two security officers. (Centre) The aftermath of an explosion at a natural gas facility in El-Arish in Egypt's northern Sinai Peninsula on 5 February 2011. The pipeline has frequently been targeted since the February 2011 revolt that toppled the Mubarak regime. (Right) On 25 April, the Ibn Taymiyyah media centre released a video showing a convoy of militant Islamist sympathisers, flying flags commonly associated with transnational jihadism, in the town of Al-Sheikh Zuweid in the Sinai Peninsula on 19 April. The video featured a man, identified as Sheikh Abu al-Bara, preaching about the importance of conducting jihad in Egypt.

retaliatory strikes in Gaza, the Egyptian daily *As Shouruk* reported on 12 March 2012 that the parliament's Arab Affairs Committee had passed a resolution calling for the "review" of its peace treaty with Israel, and endorsed Palestinian "resistance" against Israel "in all its forms." For the moment, these gestures are purely symbolic, because the SCAF remains the executive authority in Egypt's presidential system. How-

ever, the SCAF has pledged to complete the transition of power to a new president on 30 June and return to barracks.

It is possible, though unlikely, that in order to defer a power struggle the SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood may cut a deal delegating continued responsibility for national security matters, including foreign policy, to the military. Yet even if the Muslim Brotherhood-

dominated parliament succeeds in excluding the SCAF from power, its immediate priorities are likely to be domestic. Egypt is on the verge of an economic crisis: foreign reserves have declined since February 2011 from USD36 billion to about USD10 billion, the *New York Times* reported in February 2012; tourism has been badly affected by recent events and is struggling to recover; and foreign inves-

marketed as the more moderate Islamic option, in comparison to the emerging Salafist political bloc.

The Brotherhood, though adopting violent methods in its early history, has long focused on social and political struggle. However, there is diversity and contradiction within the movement, as with the other Islamic groups, parties and associated figures. There is also clear political ambition and the sense that now is the time for the Muslim Brotherhood to gain the power it has been working for since 1928. There have been hints that the Brotherhood has maintained its armed divisions, called Al-Tanzim al-Khas (the special unit), which assassinated figures in the royal government prior to the 1952 revolution. In May 2012, former member of the Brotherhood's guidance council Tharwat el-Kharabawy said that the unit still exists underground. Kamal el-Halabawy, the ex-spokesman of the Brotherhood in Europe who has recently resigned, also said that the Brotherhood is prepared for physical violence to defend its position. Even if this rhetoric reflects real capabilities, the movement remains a pragmatic one in its political decisions.

Al-Wasat (The Middle) Party

Al-Wasat party was the first party registered with a religious background. It is formed by a number of ex-Muslim Brotherhood members who believe in a more flexible Islamist political role, and reject the Salafist ideology as well as the Brotherhood's hierarchical system. There are no indications this party has any leanings towards supporting violent struggle to achieve its aims or secure power.

tors remain wary of major commitments to Egypt. In order to improve the economy and avoid widespread civil disorder, the Muslim Brotherhood currently seems to appreciate the importance of post-election stabilization. Efforts to repair the battered economy would be undermined, and international confidence in Cairo further damaged, by an escalation in domestic terrorism.

The same would be true to an extent if the Islamist-led ruling coalition in Egypt is seen to be encouraging closer relations with Hamas, with whom some elements of the Muslim Brotherhood retain a close ideological affinity. In December 2011, Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Muhammad Badie described the organization as a "role model to the Brotherhood", which in recent months has hosted Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and politburo head Khaled Meshaal for meetings in Cairo. Senior Brotherhood leaders also traveled to Gaza in June 2011 to attend the funeral of Hamas founder and shura council head Mohammed Hassan Shama. However, while Hamas may be allowed to relocate its

offices from Damascus to Cairo – which Freedom and Justice Party leader Mohamed Mursi said he would welcome – this is quite different to the government providing material support for Hamas, which for some of the reasons described above is unlikely to happen in the near-term.

Complicating factors

For the foreseeable future, beyond the rhetoric of some politicians it seems unlikely that Cairo will adopt a more confrontational approach with Israel. The Muslim Brotherhood and SCAF have a shared interest in maintaining the status quo with Israel, particularly while it faces more significant economic and internal security concerns demanding immediate action.

While Israel is bolstering its defenses against militant infiltration by constructing a 150-mile fence along its southwestern border, the proliferation of Islamist extremist groups in the Sinai could trigger further security incidents that risk placing significant strain on relations between the two countries. Whether or not the Islamists

Conclusion

Egypt has a diverse array of political and activist Islamist groups, most of which are currently focused upon jockeying for power and influence in the country's new political landscape. Political Salafist confederations such as Al-Nour, despite making strong demands for extensive implementation of sharia governance, do not appear disposed toward extremist violence to achieve this aim.

The outlook and trajectory of outliers such as the Building and Development Party and Tanzim al-Jihad is more worrying from a security perspective. Their visible presence in post-Mubarak Egypt has so far been restricted to activism outside the political process. However, their particular ideological outlook and their recent rhetoric suggests that both groups, or at least elements within them, have not ruled out a return to extremist violence if they determine that politics has failed to bring about the total Islamization of Egyptian governance and society.

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steer Egypt into a conciliatory or confrontational posture towards the West, violent jihadists will continue to exploit the security vacuum in the Sinai and Nile Valley, where social foment, economic duress, increasing Islamism and enervated security forces in post-revolution Egypt have contributed to an unstable environment conducive to terrorism.

The Egyptian state security and law enforcement apparatus requires reform and must work with the military in a more co-ordinated fashion if it is to become more effective at suppressing nascent domestic terrorist threats. The military, meanwhile, also requires reform if it is to improve its ability to engage in the kinds of counter-terrorism missions the present evolving threat environment demands. ■

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