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A RIPPLE BENEATH THE SURFACE: TRENDS IN SALAFI POLITICAL THOUGHT

What they Mean for Egypt and
U.S.-Egyptian Relations

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INTRODUCTION

The views expressed in this paper are those of Kent Davis-Packard and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. Government.

Since the military take-over on June 30, 2013, the United States finds itself at a turning point in its relationship with Egypt. It must make decisions about U.S. military assistance and its ability to work with Egypt in the future. Crucial to the success of the United States' relationship with Egypt is the question of how Egyptian Salafis¹—a relatively little-known but potentially larger portion of the Egyptian Islamist population than the Muslim Brotherhood²—feel about U.S. policy and domestic Egyptian politics. The United States has avoided Salafis in the past because they are perceived as extremist Islamists with views that are inherently incompatible with democratic progress. However, recent interviews I conducted suggest that Salafis are a more diverse community, with a wider range of political views, than generally recognized.

This paper delves into Salafi political thought by examining how Salafi rank and file feel about topics such as democracy, secularism, and human rights after the 2013 coup, and what their goals are for domestic Egyptian politics. Significantly, many of their responses reflect ideas shared by secular liberals. Many Salafis, for example, say they want neither a military-backed regime nor the reinstatement of ousted Muslim Brotherhood-backed President Mohammed Morsi, but rather a third alternative that meets many ideals consistent with democratic, civilian-led governance. They form part of a strategically interesting group of thinkers in Egypt that extends across the Islamist-secular divide.

In the past, Salafi leadership has expressed progressive views only to backtrack once they were in power, and Salafi expressions of more liberal views

¹ For background on recent Salafi history and participation in contemporary Egyptian politics, see: Tore Hamming, "Politicization of the Salafi Movement: The Emergence and Influence of Political Salafism in Egypt," *International Affairs Review*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Fall 2013); Hardin Lang, Mokhtar Awad, and Brian Katulis, "Fragmenting Under Pressure," *Center for American Progress Policy Paper*, March 2014; Stephane Lacroix, "Sheikhs and Politicians, Inside the New Egypt Salafism," Brookings Doha Center Policy Briefing, June 2012; Daniel L. Byman and Zack Gold, "The Salafi Awakening," *Brookings Policy Paper*, July/August, 2012; and Jonathan Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," *The Carnegie Papers*, Middle East, December 2011.

² "Some Salafis maintained that they could muster more votes on the ground than the Muslim Brotherhood. A former Muslim Brotherhood leader and now independent presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Abouel Fotouh publicly estimated that Salafis outnumber Muslim Brotherhood members by 20 to one." Jonathan Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," 5-6.

are often described as “double speak” in response to fears or repression, or to woo, and fool, western interlocutors.³ Research on Egyptian Salafis, however, has been focused largely on Salafi leadership and official party lines, as accessing levels of the Salafi population below this superficial upper layer over a short-term period in Egypt has proven difficult—a gap this paper tries to fill. My findings do not make definitive conclusions about whether these Salafis speak with “sincerity” and, indeed, the purpose of this study is not to argue that Salafis, if in power, would behave any differently than they have in the past. It only suggests that, after interviewing a wide range of Salafis from many different backgrounds, there are signs of an organic process of evolution taking place beneath the surface within the Egyptian conservative Islamist population.

Although there is always a risk that the voices captured by a western interlocutor are biased, discounting them as such without serious study runs the risk of missing a potential opportunity—in a country where there are so few and so much is at stake—to at least *perceive* a cross-cutting desire for democracy and unity of vision within the population. After all, the perception of division, and the fear it engenders, has played a major role in legitimizing successive military-backed regimes’ repression not only of Islamist parties, but also of the development of *any* strong political parties in Egypt. Only political pluralism and the economic empowerment of women and other civilians outside the military sector will enable Egyptians to overcome political and economic dominance by their military sector. To achieve this, Egyptians must break down stereotypes supported by the government and state-run media by identifying common goals across the Islamist-secular divide. As will be revealed in this

paper, some Egyptians have already begun this process. They understand that an undemocratic, military-backed regime can only survive when Egyptian society and its political parties are weak and divided.

Part one of this paper provides a brief history of Salafism in Egypt and the positions Salafis have taken under former President Hosni Mubarak, as well as their political participation after the January 2011 uprising. Part two describes the post-“coup” changes in everyday Salafi allegiances, and analyzes their resulting new relationships with the Muslim Brotherhood and the state. It demonstrates diverse thinking among the broader independent and splinter party Salafi population, as well as within the Nour Party’s rank and file, and even some of its leadership. Part three discusses a largely unheard set of domestic political goals that harmonize with those of secular liberals voiced by some Salafis. Part four recommends how the United States can benefit both Egypt and its own political, economic, and strategic interests in the region by taking into consideration key areas where both Salafis and secular liberals from across the Islamist-secular divide are in agreement.

For data this paper draws on a wide range of written works as well as interviews with dozens of Salafi sheikhs, businessmen and entrepreneurs, community leaders, artists, stay at home mothers, party leaders and spokesmen and women, political party staff, taxi drivers, university professors, university, and religious institute and mosque students from Cairo, Alexandria, and rural villages in the Delta and Upper Egypt. Together it offers a cross-section of Salafi opinion that goes well beyond the typical look that focuses on a few leaders.

³ “Islamists moderated not only in the absence of democracy but as repression was getting worse.” Shadi Hamid, “Can Repression Force Islamist Moderation?” in *Temptations of Power: Islamists & Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 38. Note Salafi preferences with regard to draft legislation in the 2012 constitution: David Kirkpatrick, “Egyptian Islamists Approve Draft Constitution Despite Objections.” *The New York Times*, 29 November 2012.

PART ONE: WHO ARE EGYPT'S SALAFIS?

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SALAFISM IN EGYPT

In Egypt's struggle to free itself from colonial rule, the Islamic revival movement, founded by Muhammad 'Abduh in the 1880s,⁴ proved both useful and politically polarizing. It stood in direct contradiction with the secularizing agenda of Egypt's elite and the military that had been infused with political authority under British colonial rule. Dedicated to returning to the purist teachings of the *Quran* and *Sunnah*, or way of life of Prophet Muhammed, the movement was influenced by both the wave of Islamic modernism started by 'Abduh's teacher, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-97) against European colonial encroachment and that of 'Abduh's core interest: maintaining Islamic principles within a modern, western-influenced society.⁵

In 1928, buoyed by the reformist movement, and offering a new perspective on how Egyptians could integrate western modernity, Egyptian Islamic scholar and schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna established Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood as a social and religious organization. The movement grew, and by the 1930s and 1940s, the Egyptian government faced Islamic opposition from the Brotherhood with a membership in the hundreds of thousands.

But the Muslim Brotherhood was not the only Islamic organization that grew out of Egypt's Islamic revival. In 1926, the first Salafi organization, Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah, was founded. Different from the Brotherhood—a mainly sociopolitical movement—Salafism is puritanical and focuses on transforming Egyptian society through religious dogma, rather than political power. In fact, Salafis advocated abstention from political participation until 2011, and have therefore been less threatening to the military-backed regime, which used them over the course of many decades as a buffer against the political encroachment of the Muslim Brotherhood. Salafis include circles of scholars preoccupied with spiritual texts, and, although Salafis have not attempted to create a mass movement, during a second wave of Egypt's Islamist movement in the 1970's, their scholarly works gained wide appeal, especially among Egyptian students and young engineers.

This second Islamic revival wave was brought on in part by Anwar Sadat's control over religious clergy and refusal to implement Shari'a law. As a result, dissenting religious teachers and preachers began to exert political influence, while Al Azhar University faculty, who, in general, had supported the regime, became involved in politics.⁶ The regime's actions had backfired, creating a more active Egyptian

⁴ Muhammad 'Abdu (d. 1905), Schooled at Al Azhar, he was an influential reformist, and later, in Egypt, mufti, or chief of Islamic law.

⁵ Ira Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 840.

⁶ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The Salafi Movement, Violence and the Fragmentation of Community," in *Muslim Networks from Hajj to Hip-hop*, ed. Miriam Cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 145-147.

religious movement. Egypt's humiliating defeat by Israel in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War had also discredited Arab nationalist secularism, and brought middle-class students as well as business entrepreneurs and other professionals into the Islamist fold. The roots of what would later become the main Salafi political parties, violent jihadist movements and peaceful scholarly circles, grew out of the religious networks that formed during this period.⁷

When the regime finally allowed Salafi television channels licenses to air in 2006, after the Muslim Brotherhood won close to a fifth of the seats in parliament,⁸ Salafis, who remained outside of the political sphere, were able to reach millions of Egyptians.⁹ Filling in where the government is unable or unwilling to provide relief services, Salafi charity organizations and youthful leadership give Salafism wide appeal, especially for university students and people in rural areas of Egypt where the government has not managed to provide adequate social services.

The Egyptian military-backed regime often categorizes Salafis as extremists, despite the existence of some moderate Salafi political thought and the Salafis' willingness to work with the military regime. In addition, the violent Salafi stream that organized tens of thousands of adherents into the radical *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*,¹⁰ and the al-Qa'ida-linked *Egyptian Islamic Jihad* that killed nearly 1300 Egyptians in the 1990s, contributed to Egyptians and westerners mistaking these radicals for the Salafi movement as a whole. The threat and fear generated

by Salafi extremists has, ironically, served the regime by giving it a *carte blanche* to suppress whom-ever it deems a "security threat," including political opposition that has nothing to do with terrorism. The presence of extremism in Egypt, has then—as with other autocratic regimes in the Middle East¹¹—given the regime a legitimate use of force that has wreaked havoc on all parts of its society, including peaceful, civil society movements. Imco Brouwer notes that "the Egyptian incumbents have not only been [putting 'the moderate Islamic actors into the same heap as the radical ones'] to undermine the credibility of the moderate Islamists, but also been using all possible means to cripple and control other segments of civil society, not only making the lives of many Egyptians difficult but also creating a difficult environment for freeing civil-society assistance."¹² This pattern can be seen in the deeply polarized post-"coup" Egyptian political environment in which "terrorism" is broadly defined to include any "act that might obstruct the work of public officials, institutions, universities, embassies and so on."¹³

SALAFI VIEWS OF DEMOCRACY

With the exception of the al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and all the minor jihadi groups, Salafis generally did not oppose political authority and generally advocated abstention from politics during Mubarak's 30-year reign. Their view of the state and democracy was to be reflected after the January 2011 uprising, and included rejecting the notion of a "civil state," which they considered merely code for a "secular

⁷ Lacroix, "Sheikhs and Politicians," 2.

⁸ Nathan Field and Ahmed Hamam, "Salafi Satellite TV in Egypt," Arab Media & Society, The American University in Cairo, Issue 8, Spring 2009.

⁹ Lacroix, "Sheikhs and Politicians," 2.

¹⁰ The Gamiya Islamiyya carried out terrorist attacks throughout the 1990s, killing over 1300 people in protest of the Mubarak regime.

¹¹ See, for example, the case of Syria: "Dictators can play the devil's gambit: winning international sympathy by deliberately radicalizing regime opponents, so that these adversaries look like latter-day Hitlers... The regime has even reportedly released jihadists from jail to foment extremism within the opposition." Dominic Tierney, "Bashar al-Assad and the Devil's Gambit," *The Atlantic*, 16 July 2014.

¹² Imco Brouwer, "U.S. Civil-Society Assistance to the Arab World: The Cases of Egypt and Palestine," European University Institute Working Paper 5, February 2000, 11.

¹³ Joe Stork, "Egypt: Painting Terrorism with a very Broad Brush," Human Rights Watch, 5 May 2014.

state.”¹⁴ Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, which came to accept the concept of a “civil state with an Islamic reference” after the 2011 uprising, Salafis insist on a distinctively “Islamic state,” which, they argue, is not incompatible with modernity.

Salafi views about democracy can be seen in the post 2011 uprising stance of the Alexandria-based religious organization *Da’wa Salafiyya*, or the Salafi Call, founded in the 1970s after student groups split from the violent Salafi group, al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya.¹⁵ The Salafi Call has supported the “procedures of democracy”—including elections, separation of powers, and freedom of expression as delineated by Shari’a law—while stating that ultimate sovereignty is “in the hands of God,” not the people.¹⁶ For this reason, they requested since January 2011, that Article 2 in the constitution be changed from the “principles” of Shari’a as the main source of the law, to what is much less open to moderate interpretation—the *rulings* of Shari’a—as the main source of law, although they have not been successful in making significant changes.¹⁷ Senior sheikhs in the Nour Party have taken a colder stance towards democracy, publishing extensively on why democracy does not conform to Islamic principles. Although the Nour Party has officially adopted these views as part of its platform, this has not prevented the party from participating in elections.¹⁸ Indeed, the Nour Party has demonstrated a complex relationship to democracy and political participation. As early as

2012, Will McCants notes that the Nour Party is “neither uniform nor immune to compromise,”¹⁹ and that its positions “align with some universal democratic principles.”²⁰

Salafi views on minority citizens are generally believed to be more conservative than those of the Muslim Brotherhood. On the status of religious minorities, Salafis have traditionally been associated with a belief in applying the *dhimma* system, in which Christians and Jews are protected by the government without having to serve in the military, but must pay a tax called the *jizya*. On women’s issues, despite the Nour Party’s accepting the mandatory requirement to include women onto their party lists in 2011, and its open veneration of women surrounding Prophet Muhammad, cultural, rather than explicitly religious, norms have dictated Salafi views on women’s participation in politics.²¹ Salafis still consider women ineligible to become presidential candidates, and few Salafi women hold high office within their parties. Economically, Salafis have tended towards socialism, which harmonizes with their charitable platform and reaching out to the masses. On foreign policy, Salafis have expressed distrust in the United States and Israel similar to that expressed across the Egyptian political spectrum.²² Many Salafis interviewed felt that the United States privileges its security and economic interests in the region over the interests of the people.²³

¹⁴ “Egyptian Salafi Leader Rejects the Word ‘Civil’ until it is Clarified,” *Alarabiya.net*, 11 December 2011.

¹⁵ For a detailed account of the founding of the Da’wa Salafiyya, see Mokhtar Awad, “The Salafi Dawa of Alexandria: The Politics of a Religious Movement,” *Hudson Institute*, 22 July 2014.

¹⁶ Hamming, “Politicization of the Salafi Movement,” 16. For additional analyses of tawhid, see Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 114.

¹⁷ Lacroix, “Sheikhs and Politicians,” 5.

¹⁸ Lacroix, “Sheikhs and Politicians,” 6.

¹⁹ Will McCants, “The Lesser of Two Evils: The Salafi Turn to Party Politics in Egypt,” *Saban Center for Middle East Policy, The Brookings Institution Policy Memo*, May 2012, 5.

²⁰ In “The Lesser of Two Evils...” McCants points out the Nour Party has positions advocate for “separate judicial, executive, and legislative branches; freedom to form political parties and elect rulers and representatives; free speech and association; and economic privatization,” 4.

²¹ Brown, “Salafis and Sufis in Egypt,” 10.

²² Lacroix, “Sheikhs and Politicians,” 6.

²³ Interviews by Kent Davis-Packard, September 2013 – March 2014, Egypt.

SALAFI PARTIES AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS PRIOR TO THE 2013 MILITARY “COUP”

After Mubarak was toppled in February 2011, Salafis entered politics. Their entry, despite their previous religious reservations about being involved in politics, defying political authority, and standing against democracy, revealed an unexpected pragmatism.²⁴ Salafis were attracted to the political sphere because they stood to fare well in elections. There were no existing parties that could compete with the Islamists.²⁵ They were also wary of those seeking to remove Shari’a entirely from the constitution, and decided that “the *maslaha* (benefit) from participation and helping enshrine Shari’a far outweighs the *mafsadah* (evil) of letting secularists and Christians decide the fate of the country’s ‘Islamic identity.’”²⁶ As will be seen, interviews conducted this year with young, rank and file Salafis suggest they were also as inspired as other Egyptians at Tahrir Square by the apparent power of the Egyptian people to topple a dictator. The Nour Party, or largest Salafi party, became the political wing of Da’wa Salafiyya after the 2011 uprising. The Nour Party, however, was not an easy sell to the Da’wa Salafiyya, which, to this day, maintains an ambiguous stance with regard to political participation. One of its senior spiritual leaders, Sheikh Yasser Borhamy, was among the students that left the al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya in the 1970s, because he believed in abstention from politics. The al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya founded its own political wing, the Building and Development Party, in June 2011.

Despite internal divisions, the Nour Party took under its wing both the smaller Salafi *Asala* (Authenticity Party) formed soon after the January 2011 revolution, and the Salafi Building and Development parties after they left the Muslim Brotherhood’s “Democratic Coalition” in October 2011. The Brotherhood allegedly did not include enough of their candidates on their lists.²⁷ This coalition of three Salafi parties won an astounding 25% of all parliamentary seats²⁸ in the 2011-2012 elections. In January 2013, however, the Nour Party was split when its leader, Emad Abdel Ghaffour, and Salafi Call leader Sheikh Borhamy disputed, and Ghaffour established the new Watan, or “Homeland” Party under the influence of Sheikh Hazem Abu Ismail, taking prominent members of the Nour Party with him. Since the January 2011 uprising, several other minor, unregistered splinter parties were founded, including *Raya* (the Flag), and *Shaab* (the People’s Party), and have spoken out against the return of military leadership. The *Fadila* (the Virtue Party) Party, which generally supports Morsi’s return to power, also formed soon after the January 2011 uprising, and has a limited support base comprised mainly of young Salafi professionals.

While the vast majority of Salafis and major parties in Egypt are nonviolent, several jihadist Salafi parties with membership in the low thousands are mainly active in the Sinai. Among the most well known names are *Ansar al-Sharia*, *Tawhid wal-Jihad*, *Takfir wal-Hijra*, also known as *Jama’at al-Muslimin*, and *Bayt al-Muqdis*. There is no evidence these groups have ties with the Muslim Brotherhood today, although the *Jama’at al-Muslimin* was originally founded as an

²⁴ Farid Zahran, “What are the Ingredients and Background of the Salafi Movement in Egypt?” *Daily News Egypt*, 12 June 2013.

²⁵ Hamming, “Politicization of the Salafi Movement” 12. Tore Hamming cites Ali Bakr, “Egypt’s Salafists: A closer look,” *Abram Online*, October 15, 2012.

²⁶ Awad, “The Salafi Dawa.” <http://www.hudson.org/research/10463-the-salafi-dawa-of-alexandria-the-politics-of-a-religious-movement->

²⁷ Lacroix, “Sheikhs and Politicians,” 1.

²⁸ Salafis won 127 seats in the lower house, or “House of Representatives,” and 45 seats in the Shura Council, the “upper house” or “consultative council,” in Egypt’s then bicameral parliament. The 2014 constitution has since abolished the Shura Council.

offshoot of the Brotherhood in the 1960s. These jihadist groups were critical of Morsi throughout his tenure for being “too soft” on enforcing Shari’a law.²⁹ Interestingly, after Morsi was deposed, several of these groups declared they would fight to the death for his reinstatement,³⁰ revealing the complex relationship Islamist groups have with one another in the region. Some with connections to al-Qa’ida, other political goals of these groups are the re-establishment of the Caliphate, purging the judiciary and media, and liberating Muslim lands from occupation. This paper focuses on the nonviolent streams comprising the majority of Egyptian Salafis in Egypt today. The charts included in this paper attempt to show potential areas of differentiation among key segments of the Salafi movement and the Egyptian body politic. The categories are rough, the factions are dynamic, and many individuals do not fall neatly into any particular box. The data for these charts come from official party doctrine and interviews I conducted.

Due to current circumstances in Egypt, many of my sources agreed to speak with me only if they could remain anonymous, as they could face serious consequences if identified. I am therefore at times obliged to leave out identifying information for some interviewees. In these cases, I provide the location and/or the date of the interview, and any other descriptor that does not jeopardize their anonymity; if undated, these interviews occurred during my time in Egypt from September 2013- February 2014.

SALAFI DEMOGRAPHICS

Out of 90 million Egyptians, 200,000-250,000 are official members of the Nour Party, an

uncertain number ranging in the tens of thousands are now members of other Salafi splinter parties, and a much larger, uncertain number comprise those Egyptians who are sympathetic to or identify with the Salafi Call and Salafi political candidates. This broader Salafi support base, despite the slimmer range of official Salafi party membership, is evident in the over seven and a half million votes (about 28 percent) out of some 27 million Egyptians who voted for Nour Party candidates in the 2011-12 parliamentary elections. Egyptian students estimate that Salafi supporters outnumber Brotherhood supporters, who comprise some 20 to 30 percent of the Egyptian population, by three to one.³¹ Meanwhile, Egyptian and American academics estimate the actual number of “official” Salafis as only between three and five million.³² The Egyptian government has not taken a census of Salafi numbers, and even then, a census would not necessarily provide an accurate estimate, since many Salafis refuse to call themselves “Salafi,” claiming it is simply a label given them by Egyptian society to distinguish them from members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and that “all Muslims are Salafis,” or believers in the original teachings of Islam.³³

SALAFI RELATIONS WITH THE REGIME AND THE BROTHERHOOD

Although the Salafis and the Brotherhood joined forces in the few months leading up to the fall of Mubarak, and together generated the support necessary to pass constitutional amendments in March 2011, the relationship has overall been tense. For example, both Salafis and the Brotherhood agreed in advance that a July 2011 demonstration that included liberals in Tahrir Square was to be limited to

²⁹ Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, “The Jihadist Threat in Egypt’s Sinai.” *Al Monitor*, 15 July 2013.

³⁰ Wael Nawara, “Egypt’s Moral Test.” *Al Monitor*, 9 July 2013.

³¹ Five American University in Cairo students, interviews by Kent Davis-Packard, February 3, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

³² Ashraf El Sherif, professor of political science at the American University in Cairo, said: “there are seven million Salafi votes – not necessarily Salafis. We don’t have exact numbers of Salafis, but I estimate four to five million.” Ashraf El Sherif, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 10, 2013, Cairo, Egypt. American analyst Will McCants estimates the Salafi population to be three to five million Egyptians. Will McCants, “A New Salafi Politics,” *The Middle East Channel*, *Foreign Policy*, 12 October 2012.

³³ This is one of the most common responses from Egyptian Salafis about the label “Salafi.”

Major Salafi Organizations and Political Parties in Egypt

	Founding Date	Founder/s	Part of Salafi Coalition to Win 25% of Parliamentary Seats in 2011-12	Main Principles	Official Stance on Violence	Encourage Political Participation
Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya	1926	Sheikh Mohamed Hamed El-Fiqi. Led mainly by al-Azhar graduates	No	Resentful of Sufism, dedicated to tawhid as preached by Ibn Taymeyya	Non-violent	No
Da'wa Salafiyya	1972, preaching began; school formally founded in 1977; dubbed "Da'wa Salafiyya" in 1982	Muhammad Ismail al-Muqaddim, Abu Idris and Ahmed Farid, along with other Alexandria University students who refused to join the Muslim Brotherhood	No	Rejects state institutions for being "un-Islamic." Influenced by Saudi Arabian Salafist thought	Non-violent	Subject to internal debate. Some scholars advocate for establishing political parties
Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya	1970s	Nageh Ibrahim was a main founder. Omar Abdul Rahman is the current spiritual leader of the movement	No	Began as an umbrella organization for militant student groups after the Muslim Brotherhood renounced violence in the 1970s	Renounced violence in 2003, after thousands of its leaders were imprisoned	Yes. Used by Sadat as a counterweight to oppose leftist movement. Established the Building and Development Party in 2011
Building and Development Party	2011, following the January revolution	Founded by members of the Gama'a al-Islamiyya, including Tareq al-Zumr and Safwat Abdel-Ghani	Yes	Supports political pluralism, equality, and representative democracy with institutions guided by Shari'a. Rejects theocracy	Non-violent.	Yes. The party gained 13 seats in the 2011-12 parliamentary elections
Nour Party	2011, following the January revolution	Emad Abdel Ghaffour, who later split to form al-Watan Party	Yes	Has been called the "political arm" of the Da'wa Salafiyya. Supports strict implementation of Shari'a. Originally an ally of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party	Non-violent	Yes
Raya ("Flag") and Shaab ("People's") Parties (unregistered)	2013	Hazem Salah Abu Ismail	No	Among several off-shoot parties from Nour inspired or founded by Abu Ismail	Non-violent	Yes
Fadila ("Virtue") Party (Merged with Al Nahda Party)	2011, following the January uprising. Merged with al Nahda in 2012	Mahmoud Fathy. Merged with Al Nahda, which was founded by former members of the Muslim Brotherhood	Yes	Supported Hazem Abu Ismail in the 2012 presidential elections	Non-violent	No. They also officially refuse any protests against the military take-over
Asala ("Authenticity") Party	2011, following the January uprising.	General Adel Abdel Maksoud, former head of Fadila Party	Yes	Supports strict implementation of Shari'a law	Non-violent	Yes. The party was a member of the Democratic Alliance

calls for a transition to civilian governance. Salafis allegedly brought signage with slogans favoring Shari'a law. When the liberals objected to the Salafis' slogans, the Brotherhood publicly condemned the Salafis. Although many Salafis consistently feel betrayed by the Brotherhood, they still demonstrate in the streets against Morsi's deposal. But they are largely opposed to Brotherhood leadership and doctrine. Salafis interviewed claimed they turned to Salafism because the Brotherhood "has lost its spiritual ideology" in favor of becoming a political and social organization.³⁴

SAUDI INFLUENCE AND SUPPORT FOR EGYPTIAN SALAFIS

Although analysts believe Egyptian Salafis—mainly from the Nour Party—are financially and politically supported by the Saudis,³⁵ who also stood behind

the June 30 military takeover, interviews suggested conflicting information. A Salafi Party official denied being under Saudi influence, and claimed that "the majority of Saudis and Kuwaitis don't like the Nour Party and never support it." He added: "Their way is like the Muslim Brotherhood – they prefer to hide their intentions, unlike the Nour Party, which is 'purebred;' what you see is what you get.' You cannot find any movement like the Nour Party in the Gulf."³⁶ While Salafi Call spiritual leader, Sheikh Borhamy, did not deny that the Salafi Call "is with the [Saudi] Wahabiya in some blessings of the *Kaba*," (Islam's holiest building, in Mecca)," he asserted that the Egyptian Salafis were "not given a single penny by the Saudis."³⁷ It is difficult to say to what extent these statements are true, or if Saudi funding is transferred to Egyptian Salafis through other intermediaries.

³⁴ Interviews by Kent Davis-Packard, September 2013 – February 2014, Cairo, Alexandria, Aswan, Egypt.

³⁵ See Marc Daou, "How Saudi Petrodollars Fuel Rise of Salafism." *France 24*, 30 September 2012 and Anna Lavizzari, "The Arab Spring and the Funding of Salafism in the MENA Region." *International Security Observer*, 22 May 2013.

³⁶ Undisclosed source and location, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 16, 2014.

³⁷ Sheikh Yasser Borhamy, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 16, 2014, Alexandria, Egypt.

PART TWO: POST-“COUP” SALAFI ATTITUDES AND ALLIANCES

Since the Egyptian military forced former President Morsi to step down after the Egyptian people had demonstrated in the streets against him in June 2013, the Nour Party fractured significantly. This has transformed relationships between Salafis and the state, their own religious leadership, secular liberals, and the Brotherhood. The military takeover also created an impulse for unlikely alliances across the Islamist-secular divide, especially among Egyptian youth. This section will describe the Nour Party’s loss of membership and support, its ambiguous stance regarding the military takeover despite its official support for Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, and the transforming Salafi relations with the state, their own sheikhs, the Brotherhood, and secular liberals.

NOUR PARTY LOSES MEMBERSHIP AND SUPPORT

Although the Nour Party is unable to provide exact numbers, its leadership acknowledges a significant loss in official and unofficial membership after its decision to stand by the military’s ousting of

Morsi.³⁸ The Nour Party said it chose to support the military takeover because the Egyptian military is “the only functioning army in the region.” It ultimately supported el-Sissi for president, according to Nour Party media spokesman Nader Bakkar,³⁹ because they “did not want yet another president who would clash with state agencies.” Analysts suggest the Nour Party is playing a shrewd political game, benefitting from being seen as “putting Egypt first,” and opting for stability over civil war.⁴⁰ Watan Party leaders who disagree with the Nour Party’s actions argued that almost half the Nour Party’s support base left to join Watan.⁴¹ Independent Salafis said that some Nour Party members also left to join the smaller splinter parties, or simply became “independent.”⁴² Despite the weakening of the Nour Party’s reputation and support base, Nour Party leaders continue to stand by their decision, stressing that they are “part of the country”⁴³ and will do what they can to maintain peace. Bakkar declared that the Party “didn’t want the state to fall down or to become like Syria.”⁴⁴ They dismiss the splinter parties’ attitudes that the Nour Party betrayed their fellow Islamists, the Muslim Brotherhood.⁴⁵

³⁸ Undisclosed interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 16, 2014.

³⁹ Enas Hamed, “Egypt Salafist Party Leaders Defends Decision to back Sisi.” *Al Monitor*, 5 December 2013.

⁴⁰ Nervana Mahmoud, “Egypt, Watch the Nour Party.” *Al Monitor*, 3 January 2012.

⁴¹ Watan Party leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 14, 2013.

⁴² Interviews by Kent Davis-Packard, September 2013 – March 2014, Egypt.

⁴³ Undisclosed source and location, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 16, 2014.

⁴⁴ Bakkar added: “We have millions of supporters at the grassroots level. If we ask them to protest it would be catastrophic with the state. So give us an alternative.” Nader Bakkar, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 4, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁴⁵ Dr. Hanan Alam, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 15, 2014, Alexandria, Egypt.

Even members of the Nour Party, however, have expressed dissenting opinions, suggesting there is no completely politically unified Salafi group.⁴⁶

THE NOUR PARTY'S GRAY AREAS

Although the Nour Party officially supported Morsi's removal by force, interviews with Nour Party members and its leadership reveal that it has not established internal consensus, and those who stood by the military's decision are now hesitating to throw their weight behind another military-backed regime. One Nour Party leader said "of course" he was "against the government's proclamation that the Muslim Brotherhood members were terrorists," and quietly admitted "even some of the Nour Party are already in jail."⁴⁷ Nour Party leadership acknowledges the abuses committed by the military-backed regime, and, contrary to what would have been expected in the past from the Nour Party, it did not at first actively support el-Sissi for president. In fact, Nour remained neutral⁴⁸ with regard to the presidential candidates for months, and declined el-Sissi's call to commemorate the January uprising on its anniversary in 2014.⁴⁹ Before the Nour Party met with el-Sissi, it met with presidential hopeful, Hamdeen Sabahi, General el-Sissi's only rival.⁵⁰ It was not until May 2014, the same month as the presidential elections, that the Nour Party publicly announced its support for an el-Sissi presidency.⁵¹ Still, regime supporters doubt the

Nour Party's sincerity,⁵² and Nour Party members have expressed "shock" at el-Sissi's dramatic repression of Islamists.⁵³

SALAFI RELATIONS WITH THE STATE

Because of the Nour Party's internal divisions and the dissenting attitudes of splinter parties and independent Salafis, the Egyptian government can no longer count on its traditional pro-establishment stance. A former Egyptian diplomat expressed disappointment in the Nour Party's behavior, saying, "we thought we could count on them, but now we don't know what they are doing."⁵⁴ The fact that a Nour Party spokesman called el-Sissi's presidential run "a gamble,"⁵⁵ and many other Salafis outside Nour are openly, or secretly, against el-Sissi, increases the Egyptian government's paranoia, and has created an environment of fear for all Islamists in Egypt, not just members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Egyptian Salafis also pose a new threat to the regime because they no longer have to compete against the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, which was banned from participating in parliamentary elections in April 2014 by the Alexandria Court for Urgent Matters. Accordingly, as the military-backed regime solidifies its support, it seems to be putting aside catering to Salafis in favor of securing itself against any broader coalitions

⁴⁶ Sarah El-Rashidi, "Egypt's Salafist Party Plays Neutral Amid Anti-Islamist Wave," *Al Monitor*, 21 May 2014.

⁴⁷ Undisclosed source and location, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 16, 2014.

⁴⁸ Sameh Bardisi, "Egyptian Salafist hesitates to back Sisi presidency bid," *Reuters*, 23 January 2014.

⁴⁹ "Egypt Salafi Group will not Commemorate January Uprising," *Aswat Misriya*, 21 January 2014.

⁵⁰ "Salafist Nour Party Meets Presidential Hopeful Sabahi," *Abram Online*, April 26, 2014.

⁵¹ Ayat Al-Tawy, "State Might Collapse if El-Sisi Doesn't Become President: Nour Party Head," *Abram Online*, 20 May 2014.

⁵² Former Egyptian diplomat, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, January 23, 2014, Cairo, Egypt.

⁵³ "Yet, despite all of these reasons, al-Nour seems to be facing more internal divisions and external pressures. Internally, al-Deen [a senior leader of the Salafi Call] admits that 'many Salafis have refrained from taking part in any political activity and from voting. They are shocked by the current political conditions. Some of them are very angry with al-Nour's political positions.' Jafar [an Egyptian political commentator] believes that Egypt's Salafis are becoming more 'politically pluralistic' as many new Salafi parties and political groups have emerged since the January 25 uprising." Alaa Bayoumi, "Egypt's Salafi Party Faces Growing Isolation," *Aljazeera*, 18 May 2014.

⁵⁴ Former diplomat, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 4, 2014, Cairo, Egypt.

⁵⁵ Nader Bakkar, "Egypt's Presidential Elections; the Key Step in Egypt's Roadmap," 23 January 2014.

and influence. This was manifest in its banning in December 2013 the collection of donations inside mosques without official permission from the Endowments Ministry, and announcing that only Al Azhar graduates who teach the Quran in mosques would be able to renew their licenses and be paid by the Ministry.⁵⁶ Although the Sheikh of Al Azhar stood with el-Sissi on June 30, there are many dissenting views among the students and faculty of Al Azhar. Most Salafi sheikhs are not educated at Al Azhar, and only hold a certificate awarded them from having studied privately for two years with another Salafi sheikh, or a degree from a less prestigious institute. Significantly, the government turns a blind eye to any Salafi sheikh who supports the Egyptian government, regardless of his educational background. An independent Salafi sheikh who is careful not to discuss politics in his mosque explained: “It is a compromise between them and the regime. ‘You support us, we will let you practice.’”⁵⁷

If the sheikhs express their support for democracy, or protest against the military take-over, however, they find themselves under surveillance—even by their own non-Salafi family members suspicious of their motives. Most el-Sissi supporters do not equate the regime with democracy, nor do they care whether el-Sissi is truly “democratic.”⁵⁸ Salafis are increasingly questioned by the police, and even arrested. “Everyone who is pro-democracy is a Muslim Brotherhood

member according to state security,” remarked a Salafi mother. “My sister-in-law is pro-Sisi. When she hears my arguments, she says ‘I’m not sure about where you stand.’ People have this conspiracy theory that everyone is Brotherhood under cover.” The mother also described her husband’s recent arrest without explanation as he was on his way to a mosque where there was a protest happening. “After this coup,” she said, “we thought they were going to focus on liberals and Islamists, but they are arresting *us*. I don’t feel secure in my own house, and in the streets.”⁵⁹ One Salafi student mentioned that her favorite sheikh in Cairo had been taken away without explanation by the police, and that no foreigners were safe visiting her *halaqa*, or Quranic school.⁶⁰

Despite the fact that many Egyptians are aware of these arrests,⁶¹ the Egyptian government and media has been careful not to publicize that the crackdown on Islamists includes Salafis.⁶² Contrary to what the Egyptian media reported,⁶³ for example, many Salafis were killed⁶⁴ alongside Brotherhood members at the *Rabi’a al-Adawiyya*⁶⁵ massacre in August 2013. Liberal seculars have also pointed out that non-Islamists are also being killed in protests. Graffiti artists who have portrayed non-Brotherhood victims of the regime’s violent crackdown, including liberals, in their paintings on the notorious Mahmoud Street⁶⁶ near Tahrir Square have witnessed police painting over

⁵⁶ “Mosques Now Need Ministry Approval to Collect Donations,” Mada Masr, 9 December 2013. See also Khaled Abou El Fadl, “Dominating Religion in Egypt’s Pseudo-Secular State,” 18 September 2013.

⁵⁷ Independent Salafi sheikh, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 17, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁵⁸ See Tamara Coffman Wittes and Kent Davis-Packard, “Who Said Anything about Democracy?” Blog, The Brookings Institution, 12 November 2013.

⁵⁹ Independent Salafi mother, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 2, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁶⁰ Salafi woman artist, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 22, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁶¹ Interviews by Kent Davis-Packard, September 2013 – March 2014, Egypt.

⁶² Louisa Loveluck, “Tilt Towards Military Unbalances Egypt’s Ultra-Conservative Salafists.” The Christian Science Monitor, 23 April 2014.

⁶³ In general, the Egyptian media did not identify the victims specifically, but only referred to the protesters as members of the Muslim Brotherhood. See, for example, al-Arabiya’s report in English in which Salafis are not mentioned a single time: “Egypt Says 278 Killed in Nationwide Violence,” Al Arabiya, 14 August 2013.

⁶⁴ “We were at Rabiya during Ramadan. Only 50 percent of those there were Muslim Brotherhood. The rest were many Salafis or no background, including liberals.” Undisclosed source, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 7, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁶⁵ “Rabiya” refers to those who were killed at the mosque in the outskirts of Cairo, Rabiya al Adawiya in August 2013, for demonstrating against Morsi’s deposition.

⁶⁶ “Egypt: The Legacy of Mohammed Mahmoud Street.” BBC, 19 November 2012.

their work.⁶⁷ The state and state-controlled media either do not identify student protestors' political affiliations, or claim they are all tied to the Muslim Brotherhood, who they have designated as "terrorists."⁶⁸ In the meantime, Salafi student leaders have officially condemned the brutal suppression of all protestors by Egyptian security forces.⁶⁹

SALAFI SHEIKHS LOSE POPULARITY

In addition to the Nour Party's loss of credibility among Salafis for having supported the military takeover, many Salafi sheikhs have lost credibility for "not standing up to the regime after June 30." A Salafi woman complained their sheikhs are making "black and white ultimatums" typical of the regime's political rhetoric, such as "you're either a citizen with me or against me."⁷⁰ Several other young Salafi women said they were choosing to listen instead to "lessons from the death of Umar Ibn Khattab,"⁷¹ and DVDs of Sheikh Abou Ishaq al Howeiny,⁷² a contemporary Egyptian sheikh who they respected for applying his religious ideology to the current political conflict.⁷³ Several Salafis expressed their disappointment with Muslim activist and television preacher Amr Khaled because, they said, he did not speak out strongly against the military takeover. "He hasn't any clear vision for the revolution," remarked an Asala Party member. "We think he supports the old regime."⁷⁴ Rather than accepting political leadership as they have in the past, Salafis wanted to see questioning, criticism,

and a religious analysis of the political situation in Egypt. Salafi women interviewed also highlighted the memoirs of General Saad Mohamed el-Hussiny el-Shazly, who, according to an Asala Party member, said: "the military should be a tool in the hand of a political government, not vice versa."⁷⁵ Several Salafis asserted that many Salafi scholars now connected to the regime and on television "are very far from us mentally, but that the government was supporting their talks and helped their message circulate on the Internet."⁷⁶

This criticism of their own sheikhs, both in local mosques and on television, represents another new phenomenon among Egyptian Salafis, who have in general held their spiritual and political leaders in reverence. Salafis are speaking out against the support from behind the scenes from the regime for their organizations and leadership. Although the number of Salafis who are critical of their sheikhs is uncertain, a woman community leader interviewed claimed "there were no popular Egyptian Salafi sheikhs left on TV," as, she believed, the sentiment of disillusionment was prevalent across the country.⁷⁷

SALAFIS SAY THEY ARE REACHING BEYOND THE BROTHERHOOD

Relations between Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood since the June 30 military takeover have remained tense. Instead of supporting Morsi's

⁶⁷ Undisclosed source and location, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, January 13, 2014.

⁶⁸ Erin Cunningham, "Egyptian Military-Backed Government Declares Muslim Brotherhood a Terrorist Organization." *The Washington Post*, 25 December 2013.

⁶⁹ See, for example: "Azhar Students Slam Court's Harsh Sentencing of Fellow Students," *Mada Masr*, 14 November 2013.

⁷⁰ Independent Salafi teacher, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 7, 2013.

⁷¹ See, for example, "The Death of Umar Bin al-Khattab," from a lecture series on Safeguarding the position of the Sahaba by Abu Mujahid Fareed Abdullah, October 27, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMr8KcttBus>

⁷² Umar Ibn Khattab (579 – 644 CE) was the second of the "four rightly guided caliphs" following Prophet Muhammad's death.

⁷³ Umar Ibn Khattab (579 – 644 CE) was the second of the "four rightly guided caliphs" following Prophet Muhammad's death. See also YouTube videos of Sheikh Abou Ishaq al Howeiny, including "Saddam," February 12, 2007. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaKaqa4vMtM>

⁷⁴ Islah Party Member, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 18, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Independent Salafi woman teacher, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 9, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁷⁷ Independent Salafi woman community leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 2, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

reinstatement, many Salafis are calling for a third option—for a new government that is neither military-backed nor Brotherhood-dominated. A major reason for this has to do with their sense of betrayal by the Brotherhood. Although the Asala and Shaab parties officially support Morsi, members of these groups were critical of his tenure, and independent Salafis are now skeptical of the Brotherhood's ability to work for more than its own cause. A Salafi woman lamented that when the Salafis came to politics in 2011, they were naïve and the Muslim Brotherhood simply turned their backs on them. "We found out the Brotherhood was making deals against the Salafis—trying to make Salafis into radicals"—complained a businessman—"so that the United States would support the Brotherhood."⁷⁸

As a result, Salafis have since June 30 further distinguished themselves politically from the Brotherhood, even among those parties that splintered from the Nour Party and disagree with its pro-June 30 stance. Salafi students interviewed about the events at Rab'a al-Adawiyya claimed they were not protesting in favor of Morsi's reinstatement, but simply against the military take-over.⁷⁹ The Watan Party broke with the pro-Morsi National Alliance to Support Legitimacy in order to field candidates for the upcoming parliamentary elections. Salafis have also expressed the desire to distinguish their protests against the military takeover from partisan-based protests. Salafis criticized the Muslim Brotherhood for putting up "Rab'a" signs at post-June 30 protests, shifting the focus away from a pluralist opposition to a one-sided, Brotherhood-led event,⁸⁰ although Salafis have been guilty of similar acts.⁸¹ A religious leader of the Nour Party and the Salafi Call noted that the Party had stopped acting as a

mediator between the regime and the Brotherhood in November 2013, owing to the Brotherhood's unwillingness to form a broader coalition movement against the military-backed regime.⁸² Notably, the Brotherhood has in the past accused Salafis of the same offense.

Other Salafis explained that tensions between the Islamist groups were caused by the Muslim Brotherhood's caving to military pressure and consequent failure to implement genuine legal reforms according to Islamic law when Morsi was in power. A Salafi leader explained:

*The military decided to take control of the leadership. But the people didn't accept that—you had the clashes of Mohamed Mahmoud, and the parliament, and so on. So the military decided to take another strategy. It said: 'OK, Muslim Brotherhood, we will give you the power, but you have to protect us in the constitution.' And that's what happened. They took the parliament, they took the presidential elections, and they made their own constitution—which basically has no Shari'a in it.*⁸³

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS: SALAFIS AND SECULAR LIBERALS?

The views of Salafis and secular liberals in Egypt have always differed regarding the role and interpretation of Islam. There is also deep mistrust between these two groups. Secular liberal experts on Salafism claim that Salafis are primarily interested in self-preservation, and will therefore do whatever is necessary to "get footholds in the new system

⁷⁸ Independent Salafi businessman, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 17 2013.

⁷⁹ Student taxi drivers, interviews by Kent Davis-Packard, November – December, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁸⁰ Salafi leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 7, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁸¹ See this paper's Section One, "Salafi Relations with the Regime and the Brotherhood."

⁸² Nour Party spiritual leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 15, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁸³ Salafi leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 7, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

so as not to be excluded or persecuted.”⁸⁴ While this may be true for Salafi leaders, the fact that so many Salafi rank and file have left the Nour Party reveals a broader set of interests in the post-June 30 political environment. As mentioned, rather than leaving Nour to support the Muslim Brotherhood, many Salafis interviewed claimed they demonstrated alongside the Brotherhood not to reinstate Morsi, but to protest the idea of a military take-over as anti-democratic.⁸⁵ Significantly, this is the same reason given by secular liberals protesting the events on June 30. An influential Egyptian secular liberal also said he was fighting not only against the Muslim Brotherhood, but also against a state and economy controlled by the military and a small group of elites.⁸⁶

Some Salafis even shared the theory with liberal and leftist intellectuals that after Morsi’s deposition, the military was more concerned the Brotherhood would *not* be re-elected than that it would be.⁸⁷ They said there was no call for early presidential elections because that would have enabled the participation of political parties and sparked the pluralism necessary to undermine the military’s status quo power. A leftist Egyptian artist explained:

*When you have a right and a left [political parties] you have to ask the right questions: why I am poor? Why the other is very rich? What about taxes? What about hospitals? So the state wants you instead to leave all these problems and say “Oh, he is Christian, oh, he is Muslim... If we had freedom of expression, it would lead our society to face our real problems.”*⁸⁸

Salafis, too, pointed out the poverty, corruption, and lack of social services available to many Egyptian citizens in need, and claimed the regime was using the secular-versus-religious divide to deflect attention away from its negligence.⁸⁹ Despite Salafi and secular liberals shared views, secular liberals would be wont to identify themselves in any way with Islamist ideology, largely owing to other conflicting religious or cultural practices and beliefs. Salafis would also hesitate to identify themselves with secular liberals for the same reason. Still, when focusing attention on their views of governance, the two groups speak in parallel, like ships passing in the night.

FLEDGLING ALLIANCES ACROSS THE ISLAMIST-SECULAR DIVIDE

Despite the social stratification of Salafis and secular liberals, for the first time since the January 2011 uprising, some alliances have been formed between Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and liberal secularists, namely among Egypt’s university student population. Since the June 30 military take-over, Islamist students at Al Azhar University have been in communication with Cairo University students, and, according to Islamist activists and liberal students, are building some ties with secular, liberal students, who are also taking part in the protests on both campuses. While the number of non-Islamists protesting is uncertain, interviews with students from both sides indicated a mixed participation. One Salafi college instructor said, “Yes, in the past two weeks, I have seen Azhari students joining up with Cairo University students, and forming some links between Islamic parties and the seculars.” She

⁸⁴ Ashraf El Sherif, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 10, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁸⁵ Interviews by Kent Davis-Packard, September 2013 – November 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁸⁶ Egyptian artist, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, January 14, 2014, Cairo, Egypt.

⁸⁷ See Marxist Ibrahim al-Houdaiby and his more than 40,000 followers on Facebook comments and postings in 2013-2014.

⁸⁸ Egyptian artist and political activist, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 14, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁸⁹ Leaders of independent Salafi movement, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 5, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

added: “We do not reject this. We have to accept each other. And the regime has to accept that there are some people with different ideologies, like the Islamists.”⁹⁰

The regime is aware of the possibilities for such cross-cutting political alliances and has been careful not to highlight them, just as it has been careful not

to highlight the arrests of Salafis and inspire broader opposition. Wary of the potential for youth to inspire mass movements as they have in the past in Egypt, in April 2014, the interim Egyptian government officially outlawed protests on university campuses, where these types of Islamist-secular integrated demonstrations tend to occur.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Independent Salafi woman school teacher, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 2, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁹¹ AbdelHalim H. AbdAllah, “There will be no protests on university campuses: Ministry of Interior.” *Daily News Egypt* (English), 9 April 2014.

PART THREE: SALAFI DOMESTIC POLITICAL GOALS

While official Salafi party domestic political goals are not “to establish a democracy” in Egypt, when Salafi rank and file describe ideal governance in Egypt, they often call for some of the rights and freedoms associated with modern, western definitions of democracy. Although there is no consensus on the modern definition of “democracy,” some theorists and activists have emphasized not only its procedural components, such as elections and voting, but also its social justice and human rights components. Anthony Arblaster underscores that what influences the modern notion of ‘democracy’ is what Tocqueville witnessed not only in American politics, but in its social practices.⁹² Giovanni Sartori affirms “‘democracy’ denotes more than political machinery; it also denotes a way of living, a ‘social democracy.’”⁹³ Sayid Khatab and Gary Bouma point out that democracy is “not merely election or voting,⁹⁴ but freedom, justice, equality, coexistence and human rights.”⁹⁵ Salafis interviewed emphasized these aspects identified with modern definitions of democracy as key elements for achieving ideal governance according to Islamic principles.⁹⁶

Salafi leadership is not in favor of religious freedom except for those who follow the three Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and even then, many Salafis believe in applying the dhimma system, which is not in accord with modern democracy. On other human rights issues such as freedom of expression, association, however, Salafi rank and file expressed surprising views not often exposed in the Egyptian media or by their party leaders. Obviously these rights and freedoms are on Salafis’ minds because they are overwhelmingly being violated by the regime, and having them would serve some of their political goals. But how much of their call for rights and freedoms is about Islamic concerns, and how much is it about establishing democracy—or at least a government that is in line with some democratic principles?

This section explores some Salafis views on the relationship between Islam and democracy, secularism, and civilian-led governance. It highlights their expanded vision of Shari’a law to apply to governance issues, which, Salafis believe would create a more just, even “democratic” state. It also explores

⁹² Anthony Arblaster, *Democracy: Concepts in Social Thought* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 9.

⁹³ David L. Sills, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1968), 117.

⁹⁴ Modern theorists, Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, identify some procedural criteria for modern ‘democracy.’ They list “parliaments, parties, mixed governments, interest groups, and consociational arrangements” as among these newer institutions, as well as a “procedural minimum,” which includes: “Secret balloting, universal adult suffrage, regular elections, partisan competition, associational recognition and access, and executive accountability...” Guillermo A. O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 8.

⁹⁵ Sayid Khatab and Gary Bouma, *Democracy in Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 93.

⁹⁶ Sartori’s definition implies social justice, as he emphasizes “equality of status, of opportunity, and of starting points.” Sills, *International Encyclopedia*, 117.

the importance of social justice for Egyptians both within and outside of an Islamic context, and Salafis' expressed desires to break down what they consider false stereotypes between Islamists and secularists. It documents some rarely heard Salafi voices that distinguish between Islamic and cultural practices, in particular with regard to women's rights. It concludes with a chart representing these conflicting stances that make it difficult to categorize Egyptian Salafis today into the boxes associated with traditional Salafist political thought.

While many Salafis still privilege Islamic governance as superior to all forms, they offer areas in which it overlaps with democratic principles. Are they simply engaging in Islamic apologetics with a western interlocutor, as some scholars have observed about Salafi leadership in the past, or could the thoughts of Salafi rank and file represent a new current among the lower ranks of the Egyptian population that has not yet been aired at the level of its leadership?

DEMOCRACY AND ISLAM

In contrast to the traditional aversion to democracy, owing to *tawhid*, or their belief in “rule by God,” not humans,⁹⁷ Salafis interviewed made statements about Islam's inherent compatibility with democratic principles. Many Salafis insisted that despite the fact that Islamists and westerners sometimes define the term “democracy” differently, “we share values with the United States—freedom of speech, equality between people—we had these rights in

our Quran and Sunna over one thousand years ago, and we aren't doing this to fit in with modernity.”⁹⁸ Even Nour spiritual leader Sheikh Yasser Borhamy stated:

*The elections and choice of government, political participation, and the absence of dictatorship, are all a part of Islamic Shari'a. In the days of Muhammad, all the people respected the divine law. The European governments took the democratic principle of shura from Islam.*⁹⁹

A Watan Party Leader, while defining Shari'a, explained that although he believed “*shura*¹⁰⁰ was better than democracy,” he affirmed that “in democracy you have a detailed system—you can make a complete state; there is a human effort to create some justice and balance in the country.” He highlighted Prophet Muhammad's “Constitution of Medina”¹⁰¹ as “Islamic democracy without name,” and said the fact that he was “not educated about real Shari'a and human rights” signified that “dictatorship keeps people in darkness.”¹⁰² Like their secular liberal counterparts, Salafis criticized the military-backed regime for signaling to the West that it is following a “roadmap to democracy.”¹⁰³ They note that since President Morsi's deposition, the military-backed regime has issued, for example, the largest mass death sentence in history, systematically used excessive force on protestors, imprisoned over 16,000 people—many for exercising their rights to peacefully protest—and failed to investigate security forces for the killing of hundreds of protestors.¹⁰⁴ Even el-Sissi has kept

⁹⁷ See footnote on tawhid in Part One of this paper.

⁹⁸ Salafi woman community leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 2, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

⁹⁹ Sheikh Yasser Borhamy, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 16, 2014, Alexandria, Egypt.

¹⁰⁰ “Shura” is translated into English from Arabic as “consultation,” and refers to Muhammad's method of seeking group consensus, especially during the Medina period, 622-632 AD.

¹⁰¹ The ‘Constitution’ of Medina is recognized universally by scholars as the document Prophet Muhammad authored upon his arrival in Medina in 622 A.D. It united the warring tribes and established rights and duties for members of an *umma* that is believed to have included Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

¹⁰² Watan Party Leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 18, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹⁰³ Asma Alsharif, “Egypt's General Sisi Signals may Run for President.” *Reuters*, 11 January 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Roth, Letter to Secretary Kerry on US Military Aid to Egypt, *Human Rights Watch*, 4 April 2014.

“policy vague and democracy off the agenda”¹⁰⁵ because, as he claimed in a television interview in May 2014, “Egypt is not ready” to become a democracy, despite “political will.”¹⁰⁶

A Salafi sheikh, commenting on the abnormally high number of people, including leftists and liberals, imprisoned for political reasons after June 30 said “Islam is not treating professors in such a way, by putting them in jail or killing them.”¹⁰⁷ “Even the Quran,” he added, “is inviting Muslims to establish a debate with others. And then it doesn’t force anyone to do something he is not convinced to do.”¹⁰⁸ An independent Salafi entrepreneur summarized in detail the meaning of Shari’a as encompassing social freedoms associated with modern definitions of democracy:

*Usury, fornication, drugs, and alcohol are forbidden in Islam, as well as in other faiths, but Shari’a is broader and requires the state to follow the general principles of justice, freedom, and shura or democracy, which includes fighting corruption, providing subsidies for the unemployed, women, and poor—whatever will build this country and achieve social justice; these are the main principles of Shari’a. The way we apply them will change from age to age, but regardless, these principles will be applied by the state, and a very big part will be applied by society.*¹⁰⁹

While it is clear that democratic practices would have favored an Islamist agenda in Egypt, when asked what would happen if the majority of the Egyptian people did not vote in favor of the more

conservative practices favored by some Salafis—for example, requiring women to wear the *hijab* or banning the sale of alcohol—the head of the women’s division of the Nour Party and her staff responded that “Egypt is not ready for an entirely Islamist government.”¹¹⁰ While they hoped the majority of Egyptians would one day favor their doctrine, they said they were willing to support a state in which Islamic governance did not reign supreme. Similarly, the Nour Party is willing to support a state in which democracy does not prevail.

A “SECULAR,” “CIVIL” STATE?

Rank and file members objected to Article 219, which was supported by Nour Party leadership and specifies Sunni Islam specifically as the source of Shari’a law. Seemingly a core Salafi value, interviews with independent Salafis suggest that not all Salafis were in agreement with this position—a finding that indicates the variance on many other issues within the Salafi community. One independent Salafi sheikh, for example, pushing back against the Nour Party’s insistence on certain limitations for non-Muslims said “a constitution is a contract to protect the minority, not the majority.”¹¹¹ Another independent Salafi remarked, surprisingly, that a “civil, pluralist state” was a signature of Prophet Muhammad’s advent. “The first thing I want to clarify about Shari’a,” said this woman community leader, “is that in Islam we don’t have a difference between Islam and statehood.” She explained:

This does not mean we have a state in Islam. It’s a civil state—no priesthood—civilians

¹⁰⁵ David Gardner, “Sisi Keeps Policy Vague and Democracy off the Agenda in Egypt.” *The Financial Times*, 18 May 2014. See also Laura King, “Egyptian Court Sentences 683, Including Brotherhood Leader, to Death.” *Los Angeles Times*, 28 April 2014.

¹⁰⁶ “el-Sissi: Egypt not yet Ready to Become a Democracy,” Memo, *Middle East Monitor*, 19 May 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Note the cases of April 6 Youth co-founder Ahmed Maher and opposition leaders Ahmed Douma and Mohammed Adel, now sentenced to three years in prison. Also note the handful of Egyptian intellectuals who are now on travel bans or accused of treason for speaking out against the military-backed regime’s deposition of Brotherhood President Morsi while not directly supporting the Brotherhood.

¹⁰⁸ Independent Salafi Sheikh, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 17, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹⁰⁹ Salafi man entrepreneur, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 2, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹¹⁰ Dr. Hanan Alam, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 15, 2014, Alexandria, Egypt.

¹¹¹ Independent Salafi sheikh, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 17, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

*are the ones in authority. They should be the ones most qualified and knowledgeable, so the state is not led by scholars in the dark ages. However, Islam says that the state should take into consideration—at the very first level—right and wrong.*¹¹²

This statement runs in marked opposition to the Nour Party’s long-standing effort to remove any mention of “civil state” from the constitution, concerned that it would be taken to mean that the Egyptian state is “secular.” Even the term “secular” seems to have lost its sting among Salafis. The head of the women’s division of the Nour Party made the surprising statement that secularism itself was not a foreign concept to Islam. “A secular can be a Salafi,” she affirmed, because, she explained, being a secular creates incentive for respecting difference.¹¹³ The idea that the notion of a “civil,” “secular” state harmonizes with Islamic principles because they create a situation in which others are respected is groundbreaking for Egyptian Salafis—or at least for outsiders’ perceptions of Salafi political thought.

AN EXPANDED VISION OF SHARI’A LAW

When probed more deeply, Salafis explained that secular elites have intentionally limited the meaning of Shari’a to personal status codes in order to keep Islamic visions of governance from having influence. In the past, Shari’a law has been associated, mainly by the state, with personal status codes such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody.

The state deliberately prevented Shari’a law from applying to the public sphere on issues such as elections, proper consultation, countering corruption, and implementing rule of law and due process.¹¹⁴ According to Salafis interviewed, the Egyptian government would move closer to democracy if it were to actually implement Shari’a law at the state level. While Salafis’ main concern is living by the principles of Islam, they consistently recognize critical links between Islam and democracy. An independent Salafi sheikh explained that the regime’s strategy is the following: “Let us [the government] do whatever we’d like to do outside the mosque. But inside the mosque you can do whatever you’d like to do. The state would like to say only pray for Allah, but let us worry about the economic system, let us control the judicial system.”¹¹⁵ A Watan Party leader affirmed that the underlying conflict in Egypt “is not about Salafis or religion or state; it’s about the old corrupt regime and the new one that is emerging.” He explained: “the corrupt regime is trying to market more division between state and religion—to say that this is a conflict between Shari’a and liberals. Our main project is to transition out of this corrupt dictatorship into a democratic country.”¹¹⁶

An Egyptian leftist artist, supplementing the Watan Party leader’s comments, noted that “the greatest gift an undemocratic regime can receive is an Islamic opposition that poses no threat of democratizing the country.”¹¹⁷ But what happens when Islamists, including Salafis, connect Islam to democracy? The result, according to Salafis interviewed, is a regime

¹¹² Salafi woman community leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 2, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹¹³ Dr. Hanan Alam, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 16, 2014, Alexandria, Egypt.

¹¹⁴ “...the shari’a developed historically to rule mostly on the private affairs of the community, dealing with commercial and property transactions and family matters, as well as ritual performances. The public-law provisions of the shari’a have remained largely theoretical, to do, for instance, with the laws of war and the division of the spoils. We shall see that public authorities over the centuries of Muslim history, while declaring allegiance to the holy law, largely bypassed it in matters of state. The task of the Islamic Republic, then, was to derive public law and policy within the framework and vocabulary of legal discourses developed and applied primarily in private contexts.” Sami Zubaida, *Law and Power in the Islamic World* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 2.

¹¹⁵ Independent Salafi Sheikh, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 17, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹¹⁶ Watan Party leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 18, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹¹⁷ Undisclosed sources, interviews by Kent Davis-Packard, October 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

threatened by opposition to its anti-democratic policies. An independent Salafi woman said: “Any dictator builds his main foundation on trying to separate the people—not making them mingle and work together; the seculars themselves said that if it wasn’t for the Muslim Brotherhood, the revolution would have vanished by the second day.”¹¹⁸ Another Salafi woman teacher remarked that “unity was the key success of the revolution; we stood by each other. I think if we all stand up and say ‘I’m not going to be for either [the Brotherhood or the military-backed regime],’ we will come up with a third solution.”¹¹⁹ Daniel Brumberg points out that “manipulating a wide array of ethnic, religious, and sociocultural groups by playing upon their fears of political exclusion (or worse) under majority rule and offering them Godfather-style ‘protection’ in return for political support,” is a common practice in the region. Significantly, this western scholar’s proposed solution aligns with what both Salafis and liberal seculars interviewed suggest: “To escape this game,” he writes, “opposition leaders must mobilize constituencies across identity divides.”¹²⁰

But what would mobilize such polarized constituencies across the secular-Islamist divide in Egypt? While Salafis’ ideas for a third solution may differ from and be as vague in some ways as the alternatives proposed by secular liberals, one area that can mobilize communities from across the Egyptian political spectrum is the shared struggle for social justice, a key demand during the 2011 uprising.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AS A SHARED VISION WITH SECULAR LIBERALS

Social justice, significantly, was among the top three demands of the Egyptian people at Tahrir Square during the January 2011 uprising.¹²¹ It is also identified by Salafis as a key component of ideal governance. Although this shared desire for social justice has not yet created strong bridges between Islamists and the rest of Egyptians, it represents a potentially influential and politically powerful place where liberal secularists and Islamists could come together. Salafis have already demonstrated that they are willing to work for social justice issues within the political sphere.

The Nour Party rejected the Constitutional Committee’s decision to remove a 50 percent quota in parliament for workers and farmers, expressing its concern for the rights of workers.¹²² Like the April 6 movement, the Youth Revolutionary Block, and the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information,¹²³ the Nour Party rejected the controversial protest law believed to threaten freedom of expression. Nour Party leaders also said they tried to include in the 2014 draft constitution “two benefits of Shari’a in the constitution: *zakat* or charity for the poor, and *waqaf*, where we encourage people to give to charities for specific reasons.” They attribute the Committee’s refusal to add these articles to their “sensitivity regarding anything about Islam; they felt this would give us benefits, and some people hate Islamic ideology itself.”¹²⁴ Egyptians sympathetic to

¹¹⁸ Independent Salafi woman community leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 2, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹¹⁹ Independent Salafi woman teacher, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 5, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹²⁰ Brumberg explains: “The regimes and their minions know this, of course, so they work to stymie such alliances by playing up whatever religious, tribal, or ethnic themes they can in order to reemphasize the divides and make rival groups feel as if they must look to the state to save them. This divide-and-rule strategy is enforced by “reserved domains of power”—that is, by powerful militaries that maintain links to rival identity groups; by vast internal-security services allied with the military; and often by judiciaries that furnish the protection racket with vital legal and institutional tools.” Daniel Brumberg, “Transforming the Arab World’s Protection-Racket Politics,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol 24, No. 3, (2013), 91.

¹²¹ Protesters in Tahrir Square expressed their demands in a chant: “bread, freedom, and social justice!”

¹²² Aaron T. Rosa and Rana Muhammad Taha, “Disagreement over Constituent Assembly’s Decision,” *Daily News Egypt*.

¹²³ “Interim President to Review Controversial Draft Protest Law,” News Summary, *Project on Middle East Democracy*. <http://pomed.org/regional-news-digests/egypt-daily-update-october-16-interim-president-to-review-controversial-protest-law/>

¹²⁴ Nader Bakkar, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 4, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

the Islamist cause, including academics unaffiliated with any Islamist movements, explained that Egyptian society was “allergic to Islam.”¹²⁵

A DESIRE TO BREAK DOWN STEREOTYPES

As demonstrated in the example above in the constitutional debate, at least some rank and file Salafis expressed the desire to break down what they felt was a stereotypical divide between Islamist ideology and the aspirations of their fellow Egyptians. A young independent Salafi entrepreneur noted: “After the revolution, we had more freedom to break the stereotype—the divisions between Islamists and other Egyptians.”¹²⁶ Many people who participate in the Salafyo Costa group, which was founded after the revolution as an interfaith movement dedicated to charity and social cohesion,¹²⁷ described the joy they experienced when they were able to break down stereotypes. A liberal secularist student exclaimed after participating in one of the group’s interfaith events:

*It was the best experience I’ve had in my whole life; when you meet someone, you are sometimes allergic to their features, to what they wear...but after a while, if you get to know the human inside this person, all of this is nonsense for you—you don’t care anymore about the beard or the outfit.*¹²⁸

Although Salafyo Costa has experienced internal tensions owing to its diverse leadership, which

ranges from Coptic Christians to Muslim Brotherhood supporters,¹²⁹ it provides one of the rare venues in which Egyptians can socialize and work together across political, religious, and class boundaries. Its growing membership on Facebook includes over 250,000 Egyptians, and several hundred non-virtual members participate in its many annual charitable and educational activities in different cities throughout Egypt.

WOMEN’S RIGHTS UNDER SHARI‘A LAW

While the Nour Party was against Article 11¹³⁰ in the constitution because, they felt, it “would open the door for a quota for women in parliament,” when asked why, a Nour Party spokesman responded that it had nothing to do with being against women’s participation. A quota “would not mean a fair race in which the best candidates win,” he said.¹³¹ This position contradicts Salafi views that workers should be granted a quota in parliament, although some might argue the two quotas are not comparable. Still, the anti-women’s quota stance begs the question of just how far Salafis are willing to include women. Significantly, however, all of the independent Salafis interviewed from rank and file were passionately in favor of a women’s quota. A surprising number of Salafi women, in fact, helped lead the demonstrations in favor of Article 11 outside the parliament during the constitutional drafting process, alongside liberal secularist women’s groups. They felt it was “reasonable” and “not against Islam” to implement a quota in order to pursue fair representation.¹³²

¹²⁵ Three professors at three different universities made this statement. Interviews by Kent Davis-Packard, November – December 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹²⁶ Independent Salafi entrepreneur, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 2, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹²⁷ “We want to tell people that yes, we are different,” said Tolba [a Salafyo Costa founder]. “We know we are different, but there is common ground between us.” Alistair Beach, “Salafyo Costa Aims to Put a New Face on Fundamentalism,” *Egypt Independent*, 6 May 2011.

¹²⁸ Liberal American University in Cairo student, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, November 9, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹²⁹ See Jason Casper, “Salafyo Costa: Egyptian Inclusivity,” *The Middle East Institution*, December 9, 2013.

¹³⁰ Article 11 of the Egyptian constitution states: “The State is committed to achieving equality between women and men in all the rights stated in this constitution. The State is obliged to take the necessary measures to ensure the appropriate and balanced representation of women in parliaments and local units, as organized by the law, and enable them to reconcile the duties of family and work, and protect them from all forms of violence. The State is committed to providing special care for motherhood and childhood and women who are poorest and most in need.”

¹³¹ Nader Bakkar, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 4, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹³² Interviews by Kent Davis-Packard, November-December 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

Salafi women interviewed claimed that, contrary to popular thinking, most limitations placed on Egyptian women come from societal norms rather than religious restrictions. According to some Salafi women, an example of a practice falsely associated with Shari'a law is female genital mutilation (FGM), which has been outlawed in Egypt. Even a Salafi politician defended FGM on a morning talk show in 2012, and a Muslim Brotherhood woman parliamentarian advocated for the legalization of FGM in 2012 when Morsi was in power.¹³³ When asked their views of FGM, however, independent Salafi women in Cairo said they were “horrified” to even consider the practice, and affirmed “it was never a part of Shari'a law, but merely a rural cultural practice” that they themselves would never allow in their own families.¹³⁴ To be sure, there are Salafis who favor the practice, but Salafis interviewed emphasized it is not a position unique to Salafis or Salafi doctrine. They correctly point out that Egyptians from a wide range of backgrounds, including Christians—who reportedly practice FGM as frequently as Muslims—have advocated FGM. Various schools of thought either support or oppose the practice according to lines from the *hadith*—many of which are deemed “poor in authenticity” by Islamic scholars. There is no mention of the practice in the Quran.¹³⁵

SALAFIS NO LONGER FIT TRADITIONAL CATEGORIES

Below is a chart attempting to categorize the different Salafi groups according to the answers they pro-

vided in interviews between September 2013 and March 2014. The chart illustrates the wide variation in thinking among some of Egypt's Salafis, and the unlikely places where the views of some Salafis and secular liberals overlap. Although this chart does not reflect official party platforms, but rather interview responses, it is worth noting that the Salafi al Nahda Party officially supports a “civil” state, and that the official goals of Fadila and Asala are to “fight corruption, achieve justice and equality for all citizens, equal distribution of wealth, and guarantee legal prosecution of anyone who commits a crime against the people.”¹³⁶ Both Watan and Fadila welcome Christians to join their party, although the number of Christians who joined these parties is uncertain and likely to be few, if any.

Also notable is that several Salafi parties, including Nour, were at one time affiliated with the now defunct Democratic Alliance for Egypt.¹³⁷ Finally, not all Salafi parties that are members of the anti-“coup” National Alliance to Support Legitimacy (NASL) are calling for the reinstatement of President Morsi. Some, including al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, Wasat, and Watan, have called for a national reconciliation and are in consultation with liberal secular parties. Ayman Nour, among the liberal seculars negotiating with NASL, emphasized that NASL “has nothing to do with the Muslim Brotherhood.” Instead, he echoed a view expressed by many of the Salafis interviewed: “We are not against the 30 June revolution,” he said. “We are against what happened on 3 July when the army interfered in politics and hindered the democratic process.”¹³⁸

¹³³ *France 24*, “Egyptians debate traumatizing tradition of female circumcision,” 18 May 2012.

¹³⁴ Salafi woman community leader, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 2, 2013, Cairo, Egypt.

¹³⁵ Sarah El Masry, “Female Genital Mutilation: A Bitter Experience.” *Daily News Egypt*, 6 February 2013.

¹³⁶ Hamdi Dabbash, “Salafis in Cairo Aim to Establish ‘Virtue’ Political Party.” *Egypt Independent*, 19 May 2011.

¹³⁷ “Democratic Alliance” (Freedom and Justice). *Ahram Online*, 18 November 2011.

¹³⁸ “NASL in negotiations with Baradei, Abul Fotouh to join alliance.” *Masry al Youm*, 13 May 2014.

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	Supporting Some Modern Democratic Principles, including Free and Fair Elections, Social Justice, and Freedom of Expression and Association	Pro-Civilian-Led Government and a "Civil" State	Say they would Accept a "Secular" State (not based on Islamic Shari'a by Name)	Pro-Women's Political Participation	Affiliated with National Alliance to Support Legitimacy, or "Anti-Coup Alliance," made of some 40 Islamist Parties Calling for Morsi's Reinstatement	Calling for Reinstatement of President Morsi	At One Time Affiliated with the Democratic Alliance, Formed in the Wake of the 2011 Uprising, a Coalition of 15 Parties, including the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party and a number of Leftist Parties
Nour Party	Officially Not in Favor of "Democracy." Uncertain number in favor of democratic principles	Officially Yes but Supportive of Military "Coup"	Officially No, Some Members Accepting	Yes	No	No	Yes
Watan ("Homeland") Party	Officially in Favor of "Democracy"	Yes	Some Accepting	Yes	Yes	No (was Yes until 20 January 2014)	Yes, (before it split from Nour)
Independent	Uncertain Number in Favor of Democracy and/or Democratic Principles	Yes	Some Accepting	Yes	Uncertain Numbers	Uncertain Numbers	Uncertain Numbers Favored Democratic Alliance
Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and Building and Development Party	In Favor of Democratic Principles, not "Democracy"	Yes	Yes	Uncertain	Yes	No	No
Raya ("Flag") and Shaab ("People's") Parties (unofficial)	In Favor of Democratic Principles, not "Democracy"	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes	No	No
Fadila ("Virtue") Party (Merged with Al Nahda)	In Favor of Democratic Principles, not "Democracy"	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Al-Nahda ("Renaissance") Party	Uncertain number in Favor of Democratic Principles	Yes	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes	Yes	No
Islah ("Reform") Party	Uncertain Number in Favor of Democratic Principles	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Asala ("Authenticity") Party	Uncertain Number in Favor of Democratic Principles	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Al-Wasat ("Center") Party (split from Muslim Brotherhood)	In Favor of Democratic Principles	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

PART FOUR: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

Salafis enjoy a considerable support base in Egypt, and, although there will likely be an attempt by the regime to marginalize them from parliamentary participation, they have the potential to fare well in elections—especially owing to the banning of the Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party.¹³⁹ Among Salafis is an uncertain number of Egyptians who say they support political pluralism, secular governance, and other principles necessary for a healthy, stable democracy. Some oppose their own leadership’s hard-line stance on human rights issues and support of the military-backed regime. It would be in the United States’ strategic interest not to alienate these Egyptians, as they represent part of a broader nascent desire from within Egyptian society that includes secular liberals to move beyond the cycle of military-backed regimes in Egypt.

But how best can the United States engage Egyptians who are against the June 30 military takeover while maintaining a strategic relationship with the military general whose government now controls Egypt? There are three important steps the United States can take that would enable an interaction with Islamists that would benefit the Egyptian people while protecting U.S. strategic interests in the region: 1) tone down divisive rhetoric; 2) fund educational

programming and exchanges that develop independent thinking; and 3) increase economic development assistance and investment in civilian businesses, while refraining from assuming military aid is what makes or breaks U.S. support for human rights and democracy in Egypt.

1. *Tone Down Divisive Rhetoric*

U.S. officials have made public declarations such as “the Muslim Brotherhood stole the revolution,”¹⁴⁰ appearing no more sophisticated than the Egyptian regime when it uses its divisive, “either you’re with us or against us”¹⁴¹ type of language. The regime and state-controlled media encourages a black and white vision of Egyptian society when, as the Salafis interviewed have shown, Egyptian society is anything but black and white. As the Egyptian leftist artist and some Islamists point out, the regime relies on an Islamist-secular divide so that it can more easily suppress the development of real political parties that threaten to undermine its legitimacy and call into question its own undemocratic practices. Islamist leaders are not the principal “enemies” of the regime, but rather have been made part of a symbiotic relationship with military leaders to the detriment of Egypt’s political progress.

¹³⁹ The likelihood, especially because of this, of free and fair elections remains questionable.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Mackey, “Egypt’s Revolution was ‘Stolen’ by the Muslim Brotherhood, Kerry Says,” *The New York Times*, November 20, 2013.

¹⁴¹ Rana Allam, “If You are not with Us, You are against Us,” *Daily News Egypt*, 29 July 2013.

In order to promote real political party development, the United States should use language that encourages relationships across the Islamist-secular divide, as both Salafi rank and file and secular liberals have proposed. It should counter the “with us or against us” mentality put forward by the regime by regularly including in its public statements mention of principles of freedom, especially social justice, shared by most Egyptians—whether they are Islamists or secular liberals. The United States should also refrain from assigning blame to any one “side.” This is not to say the United States should not strongly condemn human rights abuses and other violations of democratic principles. There is a difference between calling out the government or any other entity for disrespecting human rights, and making a single group responsible for the results of the 2011 uprising, or singling out an “enemy” in what is a complicated and dynamic conflict compounded by both historical and economic factors.

2. Increase Educational Programming that Promotes Independent Thinking

As Egyptian Salafis and others point out, no amount of outside coercion or money can make Egyptians want real democratization.¹⁴² This desire must come from within Egyptian society. Although this paper

deals with Salafis and not U.S.-Egyptian relations in general, the Salafis’ expressed desire for greater Egyptian unity hits on a critical need for a better public school educational system that includes encouragement for independent thinking. Many Salafis argue that a more educated populace would be less vulnerable to manipulation by a regime that uses divisive techniques to eliminate political opposition. Liberal intellectuals similarly identify a lack of analytical thinking in public schools¹⁴³ to be among the primary weaknesses in Egyptian education hindering Egypt’s democratic development. Research has confirmed this correlation between higher education levels and democratic progress in a country.¹⁴⁴ Education at the earliest stages brings three critical components necessary for a healthy democracy: the ability to think independently, the ability to understand how one’s own state functions, and the skills required for civic engagement and political participation.¹⁴⁵

USAID evaluation reports demonstrate that the quality of Egyptian primary school education remains low.¹⁴⁶ While the Egyptian government has been hostile to non-governmental organizations promoting democracy,¹⁴⁷ it welcomes educational development aid.¹⁴⁸ The United States can relatively more easily pursue this alternative method of promoting

¹⁴² “...in today’s highly charged political climate in Egypt, with the military exercising tight control, the United States and other outside actors can assist only at the margins. Ultimately, the struggle over whether Egypt will be a democracy is a political one that Egyptians themselves must wage.” Stephen Grand, *Understanding Tahrir Square* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2014) 217.

¹⁴³ Interviews with Egyptian artists and intellectuals by Kent Davis-Packard, September 2013 – March 2014, Cairo, Egypt.

¹⁴⁴ “The hypothesis that higher education leads to more democratic politics (Lipset, 1959, 1960) has received a good deal of empirical support (Barro, 1999; Glaeser, LaPorta, Lopez-de-Silanes, and Shleifer, 2004; Papaioannou and Siourounis, 2005)” according to Edward L. Glaeser, Giacomo A. M. Ponzetto and Andrei Shleifer. Edward L. Glaeser, Giacomo A. M. Ponzetto and Andrei Shleifer, “Why Does Democracy Need Education?” *Journal of Economic Growth*, Vol 12, (2007), 77.

¹⁴⁵ Glaeser confirms: “Our starting point is the connection between education and political participation. This connection has been emphasized by Almond and Verba (1989, 1st ed. 1963), who see education as a crucial determinant of ‘civic culture’ and participation in democratic politics. Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ “Approximately 16 million Egyptian children (roughly 90 percent, nearly half of whom are girls) attend 43,000 public schools. While primary school enrollment is high and Egypt has reached an acceptable level of first-tier education indicators, Egyptian children are not receiving the quality of education or skills needed to facilitate ongoing learning.” U.S. Agency for International Development Home Page: “Where We Work,” “Egypt,” “Education Overview,” 13 April 2014. <http://www.usaid.gov/egypt/education>.

¹⁴⁷ “A crackdown on U.S.-funded pro-democracy groups in Egypt and a bill before parliament that would further restrict nongovernmental organizations here are inhibiting development work and activism during a period many Egyptians hoped would be marked by greater freedoms. [...] ‘This has become a huge impediment to the U.S.’s ability to deliver and to have an impact with its aid,’ said Stephen McInerney, executive director of the Washington-based Project on Middle East Democracy. ‘This is casting a real shadow over all U.S. assistance to Egypt.’” Ernesto Londono, “In Egypt, NGO Crackdown and Draft Law have Chilling Effect,” *The Washington Post*, 11 February 2012.

¹⁴⁸ “The team’s investigations, moreover, indicate that the GOE and MOE’s openness, even eagerness, to receive continued USAID assistance, including involvement in strategic policy development, continues undiminished.” “USAID/Egypt Education Portfolio Evaluation,” Final Report, Aguirre Division of JBS International, Inc. April 2010, vi. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacu550.pdf

democracy in the longer term. More specifically, the United States can promote educational programming that trains teachers to welcome diverse viewpoints and to include guest speakers, including Salafis, who can talk about the connections between education and good governance. The United States should also encourage relationships between primary and secondary schools in Egypt and America so that children are exposed to other cultures and teaching styles, cultural diversity, and, most importantly, the ability to openly express multiple opinions without censorship or tension. The aim is not to make Egyptians think like Americans, but to expand the burgeoning number of those who think for themselves.

3. Match U.S. Economic Development to Military Assistance, and Increase Multilateral Investment and Development Assistance

Although Salafis affirm that no amount of money can make Egypt change its internal politics, they are speaking of the military assistance the United States has attempted to use to bring about political change in Egypt. Salafis interviewed believe U.S. military aid has little to do with democratization or human rights, and that its main purpose is to serve the strategic interests of the United States in the region, namely to protect Israel. For Egyptian Salafis and others, U.S. military aid will never be about building a trusting relationship, and withholding aid will never be about supporting human rights. For this reason, the United States should respond to the call by rank and file Salafis for more direct aid to the Egyptian people, or no aid at all.¹⁴⁹

There are several reasons why increasing economic

development assistance could be a more effective and less risky way for the United States to achieve leverage in Egypt than withdrawing some or all military assistance. First, withholding military aid in 2013 only antagonized U.S.-Egyptian relations and caused a backlash among the many Egyptians who support President el-Sissi, along with the many more who simply see their military as a symbol of national pride. The United States cannot afford to lose allies in the region in the face of increasing political tensions and asymmetric threats, including those that are emerging from Syria, Iraq, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, withdrawing some military aid in 2013 did not change the Egyptian government's behavior with regard to human rights. The abuses increased, undisturbed by American policy.¹⁵⁰

At a relatively small price for the United States,¹⁵¹ economic development assistance could be positively conditioned according to Egypt's behavior with regard to human rights, without jeopardizing U.S. strategic interests in the region. As Hanan Alam, head of the Women's Division of the Nour Party stressed,¹⁵² positive incentive is much more likely to be met with open ears than a punishing withdrawal of funding that can be replaced, at least temporarily, with funding from the Gulf. While it is impossible to predict whether conditioning economic development aid could change the Egyptian government's behavior, there is a greater chance if it matched the \$1.3 billion per year the United States spends on the Egyptian military, instead of the current miniscule amount of \$0.2 billion per year, and if the United States' multilateral partners and investors followed suit. If the Egyptian people, especially elite busi-

¹⁴⁹ "Help from America and other countries, for the sad truth, must be done as friends, not as leverage. I know Americans and other countries try to use money to protect their interests in Egypt. Why don't you help us with economic development? America must understand it is the only way to be our friend." Dr. Hanan Alam, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 15, 2014, Alexandria, Egypt.

¹⁵⁰ "Egypt: Rampant Torture, Arbitrary Arrests and Detentions Signal Catastrophic Decline in Human Rights One Year after Ousting of Morsi." *Amnesty International*, 3 July 2014.

¹⁵¹ The overall U.S. foreign assistance budget is \$37 billion, which accounts for less than 1% of its overall budget.

¹⁵² Dr. Hanan Alam, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, February 15, 2014, Alexandria, Egypt.

nesspersons, are disappointed when and if the United States and other nations withdraw aid that could otherwise directly benefit them, they will likely have more lobbying power over their government than the United States.

Second, apolitical development aid and investment is a more viable, albeit indirect, route to democratic governance. It is acceptable to the regime because it relieves Egyptian citizens of economic hardship, making them less likely to be dissatisfied with their government's performance. But it also has the reverse effect of alleviating the factors that have made another military regime acceptable to the Egyptian people. In the wake of the January 2011 uprising, Egyptians have lived through several years of severe political and economic instability. Tourism is at an all-time low, the majority of university-educated students cannot find jobs, and peoples' basic security is compromised on a daily basis.¹⁵³ As a result, many Egyptians are even calling for Mubarak's return, and yearn for any kind of government that brings stability. They are willing to turn a blind eye to the egregious human rights abuses being committed by the regime.¹⁵⁴

While it is true that economic progress does not always lead to democratic progress, Egypt is a representative case study of what happens to democratic aspirations when basic underlying conditions, especially the economic, have not yet been met. Many Egyptians even say Egypt "is not ready for democracy," including President el-Sissi.¹⁵⁵ This is where U.S. knowledge of rank and file Salafis' at-

titudes can play a vital role, because it allows the United States to legitimately push back on el-Sissi's assumption that Egyptians do not yet want democracy. At the same time, working multilaterally to increase the impact and reduce the potentially negative effects of a uniquely American stamp, the United States can contribute to an economic atmosphere in which democracy could eventually take root. Development aid and investment, aimed especially towards women and other underprivileged civilian groups, would contribute to balancing the enormous discrepancy in economic power between the military, which controls up to 40% of the economy in Egypt, and the rest of Egyptian institutions and civilian-owned businesses. As more and more Salafis enter the business and IT worlds, economic programs also present opportunities for cooperation and influence through the private sphere as well as the public, exposing diverse groups of Egyptians to American institutional practices that automatically promote democratic thinking.

If the United States does not step forward at this critical juncture in Egyptian history with real influence, less attractive donors, including Gulf states with their own political agendas,¹⁵⁶ and investors, such as China¹⁵⁷—who show little concern for human rights—will and already have. Economic development assistance can no longer be seen as a "soft" priority for the United States, nor can respect for human rights, since, as Salafis interviewed noted, the more the international community allows the Egyptian government to violate Islamists' human rights, the more susceptible these commu-

¹⁵³ Dalibor Rohac, "Egypt's Election Over, What Now for the Economy?" Beyondbrics Blog, *Financial Times*, 30 May 2014.

¹⁵⁴ In his discussion of several Middle Eastern countries, Daniel Brumberg writes: "Many secular elites have seen autocracy as a necessary evil sheltering them from the prospect of uneven democratic contests with Islamists." Brumberg, "Transforming the Arab World's Protection-Racket Politics," 90.

¹⁵⁵ "el-Sissi: Egypt not yet Ready to Become a Democracy," *Middle East Monitor*, 2014.

¹⁵⁶ Gulf states have provided \$20 billion since the 2013 military takeover. Abdel Hafez El Sawy, "Why do Gulf Sovereign Funds not Invest in Egypt?" *Middle East Monitor*, 16 June 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Ben Blanchard and Megha Rajagopalan, "China Says More than Half of Foreign Aid Given to Africa." *Reuters*, 10 July 2014.

nities are to radicalization.¹⁵⁸ This trend has already been witnessed among the Muslim Brotherhood,¹⁵⁹ and is a security issue that threatens the entire region.

Finally, aid and investment must allow Egyptians to rebuild their economy without becoming dependent on the United States, as many Salafis fear. Programs should be Egyptian-managed and self-sustaining. When exploring which need areas to focus

on, the United States should include all sides of the Egyptian political spectrum at the table, so that no single group is targeted as “American affiliated.” Members of Salafi rank and file will no doubt present a wider range of viewpoints than expressed by their leadership, and more radical Salafis will hear them. Before this ripple beneath the surface is dismissed as merely “Islamic apologetics,” it should have the opportunity to make a wave.

¹⁵⁸ “The young generation is starting to say that [U.S.] democracy does not guarantee our rights. The ones who have weapons are the one that wins in the end and are legitimate in the eyes of the world. And so let’s all resort to weapons. This kind of hatred will one day result in a new September 11th in the U.S. This is what things are moving towards. They’re pushing us to radicalize. We are dying in thousands...we, the ones who chose democracy through the practical, well-known procedures of implementing democracy worldwide.” Salafi woman teacher, interview by Kent Davis-Packard, December 2, 2014, Cairo, Egypt.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel Byman and Tamara Cofman Wittes, “Muslim Brotherhood Radicalizes.” Memorandum, *The Brookings Center for Middle East Policy*, 23 January 2014.

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