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THE SALAFI CALL: A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

by  
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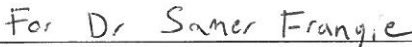
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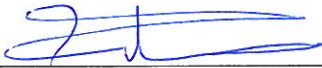
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# AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This thesis aims to explain the reasons for the emergence and development of the Salafi Call to become one of Egypt's most influential Islamic social movements. The Salafi Call is primarily an ultra-conservative proselytization organization, aiming to create a more Islamic society from the ground up. After the Arab Spring, the Salafi Call is best known for its entrance into politics through its political arm the Nour Party. The emergence of the Salafis to play a large political and social role has taken many experts by surprise. Therefore, a number of studies have been published on the politicization of the Egyptian Salafi movement. This thesis, however, argues that we must look at the historical trajectory and the internal workings of the Salafi Call as a full-fledged social movement organization to understand its success after the fall of Husni Mubarak in 2011 and even more so after the ousting of Muhammad Mursi in 2013.

The thesis argues that the Salafi Call emerged and developed because it has been able to pragmatically deal with Egypt's changing political environment, from its founding in the 1970s until today, by exhibiting an organizational adaptability. Throughout the history of the Salafi Call, it developed in a political environment greatly influenced by the state and the Muslim Brotherhood, both of which provided opportunities and constraints for the movement. The Salafi Call traditionally has developed a policy of obedience towards the state. When the state is tolerant of Islamic activism, the Salafi Call scales up its organizational structures to more effectively administer its organization. Yet, during times of state repression, it disbands organizational structures and survives solely by preaching at mosques. It is this organizational adaptability that allowed the Salafi Call to quickly and effectively grasp the opportunities provided by the Arab Spring.

Furthermore, the thesis argues that the Salafi Call benefits from this organizational adaptability due to its unique leadership structure made up entirely of shaykhs, who maintain strong connections to Egyptian communities through preaching at mosques. This allowed the group to develop and maintain large networks of support even when Islamic activism was repressed. This provided the group a ready-made network to quickly organize into decision making bodies after the fall of Mubarak and effectively deal with Egypt's treacherous political environment.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mentor and sponsor Mr. Paul Wineman. Without you I never would have studied at AUB. You have truly opened doors for me and helped in reaching my goals. Also, to my mother and father, thank you for your love and support in all my ventures and for the sacrifices you have made on my behalf.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, Salafism has transformed from a marginal phenomenon into a mainstream movement in Egyptian society. After the removal of President Husni Mubarak, the success of Salafis in the November 2011 parliamentary elections took many policymakers, academics, and experts by surprise. The Nour Party, the largest of Egypt's Salafi parties, won 111 of 498 seats in Egypt's parliament, becoming the second largest party, only behind the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party. Initially, Salafi politicians were considered inexperienced and were accused of being more interested in banning bikinis and alcohol than confronting Egypt's many ills. Yet, months into Muhammad Mursi's presidency, Nour politicians were gaining reputations as shrewd political players, more so than the supposedly "experienced" politicians of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>1</sup> Many were again caught by surprise when the Nour Party supported and essentially became the "kingmaker" of the military's removal of Muhammad Mursi, defying the rest of Egypt's Islamist current.<sup>2</sup> However, if one positions the Salafis historically and considers the gradual development of Egyptian Salafism as a social phenomenon, the role of the Salafis in post-Mubarak Egypt seems less surprising.

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<sup>1</sup> Nervana Mahmoud, "In Egypt, Watch the Nour Party," *al-Monitor*, January 6, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/egypt-nour-party-gathers-strength.html>

<sup>2</sup> Alaa Bayoumi, "Egypt's Salafi Kingmakers Suffer Backlash," *Al-Jazeera*, July 21, 2013, accessed July 22, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/07/201372191920631195.html>

The group behind the Nour Party is the Salafi Call (*al-da‘wa al-salafiyya*),<sup>3</sup> and is considered the dominant group in Egypt’s Salafi landscape.<sup>4</sup> Its origins date back to the early 1970s and arose out of Islamic student activism on Alexandria University’s campus. The Salafi Call is a religious organization, aiming to reform Egyptian society and restore the Islamic faith and practice to the way they existed at the time of Muhammad and his followers. The group is, first and foremost, a proselytization (*da‘wa*) organization and simultaneously acts as a charity and political organization.

Primarily a nationwide mosque network visible in almost every Egyptian community, it is difficult to determine how many supporters the Salafi Call has. Ashraf el-Sherif, an expert on Egyptian Islamism estimated the Nour Party has 200,000 members, which suggests the Salafi Call has a large support base.<sup>5</sup> After the 2011 uprising, it developed a formal organizational structure, similar to that of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>6</sup> The group’s newly formed Administrative Council (*majlis al-idāra*) directs its activities across the country through different committees (i.e. social, medical, youth, district

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<sup>3</sup> In English there is no agreed upon term for *al-da‘wa al-salafiyya*. Scholarly articles and different media sources all use different variations such as the Salafi Dawah, the Salafi Da‘wa, the Salafist Call Society, the Salafi Call, and various transliterations of *al-da‘wa al-salafiyya*. I have chosen to refer to them as the Salafi Call. The name means the call to Islam as it was practiced in the time of Muhammad and his companions.

<sup>4</sup> Stephane Lacroix, “Sheikhs, Politicians, and Revolutionaries: The Political Sociology of Salafism in the Wake of the Arab Spring,” (lecture at the London School of Economics, London, November 12, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Ashraf el-Sherif, “The Salafi Movement: Competing Visions (Part 1),” *Egypt Independent*, November 1, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/opinion/salafi-movement-competing-visions-part-1>

<sup>6</sup> Ahmad Zaghlul, “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya...khaṭwāt naḥū al-tanzīm al-dawlī,” *Islamyun.net*, November 12, 2012.

committees, etc.).<sup>7</sup> The Salafi Call also provides an array of social services across Egypt, allowing it to establish strong ties with the Egyptian public. The Salafi Call's activities are not only restricted to Egypt. The group frequently sends delegations to other countries in the Arab world, Europe, and the United States to connect Muslims with the group's leadership. Salafi Call leader Sa'id 'Abd al-'Azim stated the group aims to form an international organization, like the Muslim Brotherhood, and seeks to spread its thought throughout the world.<sup>8</sup>

#### **A. Research Question and Argument**

It is evident that the Salafi Call grasped the political and social openings caused by the 2011 uprising to build its capacity in an attempt to get closer to its goal of societal transformation. Therefore, this thesis aims to understand how an ultra-conservative proselytization organization became so influential in shaping Egypt's religious, political, and social spheres at both the local and national levels. In order to explain their present success, the thesis analyzes the emergence and development of the Salafi Call, focusing on the capacity of this organization to pragmatically deal with Egypt's changing political landscape, a capacity enabled by the Salafi Call's unique leadership structure made up entirely of shaykhs.

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<sup>7</sup> Khalil al-Anani and Maszlee Malik, "Pious Way to Politics: the Rise of Political Salafism in Post-Mubarak Egypt," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 59, accessed August 1, 2013, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/dome.12012/abstract>

<sup>8</sup> "al-da'wa al-salafīyya tunazzim 'amalahā dawliyyan... wa shuyūkhuhā: nas'a li-rabṭ anṣārinā bi-l-qīyyādāt al-miṣriyya," *Akhbarak*, November 12, 2012, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1kiIGia>

Chapters two and three argue that the Salafi Call emerged because it has pragmatically adapted to Egypt's changing political environment from the seventies until today. The group strategically dealt with Egypt's two main power players – the state and the Muslim Brotherhood – in order to ensure its emergence, survival, and development. The Salafi Call, traditionally, respected the power of the state and avoided encroaching on it to avoid repression and crackdowns. When the regime tolerated Islamic activism, the Salafi Call scaled up its organizational structures to more effectively administer its *da'wa* activities and provision of social services. However, when the state cracked down on Islamic activism, especially starting in the mid-nineties, the Salafi Call dismantled its organizational structures and operated solely out of its mosques for survival.

The presence of the Muslim Brotherhood also had a profound effect on the emergence of the Salafi Call, with the latter organization adopting greater organizational structures to remain competitive with its rival. In the post-Mubarak era, we see that strategically dealing with the state and the Muslim Brotherhood has been essential for its survival and development. Ultimately, the Salafi Call is pursuing a policy of obedience towards the state in order to keep political space open, ensure that it can maintain a public presence through its *da'wa* activities and social services, and avoid the state's widespread crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies.

The conclusion looks at the reasons within the Salafi Call's organizational capacity that enabled it to effectively deal with Egypt's political landscape. I argue that the group's unique leadership structure, entirely made up of shaykhs, is the main reason the Salafi Call has grown into one of Egypt's most influential social movements. Unlike most Egyptian parties and movements, in which tasks are divided, the shaykhs perform multiple

roles including: articulating the movement message, creating policy, and interacting with their local communities. Through the shaykhs, the Salafi Call has built large networks of support around its mosques. This has given the group organizational adaptability, because, during times of repression, the shaykhs have been able to maintain large networks of support at mosques. When political space opens, the shaykhs are able to organize quickly in the Salafi Call's internal structures, allowing the group to effectively make decisions and administer its services.

## **B. Literature Survey**

Despite the fact that the Salafi Call has been around for over forty years, there is no source that comprehensively deals with its background and history. There is very little written about the group in English. While there is more in Arabic, there are still no full length books. In English, there are now a number of think-tank papers, dealing with the general Egyptian Salafi movement. Richard Gauvain's paper "Salafism in Modern Egypt: Panacea or Pest?" is possibly the only paper published on the Egyptian Salafi movement before the January 2011 uprising.<sup>9</sup> He discussed the origins and belief system of the movement, but failed to discuss the Salafi Call at all. After the success of Nour and the Islamic Alliance, an electoral coalition of Salafi parties, in November 2011 parliamentary elections, a number of scholars published papers describing the Egyptian Salafi political

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Gauvain, "Salafism in Modern Egypt: Panacea or Pest?" *Political Theology* 11, no. 6 (2010): 802-825.

landscape.<sup>10</sup> Most of the papers discussed and elucidated the reasons for the movement's politicization, because, traditionally, the worldwide Salafi movement has been thought to be apolitical. Naturally, they focused on the Nour Party, as it is the largest Salafi party. These papers very briefly discussed the Salafi Call, and only did so to give a better understanding of the Nour Party.<sup>11</sup> Of course that is not to say the politics of the movement is not important, but the discussion of the Salafi Call should not be relegated to secondary importance, when in fact, the Nour Party exists mainly to help the Salafi Call achieve its goals.

There are also a few books in Arabic that discuss the general Egyptian Salafi movement.<sup>12</sup> The books discuss the origins and thought of contemporary Egyptian Salafi groups, but none specifically focus on the Salafi Call. One book, *al-Salafiyyun fi Misr* – which deals with the Salafi movement's role in, reaction to, and transformation after the 2011 uprising – pays particular attention to the Salafi Call, however it still does not deal with the group comprehensively. Nevertheless, there are still no in-depth answers to: How

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<sup>10</sup> See, Jonathan Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011; Nathan Brown, "Islam and Politics in the New Egypt," Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2013; William McCants, "The Lesser of Two Evils: The Salafi Turn to Party Politics in Egypt," Washington DC: Brookings Saban Center, May 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Anani and Lacroix went into greater depth on the Salafi Call than other papers, Khalil al-Anani and Maszlee Malik, "Pious Way to Politics: the Rise of Political Salafism in Post-Mubarak Egypt," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 59, accessed August 1, 2013, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/dome.12012/abstract>; Stephane Lacroix, "Sheikhs and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism," Doha, Qatar: Brookings Doha Center, June 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Mustafa Zahran et al., *Al-Salafiyyun fi Misr: Ma Ba'd al-Thawra* (Riyadh: Markaz al-Din wa al-Siyasa li-l-Dirasat, 2012); Ahmad Zaghlul, *Al-Hala al-Salafiyya al-Mu'asira fi Misr* (Cairo: Madbouly Books, 2011); Ahmad Ban (ed.), *Waqi' wa Mustaqbal: al-Harakat al-Salafiyya fi Misr* (Cairo: Markaz al-Nil li-l-Dirasat al-Iqtisadiyya wa-l-Istratijiyya, 2012).

did it emerge? And through what means is it engaging and influencing Egyptian society? In order to answer these questions it is valuable to turn to social movement theory as a theoretical tool.

### C. Social Movement Theory

Starting in the early 2000s, a number of scholars began arguing for applying social movement theory (SMT) to analyze Islamic movements.<sup>13</sup> In *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Quintan Wiktorowicz contends that SMT is “a unifying framework and agenda that can provide effective modes of inquiry to further boundaries of research on Islamic activism.”<sup>14</sup> Wiktorowicz and others, such as Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, agree that previous studies on Islamic movements offer insufficient explanations as to why mobilization occurs. Wickham identifies “cultural identity” and “political economy” as the two major insufficient models.<sup>15</sup> The “cultural identity” viewpoint explains the rise of Islamic activism as a reaction to Western cultural domination. Other studies propose the “political economy” model which theorizes that the failure of post-colonial regimes to provide citizens with economic growth, social equity, and political rights provides the impetus for mobilization. Both viewpoints posit that individuals seek

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<sup>13</sup> These studies are: Quintan Wiktorowicz (ed.), *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002); Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*

<sup>14</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, 6.



out Islamic movements to express their grievances and to assuage psychological discomfort.

Social movement theorist, Doug McAdam, argues, however, that the above grievance-based explanations are not enough, explaining that grievances are ubiquitous but social movements are not, and, therefore, calls for a more comprehensive approach.<sup>16</sup> That is not to say that the “political economy” and “cultural identity” models are invalid, but they cannot explain the emergence and dynamics of Islamic social movements. SMT has thus blossomed as a theoretical tool, largely due to it offering various means of understanding movement emergence and dynamics. Equally valuable is SMT’s emphasis upon the rational and strategic nature of Islamic movements, as it does of Western movements, thus helping to avoid the narrative that Islamic movements are “exceptional,” static, and inherently uncompromising. Scholars have demonstrated that Islamic movements make strategic decisions and adapt their programs and ideologies in accordance with changing circumstances.<sup>17</sup>

Proponents of SMT argue movement emergence and mobilization occur because of three interrelated dimensions.<sup>18</sup> The first, opportunity structures, contends that exogenous factors, occurring in the local or international context, either enable or constrain movement dynamics. These opportunities or constraints often demarcate the tactics,

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<sup>16</sup> Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Roel Meijer, “Taking the Islamist Movement Seriously: Social Movement Theory and the Islamist Movement,” *International Journal of Social History* 50, no. 2 (August 2005): 279-92.

<sup>18</sup> McAdam et al. (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*.

actions, and choices available to movements. Social movement theorists have not agreed on a common list of the most important exogenous factors, however all scholarship focuses on “the opening and closing of political space and its institutional and substantive location.”<sup>19</sup> Some of the most cited factors are “the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, the stability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity, the presence of elite allies, and the state’s capacity and propensity for repression.”<sup>20</sup> Exogenous variables are not simply given, rather they must be interpreted and grasped by social movements. Moreover, opportunities are not solely exogenous, as social movements can create opportunities themselves through their tactics, actions, and framing. Opportunity structures emphasize the logical and rational character of movements because it treats them as active agents who make strategic choices based on the political and social contexts. Studies on Hamas are a good example of how movements adapt their decision making to changes in the political context.<sup>21</sup> Hamas has been previously regarded as an uncompromising movement that rigidly adheres to doctrine, however as Mishal and Sela argue, the group calculated after the Palestinian *intifāda*, beginning in 2000, that there was

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<sup>19</sup> William A. Gamson and David S. Meyer, “Framing Political Opportunity,” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 277.

<sup>20</sup> McAdam et al. (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Jerusalem: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 2000); Glenn E. Robinson, “Hamas as Social Movement,” in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004): 112-143.

greater Palestinian support for the peace process.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, for organizational survival, the group adjusted its doctrine to allow for the possibility of peace with Israel. They did this by framing peace as a temporary suspension of the jihad, allowing Muslim forces the time to strengthen their positions before a final attack. They invoked the Islamic concepts of *sabr* (patience) and *hudna* (truce) to legitimize this doctrinal flexibility.

The second dimension in SMT is resource mobilization. Resource mobilization theory (RMT) analyzes the intermediary variables that transform individual grievances into organized collective action. At the crux of RMT is the belief that resources and mobilizing structures, such as social movement organizations, are essential for collective action. Movements organize the “mobilization of resources through communication channels, the division of labor and the financing of the movement.”<sup>23</sup> Through greater organization, the movement can better direct its activities and “maximize its impact and efficaciousness.”<sup>24</sup> The major mobilizing structures for Islamic movements include: (1) the mosque and other religious institutions; (2) Islamic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as medical clinics, hospitals, charity associations, and cultural centers; (3) political parties, including student politics; (4) informal social networks and personal ties.

The mosque, as the central religious institution in Muslim societies, is frequently used as a mobilizing structure for Islamic groups.<sup>25</sup> At the mosque, groups can recruit and gather adherents, while propagating the movement’s message through Friday prayer,

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<sup>22</sup> Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*.

<sup>23</sup> Meijer, “Taking the Islamist Movement Seriously,” 281.

<sup>24</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

sermons, lessons, and study groups. In authoritarian Arab states the mosque has been especially important for mobilization, as more formal modes of participation, such as political parties and professional associations, have been closed. The mosque has traditionally been a free space for mobilization, however regimes have tried to neutralize this space by extending state control over them to varying degrees of success.

Islamic NGOs are utilized frequently for Islamic outreach. These NGOs include hospitals, medical clinics, charity associations, cultural centers, and schools, where they provide basic goods and services to “demonstrate that ‘Islam is the solution’ to everyday problems in Muslim societies.”<sup>26</sup> At these locations, Islamic activists not only provide social services, but use these interactions with local communities to propagate and recruit new members. Wickham calls this the “parallel Islamic sector.”<sup>27</sup> This sector emerged in the 1980s after Arab regimes implemented neoliberal economic policies and were no longer able to live up to the “social contract” in which states provided basic goods and services to the masses in exchange for support and peace. Islamic NGOs aim to fill the void left by the states’ inability to provide basic goods and services and social development.

Another organizational forum used by Islamic activists is formal political parties. Reform-oriented groups took advantage of limited political liberalization in the 2000s and the political openings after the 2011 Arab Spring. According to Langhor, moderate

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<sup>26</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, 93.

Islamists in Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Yemen, and elsewhere have been able to mobilize large support through formal political parties.<sup>28</sup>

The third and final dimension of SMT is cultural and framing processes. Social movement theorists view Islamic movements as “new social movements,” that is they rely heavily on the creation of meaning and identity.<sup>29</sup> This dimension considers how individual participants view themselves as a collectivity, how groups convince potential followers to participate, and how meaning is produced, disseminated, and articulated. Meaning and identity is created through what social movement theorists call frames. Frames are defined as, “interpretive schemata that offer a language and cognitive tools for making sense of experiences and events in the ‘world out there.’”<sup>30</sup> According to Benford and Snow the three core framing tasks are to diagnose a problem, provide solutions to the problem, and provide a rationale for engagement in collective action.<sup>31</sup> For frames to be successful, they must develop frame resonance, which is frequently achieved by drawing on indigenous cultural symbols, language, and identities to enhance the likelihood potential participants will identify with the movement and actively participate. In addition to drawing from cultural narratives, frame resonance also depends on the reputation of the individuals and

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<sup>28</sup> Vicky Langhor, “Of Islamists and Ballot Boxes: Rethinking the Relationship between Islamisms and Electoral Politics,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, 4 (November 2001): 591-610.

<sup>29</sup> Meijer, “Taking the Islamist Movement Seriously,” 282.

<sup>30</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 15.

<sup>31</sup> Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 616.

group articulating the frame.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the authority of group spokesmen, leaders, and preachers is as important as the content of the frames and message.

SMT is very broad in scope, therefore, due to the time limitations of this study, a comprehensive SMT analysis of the Salafi Call is not possible. It is useful, however, to provide a framework for pinpointing the specific causes for the Salafi Call's emergence. Armed with this toolbox, we turn now to the Salafi belief system that provides a shared identity for participants in the Salafi Call and a basis for its functioning as a proselytization organization.

#### **D. Salafism**

The Salafi Call adheres to Salafi doctrine.<sup>33</sup> Understanding the Salafi doctrine and creed gives great insight into the goals and aspirations of the Salafi Call, as the Salafi Call's main goal is to propagate Salafi thought. Salafism is a Sunni theological reform movement that believes Muslims have become ignorant of their religion and blame this as the root cause of the Muslim world's spiritual and political decline. Salafis believe the cure for this decline is to return Islam to its original form, as the prophet and his companions practiced it. The term Salafi is derived from the Arabic expression *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, meaning the virtuous forefathers. This refers to the first three generations of Muslims, the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (*al-ṣaḥāba*), and the next two generations, known as the followers (*tābi'ūn*) and the followers of the followers (*tābi' al-tābi'īn*). Salafis believe the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 620.

<sup>33</sup> For a comprehensive look at Salafi doctrine see, Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst and Company, 2009).

first three generations of Islam were the religion's golden age, because the companions of the prophet and the succeeding two generations were taught either by the Prophet himself or by someone who was directly taught by him. Therefore, at this time, the Islamic creed was pure because of temporal proximity to the Prophet. Salafis have such an affinity for this golden age that they attempt to emulate Muhammad and his companions in their beliefs, daily habits, practices, and dress. After these three generations, they believe Islam became adulterated and strayed from its original message. Salafis reject the vast body of Islamic theological discourse as well as the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence that began to develop during the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258 AD). They regard this body of knowledge as innovative and corrupted by human reasoning and opinion, both of which, they believe, should not be used to interpret Islam. Salafis aim to purify Islam of this body of knowledge and advocate using the Qur'an and sunna as the only pure sources for Islamic teaching. They advocate teaching this purified Islam on the individual level to come closer to its goal of transforming society in an Islamic direction. Thus, in this manner, the Muslim world may return to its former glory. To be clear, all Sunni Muslims use the Prophet and his companions as models of correct belief and practice and regard the Qur'an and sunna as the two most important Islamic sources, but they do not reject all succeeding developments.

The Salafi reformist project revolves around purifying and propagating its creedal tenets. The cornerstone of the creed is the concept of *tawhīd*, meaning the oneness of God.<sup>34</sup> Although all Muslims believe in *tawhīd*, Salafis have a very rigid understanding of this. Salafis believe the preservation and defense of their conception of *tawhīd* is a

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<sup>34</sup> For a deeper look at the three components of *tawhīd*, see Zoltan Pall, *Lebanese Salafis Between the Gulf and Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 20.

Muslim's most important duty. The opposite of *tawhīd* is *shirk*, meaning associating others with God, or polytheism. Salafis, therefore, fight human innovations (*bid'a*) because they believe *bid'a* eventually leads to *shirk*. Salafis have a very strict conception of *bid'a*, as they regard anything that is not outlined in the Qur'an and the sunna as *bid'a*. For example, praying more than five times a day is innovation, because the Qur'an only prescribes five times.

To preserve *tawhīd*, Salafis adhere to the absolute authority of the Qur'an. They also put great emphasis on the hadith, which is a codification of the sayings and deeds of the prophet Muhammad. If a certain verse in the Qur'an is unclear, Salafis refer to the hadith to find an explanation. Because the hadith elucidates how Muhammad practiced Islam in real life, Salafis have become obsessed with the outward practice of Islam.<sup>35</sup> The study of hadith is one of the greatest preoccupations of the Salafi movement. Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999), one of the most prominent Salafi scholars, and the chief ideological influence on the Salafi Call, turned the study of hadith into a science, *'ilm al-ḥadīth*. Part of the Salafi purification mission is to examine the strength of hadith by looking at the chain of transmission from the seventh century until today. If the hadith is weak, they try to eliminate it from practice.

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<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey Halverson calls this preoccupation with outward practice "orthopraxy." Jeffrey R. Halverson, *Theology and Creed in Sunni Islam: the Muslim Brotherhood, Ash'arism, and Political Sunnism* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).



Another way Salafis protect *tawhīd* is through the concept of *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* (loyalty and disavowal).<sup>36</sup> The concept was first introduced by the thirteenth century theologian Ibn Taymiyya, one of the greatest inspirations for the modern Salafi movement. The concept separates the world into two realms. The first, the realm of Islam, is good, and the second, the realm of the *kuffār* (unbelievers), is evil. Muslims must show loyalty to the first realm, while defending Islam from the heretical influences of the second realm. In practice, Muslims should seek out and spend their time with other Muslims who will support and nurture their correct Islamic belief and practice, and avoid unbelievers, who aim to draw Muslims away from correct belief and practice.

#### **E. Implementing the Salafi Creed**

Although all Salafis agree on the common creed, revolving around *tawhīd*, they differ on the methods of purifying Islam and implementing the “correct” creed. Some Salafis focus only on proper religious practice and avoid politics completely, others advocate an activist approach that openly criticizes Arab governments, and others see violence as the main tool available to purify Islam. As the scholar Thomas Hegghammer says, Salafism is a theological term, therefore “the term Salafi says very little about the political preferences of the actors described [as such].”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, discussing the various

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<sup>36</sup> Joas Wagemakers, “The Transformation of a Radical Concept: *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi,” in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst and Company, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, “Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism,” in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst and Company, 2009), 250.

methods Salafis use to purify Islam and implement their creed will help us understand how the Salafi Call acts in the political context.

Quintan Wiktorowicz was the first scholar to develop a classification of Salafis proposing three factions: purists, politicos, and jihadis.<sup>38</sup> Although his classification is regarded as too rigid and outdated, it is worth mentioning, because it helps us understand how Salafis aim to implement their creed. His classification deals with the socio-political reality Salafis face in the modern Muslim world. In other words, it classifies Salafis on how they view and relate to politics.

According to Wiktorowicz, the purists believe “the primary emphasis of the movement should be promoting the Salafi creed and combating deviant practices, just as the Prophet fought polytheism, human desire, and human reason. Until the religion is purified, any political action will likely lead to corruption and injustice because society does not yet understand the tenets of the faith.”<sup>39</sup> Purists, therefore, see *da‘wa* (propagation) as the main tool for purifying society. Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, the chief ideological influence on the Salafi Call and a teacher of many of the group’s founders, is considered one of the chief developers of purist Salafi thought. His method of spreading Salafism is *al-tasfiyya wa-l-tarbiyya* (purification and education).<sup>40</sup> He advocated purifying all Islamic doctrine and then teaching this correct doctrine at a grassroots level to

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<sup>38</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): 207-239.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>40</sup> Stephane Lacroix, “Between Revolution and Apoliticism: Nasir al-Din al-Albani and his Impact on the Shaping of Contemporary Salafism,” in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst and Company, 2009), 69-70.

transform society. To transmit this knowledge, al-Albani was a proponent of the student-teacher relationship.<sup>41</sup> In this way, Salafis do not need formal organizational structures to spread the correct doctrine, but rather do so at the individual level, with the goal of purifying the society from the ground up. Purists believe the correct form of practice must be implemented before political activism, or else the politics will be corrupted. Moreover, according to Wiktorowicz, purists eschew politics because it is an innovation and not outlined in the Qur'an.<sup>42</sup> They see that political participants will pledge their loyalty to a party instead of God, and, moreover, pledging allegiance to parties divides the Muslim community and can lead to chaos (*fitna*).

The politicians criticize the purists' abstention from politics because they see politics as a natural part of Islam. The politicians are most associated with the Saudi *ṣaḥwa* movement.<sup>43</sup> After many Egyptian Muslim Brothers fled to Saudi Arabia following the wave of repression under Abd al-Nasser in the fifties, they influenced the Saudi religious sphere. They believed politics was a natural tool to defend *tawḥīd*, and believed the rulers are in a position to destroy *tawḥīd*, therefore, the rulers must be held accountable through criticism and activism to prevent that from happening. In the Saudi context, confrontations between the Saudi regime and the politically activist *ṣaḥwa* movement led to the politicians' persecution. Therefore, according to Wiktorowicz, the jihadis emerged, because they saw

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<sup>41</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 133-144.

<sup>42</sup> Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," 220.

<sup>43</sup> For more on the *ṣaḥwa* movement see Stephane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

political confrontation as futile, and saw violent confrontation as the only recourse to protect *tawhīd*.

Zoltan Pall, a researcher on Salafi movements, modified and updated Wiktorowicz's classification.<sup>44</sup> His approach is more flexible and reflects how Salafis aim to implement their creed in the real world. He argues that, in fact, the greatest divide between Salafis is not political in nature, but rather theological and concerns the concept of *ḥukm*, the relationship between the ruled and the ruler (*ḥākim*). According to Pall, purists believe the ruler should be obeyed unconditionally as long as he is not openly an apostate. They do not allow open criticism of the ruler, but instead advocate secret advice (*naṣīḥa sirriyya*), which is given to the ruler behind closed doors. They see that open criticism of the ruler opens the doors to chaos in society, which purist Salafis try very hard to avoid.

Pall divides the purists into two groups. The division is not theological in nature, but regards what the two groups see as the best way to spread *da'wa*. The first group, Pall refers to as the "purist-rejectionists." They reject any form of political participation because politics forces politically active Muslims to engage with those who do not practice the religion properly. They believe that compromise and corruption of the doctrine is inevitable. The second group, the "purist-politically oriented," see that if political participation is allowed by the ruler, it is a great tool for *da'wa*. They see political participation as a great opportunity to spread the "correct" Islam and a platform to defend Islam. Pall argues, for the politically-oriented purists, politics is only a tool that serves

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<sup>44</sup> Pall, *Lebanese Salafis Between the Gulf and Europe*, 25-28. He also discusses politically active Salafis, who he classifies as *harakis*, and jihadis, but a description of these classifications goes beyond this thesis.

*da'wa*, and their main reason for involvement in politics is to achieve the goal of creedal purification. The Salafi Call is closely related to the politically-oriented purists in that it calls for obeying the ruler to avoid chaos, but also participates in politics, when allowed by the ruler, because it is a great propagation tool. Understanding Salafi theological discourse helps us understand how Salafis make decisions in the political context.

## **F. Methodology**

Research for this thesis has drawn upon various different sources – both English and Arabic. Of particular importance was content analysis in the form of reviewing online news sources. Arabic newspapers and e-news platforms were reviewed on a daily basis, as were English Egyptian newspapers such as Egypt Independent, Daily News Egypt, and Ahram Online. Other online sources such as websites affiliated with the group were regularly consulted in order to access the group's official statements and media, as were social media sites such as Facebook – valuable for regular updates on the group. Academic texts – both Arabic and English – were of course also drawn upon. In general, however, English language content was very limited and was only really useful for developing questions for further investigation. A proficiency in Arabic was thus an essential tool for researching the Salafi Call.

As well, I conducted primary research in Egypt during May - June 2013. Interviews were essential especially to identify themes as very little analytical work on the Salafi Call has been conducted. I conducted eight interviews with a broad array of individuals including Nour Party leaders, researchers, professors, journalists, and experts on political Islam and Egyptian Salafism. I identified these interviewees by surveying the literature on

Egyptian Salafism and through two Egyptian contacts, who suggested interviewees and contacted them for me. All interviews, except for one, were conducted in Arabic. The interviews were open-ended, but revolved around gaining more information on the emergence of the Salafi Call, its history, organization, and activities, and the group's current political and social situation in Egypt. All interviewees formally agreed to the interview, its recording, and the use of information by signing the Institutional Review Board's approval form.

### **G. Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis aims to determine how the Salafi Call, a proselytization organization, has emerged and developed into one of the most influential social movements in Egypt's social, political, and religious fields. Social movement theory is relied upon to provide a framework to determine the specific reasons for its emergence. The thesis argues that the Salafi Call, throughout its history, has been able to effectively deal with opportunities and constraints in Egypt's political environment because its unique leadership structure made up entirely of shaykhs – who maintain strong connections with local Egyptian communities – has afforded it greater organizational flexibility than other groups.

Chapter two looks at the political context in which the Salafi Call emerged from the early seventies until the January 2011 uprising. The chapter argues, despite that Salafis are regarded as doctrinally rigid and characterized as eschewing organizational structures, especially political parties, the Salafi Call emerged because it pragmatically dealt with Egypt's changing political environment by displaying an organizational adaptability. The group strategically dealt with Egypt's two main power players – the state and the Muslim

Brotherhood – in order to ensure its emergence, survival, and development. Since the Salafi Call's origins, it has adopted obedient stances towards the state and avoided encroaching on it to avoid crackdowns, as the group deems this is the best way to maximize the space available for its mosque-based and proselytization activities. Initially, in the seventies, it was the state that provided the environment that allowed for the Salafi Call's founding. Yet, it was the competitive – and sometimes violent – relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood in the late seventies that encouraged the Salafi Call to turn into a full-fledged social movement organization to remain competitive with its rival. During the eighties, when the state tolerated Islamic activism, the Salafi Call expanded its organizational structures and increased its social services to come in contact with more Egyptians and spread throughout all of Egypt. However, by the mid-nineties, the state began to broadly crackdown on the entire Islamist current, therefore the Salafi Call disbanded all organizational structures and solely operated out of its mosques to avoid repression. Until the fall of Mubarak, the Salafi Call survived by maintaining networks of support through mosques and the overall rise in popularity of Salafism partly due to Salafi satellite television programming beginning in the mid-2000s.

Chapter three looks at how the Salafi Call dealt with the political openings created by Mubarak's removal in February 2011. In post-Mubarak Egypt, the Salafi Call has become one of Egypt's most influential social movements because it has strategically dealt with Egypt's two biggest political players – the state and the Muslim Brotherhood. It used political openings, created by the Arab Spring, to reconstitute its organizational structures and form a political party to increase its ties with Egyptian communities, more effectively proselytize, and influence the new political system in an Islamic direction. The tension

between the entrenched state and the Muslim Brotherhood, beginning after Muhammad Mursi's election, sparked possibly the most difficult time period in the Salafi Call's history. Ultimately, the group decided to back Mursi's removal and support the state, as it deemed this was the best way to maintain an open political space, protect its *da'wa* activities, and avoid repression, as the rest of the Islamist current, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, has been subject to a widespread crackdown. Supporting the state, moreover, has allowed the group to increase the reach of its religious institutions and social services and has given it opportunities to influence the political system, while other Islamist groups and their activities have been banned.

In the conclusion, I look at the reasons within the Salafi Call's organizational capacity that enabled it to effectively deal with Egypt's political landscape. I argue that its unique leadership structure, made up entirely of shaykhs, is the reason the group has been able to adapt to Egypt's changing political environment. Unlike most groups in which tasks are divided, the shaykhs are involved in all aspects of the organization including decision-making, preaching at mosques, and interacting with communities through its religious and social services. The chapter looks at how the shaykhs were able to develop large support bases and argues that the shaykhs' mosque-based networks afforded the group organizational flexibility not possessed by other groups. Furthermore, we see that shaykhs' large networks have allowed the group to navigate Egypt's political environment independently because it does not need to rely on the networks of the Muslim Brotherhood like most other Islamist groups.



## CHAPTER II

### THE ORIGINS OF THE SALAFI CALL – 1970-2011

This chapter looks at the political context in which the Salafi Call emerged, from its origins in the early seventies until the January 2011 uprising. The chapter argues that the Salafi Call emerged and developed because it pragmatically responded to the opportunities and constraints provided by Egypt's two main power players – the state and the Muslim Brotherhood. Despite the fact that the purist Salafis are often considered uncompromising and have traditionally been regarded as eschewing party politics and organization for doctrinal reasons, we see that the Salafi Call has employed an organizational adaptability that allowed it to survive and grow. In relation to the state, it seems it follows the Salafi concept of *ḥukm* that concerns the relationship between the ruled and the ruler. The concept states that the ruler must be obeyed unconditionally, as long as he is not an apostate, in order to avoid chaos in society. Moreover, the purpose is to avoid angering the ruler which may lead to an overall crackdown on the Salafi movement and restrict opportunities to propagate the “correct” Islam. Throughout the Salafi Call's history, it adapted its organizational structures, in regards to the regime's changing tolerance for Islamic activism, to allow the movement to survive and grow. When the regime was tolerant of Islamic activism, the Salafi Call expanded its organizational structures to more effectively administer its *da'wa* activities and services and increase its public presence. Yet, during times of regime repression, it abandoned all organizational structures and solely operated out of mosques to avoid a crackdown and ensure survival. Initially, in the seventies, the

state provided the environment that allowed for the rise of Islamic student activism, out of which the Salafi Call emerged. Yet, it was the competitive relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, in the late seventies and early eighties, that caused the group to adopt greater forms of organization and turn into a full-fledged social movement organization to remain competitive with its rival. Moreover, it grasped opportunities created by Mubarak's tolerance of moderate Islamic movements in the eighties to expand its organizational structures and spread to all areas of Egypt. However, by the mid-nineties, the state began to broadly crackdown on the entire Islamist current, therefore the Salafi Call disbanded all organizational structures and solely operated out of its mosques to avoid repression. Until the fall of Mubarak, the Salafi Call survived by maintaining networks of support through mosques and benefitted from the overall rise in popularity of Salafism partly due to Salafi satellite television programming beginning in the mid-2000s.

#### **A. Anwar Sadat and the Islamic Revival**

The origins of the Salafi Call date back to the early seventies when Egypt was going through a deep transition crisis between the reigns of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat. Political openings caused by the failure of Arab nationalism, due to economic and political crises and military defeat, and the Islamic revival, partly encouraged by the state itself, provided the necessary opportunities for the rise of Islamic student activism, out of which the Salafi Call emerged.

For most of Nasser's reign the political system was closed, as he was able to successfully restrict all activity and mobilization he considered a possible threat to his regime, including prohibiting independent student groups. He did this through a preemptive

campaign of repression, economic redistribution through the “social contract,”<sup>45</sup> and strategic co-optation of the Egyptian youth – who he considered the greatest threat to his rule – through increased educational opportunities and guaranteed employment.<sup>46</sup> However, by the end of his reign, economic crises and the defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war weakened the regime’s ability to live up to the “social contract” and resulted in collective protest against its failing performance. In response, Nasser began limited political reforms, aiming to bolster his floundering legitimacy. Most notably, he allowed the formation of independent student groups on Egyptian campuses in 1968.<sup>47</sup>

When Sadat assumed power in 1970 after Nasser’s death, he sought alternative modes on which to base his rule. First, he institutionalized the rule of law and increased political liberalization. Second, he made Islam central to his self-image and his claim to political authority, recognizing the failure of Arab nationalism and the rising popularity of Islamism following Egypt’s 1967 defeat.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Sadat encouraged an overall trend of higher levels of religious observance in Egyptian society. He did this on the societal level by encouraging the building of mosques and religious centers outside of the supervision of the state and by increasing Islamic programming in media, schools, and universities.<sup>49</sup> He also enshrined Islam’s place in Egyptian public life by stipulating in the 1971 Constitution

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<sup>45</sup> The “social contract” refers to Nasser’s policy of state redistribution, in which the regime provided goods and services to the public in exchange for support and political quietism. See Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, 23-24.

<sup>46</sup> Hesham al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brothers and Mubarak, 1982-2000* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2004), 30-45.

<sup>47</sup> Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, 33.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 96; al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy*, 36-37.

that “Islam is the religion of the state; Arabic is the official language; and the principles of Islamic shari‘a are a principle source of legislation.”<sup>50</sup>

In addition, Sadat used Islam as a tool to consolidate power. After Abdel Nasser’s death, Sadat was engaged in a succession struggle with Nasser’s leftist and socialist allies. He encouraged the rise of Islamic activism and attempted to develop Islamist allies to pose as a counterweight to the Nasserist left.<sup>51</sup> He granted the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been outlawed since 1954, general amnesty in 1971. Between 1971 and 1975, Sadat gradually released Muslim Brothers from prisons and allowed exiled Brothers in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to return home. Moreover, he gave them the space necessary to reconstitute their organization.<sup>52</sup> As well, he undertook a proactive policy to encourage Islamic student groups on university campuses. Since Nasser allowed the formation of independent student groups in 1968, campuses became dominated by leftist student groups supported by the leftist bureaucratic elite. Therefore, Sadat supported fledgling Islamic student groups to diminish the influence of his rivals. During the seventies, the Islamic student groups, known as al-Gama‘at al-Islamiyya, became the dominant force in student politics, and set the stage for the overall rise of Islamic activism in Egypt.<sup>53</sup>

## **B. Rise of the Islamic Student Associations**

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 36.

<sup>51</sup> Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 30.

<sup>52</sup> al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy*, 41-43.

<sup>53</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003 edition), 129-171.

The nationwide rise of Islamic student activism provided the foundation in which the Salafi Call would emerge. During the early seventies all nationwide Islamic student groups operated under the generic name al-Gama‘at al-Islamiyya. Although the groups were influenced by the regime, the groups were independent, and, initially, were not controlled by any national movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. The small Islamic societies on campuses, known as *usar* (clubs or families), slowly began to spring up after Nasser allowed independent student groups to form.<sup>54</sup> Initially, the Islamic groups confined their activities to holding religious lessons, promoting Qur’anic memorization, and calling for greater social conservatism on campuses, such as demanding the segregation of male and female students. The religious goals and activities were much more palatable to the Sadat regime than the overt political activism of the leftist groups, which were very critical of Sadat’s policies, especially his accommodation of Israel.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to the regime’s encouragement, the rise of the Islamic student associations, as the dominant social force on campuses, is attributed to the support they gained from their ability to address the real-life problems of economically marginalized and socially conservative students who struggled in Egypt’s difficult university setting.<sup>56</sup> Nasser’s policy of opening higher education to greater numbers of Egyptian students without commensurate increases in university budgets led to overcrowded classrooms and decreased quality in teaching as professors’ salaries remained low.<sup>57</sup> Not only did this

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 130-135.

<sup>56</sup> Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 35-36.

<sup>57</sup> Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, 135-138.

encourage the best professors to seek employment elsewhere, such as in the Gulf, but it also created an environment where professors supplemented their income by providing costly extra study sessions, which were essential for students to attend in order to succeed in class. Moreover, in this crowded environment, sexual harassment was a daily hardship for female students. The Islamic student associations provided practical solutions to these problems, such as publishing cheap study guides, organizing extra tutoring and study sessions, and combatting sexual harassment, by organizing female-only transport and segregating lecture halls.<sup>58</sup>

By the mid-seventies, the Islamic student associations were active at all national Egyptian universities.<sup>59</sup> They were particularly strong in the natural science faculties: engineering, medicine, pharmacy, and agriculture.<sup>60</sup> *Shūra* councils headed by an *amīr* (leader) coordinated the student movement's activities at each university.<sup>61</sup> A national *shūra* council was made up of the *amīrs* from each university, and this in turn was led by the *amīr al-umarā'* (leader of leaders).

As Islamic student associations became more influential on campuses, their activities, revolving around religious education and outreach, became more elaborate and much more ubiquitous. They sponsored lectures and conferences around various religious and social themes that frequently featured notable Islamic preachers and scholars. They organized book fairs and published small booklets to introduce their ideas to the Egyptian

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 136 and 141-146.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>60</sup> Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 35.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 35.

student youth. In addition, they organized huge collective prayer sessions in public squares nationwide during Islamic holidays. Perhaps one of their most effective and elaborate activities was their annual summer camps. The camps, typically lasting one or two weeks, were experiments aiming to recreate an Islamic utopia based on the time period of the four rightly guided caliphs, Islam's golden age.<sup>62</sup> At the camps, participants contemplated the Qur'an, attended collective prayer and lectures of prominent preachers, and trained in various sports and martial arts. The camps provided a training ground for Egypt's future Islamist leaders.

### **C. Origins of the Salafi Call at Alexandria University**

Although al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya were nationwide, the Salafi Call arose solely out of the Islamic student association at Alexandria University. The Salafi Call now operates all over Egypt, but Alexandria is the group's stronghold, as it is where the group was founded and its leadership is primarily based. For this reason, the group is sometimes referred to as the Alexandria Salafis. It was started by a number of pious students at the Faculty of Medicine.<sup>63</sup> Muhammad Isma'il al-Muqaddam, Ahmad Farid, Sa'id 'Abd al-'Azim, and Muhammad 'Abd al-Fattah (Abu Idris) were all founders and are still some of its most important figures today. In the early seventies the group was still part of al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya, which encompassed all orientations of Islamic activism on campus.

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<sup>62</sup> Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, 138-139.

<sup>63</sup> Ali Abd al-Al in Mustafa Zahran et al., *Al-Salafiyyun fi Misr: Ma Ba'd al-Thawra* (Riyadh: Markaz al-Din wa al-Siyasa li-l-Dirasat, 2012), 37.

However, in the memoirs of Ahmad Farid, a leader in the Salafī Call, he claims the Islamic student association was mainly Salafī in its orientation.<sup>64</sup>

The main activities of the Alexandria Islamic student association revolved around *da‘wa* and religious education.<sup>65</sup> The most knowledgeable Islamist students gave regular lectures and lessons in any available space, whether it was the steps on-campus, empty lecture halls, or even in lecture halls before class. Since the Islamic association was new in the early seventies, it had not yet been allocated a meeting place by the university. Farid proudly claimed the association appropriated the practice space for the music and drama clubs and turned it into a mosque and classroom for religious lessons.<sup>66</sup>

Since the early seventies, the association was active in student politics, and used it to increase its influence. Farid and other members ran in elections and served on different university councils.<sup>67</sup> Under the leadership of Ibrahim al-Za‘farani, the Islamic association moved beyond the Faculty of Medicine and was established at all other Alexandria University faculties. By the mid-seventies, the Islamists controlled all university councils.

Gaining control of university councils was very important, as the student union budget was then used to fund the activities of the Islamic association, causing its activities to become more organized and elaborate. In the mid-seventies the student union began

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<sup>64</sup> Ahmad Farid, “al-shaykh al-duktūr Ahmad Farid yarwī qiṣa iltizāmīhi wa i‘tiqālīhi wa ṭardihi min al-jaysh,” *ahl al-ḥadīth*, accessed on March 14, 2013, <http://www.ahlalhdeth.com/vb/showthread.php?t=185162>; Carrie Rosefsky Wickham confirms the nationwide al-Gama‘at al-Islamiyya was initially Salafī in orientation; Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 34-39.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.



funding religious summer camps. At the camps, Salafi Call leaders such as Farid and Muhammad Isma‘il al-Muqaddam, who is now a world renowned hadith scholar, planned the religious curriculums.<sup>68</sup> The association taught the Islamic sciences and the works and ideas of the medieval theologian Ibn Taymiyya and his protégé Ibn Qayyim, as well as modern day Salafi thinkers Ibn Baz and Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani.

Its activities expanded on campus as well. Salafi Call leaders regularly organized what they called the “Islamic Week” in which they conducted lectures, seminars, and activities around a specific socio-religious issue, such as the importance of wearing the hijab for women.<sup>69</sup> The group organized Omra and Hajj trips as well as set up tents for students to break fast during Ramadan. It produced and distributed pamphlets written by its members, for example “Hey People, Answer God’s Call” written by al-Muqaddam.<sup>70</sup> The group also started organizing *da‘wa* caravans, in which dozens of students participated. To emphasize the growth of the Islamic student association, in 1976 it was able to gather over forty thousand people for public prayer at Alexandria University’s stadium.<sup>71</sup>

#### **D. The Muslim Brotherhood Gains Control of al-Gama‘at al-Islamiyya**

In 1976, the Muslim Brotherhood gained control of al-Gama‘at al-Islamiyya at Alexandria University. This event was the first real constraint placed on the Salafi students,

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ahmad Zaghlul, expert on Egyptian Salafism and founder of islamyun.net, in an interview with the author on June 10, 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Farid, “al-shaykh al-duktūr Ahmad Farid yarwī qiṣa iltizāmihi wa i‘tiqālihi wa ṭardihi min al-jaysh.”

<sup>71</sup> Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, 145.

which led to the founding of the Salafi Call. The competition that commenced between the two groups caused the Salafi Call to adopt more formal modes of organization to survive and remain competitive with the stronger Muslim Brotherhood, and resulted in the Salafi Call developing differently than any other Salafi group worldwide.

In the early seventies the Muslim Brotherhood was reforming its organization and reorganizing its ranks, as the group was outlawed and practically destroyed during Abdel Nasser's reign. Therefore, Umar al-Tilmisani, the Brotherhood's new supreme guide, sought to gain control over the growing nationwide al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya. He and the Brotherhood increased contact with leaders and members of the Islamic associations and asked them to join their movement. The leader of the Islamic association in Alexandria, Ibrahim al-Za'farani, acquiesced and brought most members with him.<sup>72</sup> However, in 1977, al-Muqaddam, Farid, Abu Idris, Sa'id 'Abd al-Azim, Yasir Burhami, Ahmad Hutayba, and other Salafi students withdrew from the then Brotherhood-dominated Islamic association and formed al-Madrassa al-Salafiyya (the Salafi School), the precursor to the Salafi Call. Ahmad Farid cited that they did not join the Brotherhood because they refused to pledge allegiance to the Supreme Guide.<sup>73</sup> Farid also criticized the Muslim Brotherhood as being a political organization that is not well-versed and not interested in the Islamic sciences. Focus on nurturing one's education in the Islamic sciences would become a major preoccupation of the Salafi Call and a major distinguishing trait Salafi Call members use to differentiate themselves from the Brotherhood.

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<sup>72</sup> Farid, "al-shaykh al-duktūr Ahmad Farid yarwī qiṣa iltizāmihi wa i'tiqālihi wa ṭardihi min al-jaysh."

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

After the Salafi School split from the Islamic association many conflicts occurred – sometimes violent – with Brotherhood members. They competed over potential adherents and space to operate, mosques and charity associations.<sup>74</sup> The conflict was both on- and off-campus because, by the late seventies, the first Islamist students were graduating and bringing the movement to their own communities.

The Salafi School was clearly at a disadvantage because its numbers were miniscule compared to the Brotherhood's. The Brotherhood began trying to restrict the activities of the Salafi School. Yasir Burhami, the chief ideologue in the Salafi Call today, recalled Muslim Brotherhood students, in one instance, tried to prevent the group from holding a religious lecture at the university's square on the issues of *tawhīd* (monotheism) and *īmān* (faith).<sup>75</sup> The Salafi School realized it was at a great disadvantage not only because it lacked the numbers of the Muslim Brotherhood, but also because it lacked organization like the Muslim Brotherhood. It was the conflict with the Brotherhood that encouraged the group to begin to develop an internal organization. Therefore, the Salafi School appointed its first leader, Muhammad 'Abd al-Fattah Abu Idris, and he remains the leader today.<sup>76</sup> The leader of the Salafi Call goes by the title *qayyim*, meaning chief or president.

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<sup>74</sup> Khalil al-Anani, "The Salafi-Brotherhood Feud in Egypt," *al-Monitor*, February 21, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/contents/articles/opinion/2013/02/muslim-brotherhood-salafist-feud-in-egypt.html>

<sup>75</sup> Ali 'Abd al-'Al in Zahran et al., *al-Salafīyyun fī Misr*, 39.

<sup>76</sup> Farid, "al-shaykh al-duktūr Ahmad Farid yarwī qiṣa iltizāmihi wa i'tiqālihi wa ṭardihi min al-jaysh."

## E. The Beginnings of a Social Movement Organization

Although it was the Muslim Brotherhood that provided the impetus to adopt more formal modes of organization, it was the Mubarak regime's tolerance for Islamic activism in the eighties that provided the opportunity for the Salafi Call to turn into a full-fledged social movement organization and spread across Egypt.

At the same time that the Salafi School split from the Islamic association, it expanded off-campus and started to make connections with local communities by preaching at mosques throughout Alexandria.<sup>77</sup> Al-Muqaddam gave weekly religious lessons in Alexandria at 'Umar bin al-Khitab mosque in Ibrahimiyya and 'Ibad al-Rahman mosque in Bolkly. These lessons served as weekly meetings for the group. The Salafi School's aim was to remove all innovation and bring mosques closer to the sunna. Farid lamented, very few mosques followed the sunna during the late seventies. But, he said, Alexandrians were receptive to the group's pure approach to Islam, and it was at this time that the group began to develop a following and plant roots in Alexandrian communities.

Although Sadat's openings allowed for the rise of Islamic activism, the Brotherhood and Islamists became increasingly critical of his policies, especially the *infītāh* (economic liberalization) and the 1979 peace accord with Israel.<sup>78</sup> He revoked his policy of tolerance towards the Brotherhood and arrested hundreds of them. Sadat was subsequently assassinated by Egyptian Islamic Jihad in October 1981 and Husni Mubarak immediately assumed power.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy*, 43-45.

During the first decade of Mubarak's reign, the Salafi Call witnessed tremendous growth and expanded to all areas of Egypt. Mubarak recognized the state-society tensions and took a more tolerant approach towards moderate Islamists, especially the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>79</sup> He sought to bolster moderate Islamists in order to isolate violent extremists who he viewed as the most immediate threat to his authority. It was this spirit of tolerance that allowed Islamist groups – the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafi Call, and others – to increase their activities and expand the structures of their organizations.

In addition, social disturbances in the mid-eighties provided opportunities for Islamists to expand. Egypt witnessed another economic crisis in 1985, caused by a fall in international oil prices, increased debt, and inflation. Consequently, the regime was not able to address the needs and concerns of the population. This led to the appearance of the “parallel Islamic sector.”<sup>80</sup> Islamic groups seized the opportunity to fulfill the population's needs by providing services in order to increase their legitimacy.<sup>81</sup> Mubarak tolerated the parallel Islamic sector because it helped carry the burden of providing for the lower-middle class.

The Salafi Call grasped the opportunities provided by Mubarak and used them to develop a nationwide mosque and social service network. In the mid-eighties, when the group began to expand outside Alexandria, it changed its name to the Salafi Call to confirm

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>80</sup> Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, 93-118.

<sup>81</sup> al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy*, 89.

that *da'wa* was its purpose and that it would engage in any activity that promoted the call to Islam, according to the group's spokesman 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Shahat.<sup>82</sup>

The group opened the Furqan Institute for Preparing Preachers in 1986.<sup>83</sup> Graduates spread the Salafi curriculum to all areas of Egypt. Students studied all branches of the Islamic sciences including: jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Qur'anic recitation (*tajwīd*), hadith, theology (*uṣūl*), and others. The Institute developed a very good reputation among those seeking out education in the Islamic sciences, even among al-Azhar graduates. According to Ali 'Abd al-'Al, an Egyptian expert on Salafism, the Institute was responsible for extending the movement to all areas in Egypt and making it noticeable in Egyptian communities.<sup>84</sup> The Salafi Call also began publishing its monthly magazine, Voice of the Call (*ṣawt al-da'wa*). The magazine published articles by its preachers on anything that dealt with Salafi thought.

Its activities were not restricted only to the religious sphere, as it began operating a social services network. Not much is known about the details and extent of its services, but it seems they were provided throughout the country, wherever the group had a mosque. According to 'Abd al-'Al, its services network reached every neighborhood in Alexandria.<sup>85</sup> The group provided aid for the poor, widows, and orphans, and operated clinics to treat the sick. Its nascent social services network was funded by a zakat committee.

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<sup>82</sup> Ali 'Abd al-'Al in Zahran et al., *al-Salafiyyun fi Misr*, 44.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

Expansion of activities beyond preaching and religious education and expansion to every province in the country necessitated greater levels of organization. The group, like the Muslim Brotherhood, formed an internal organization that formed policy and directed its activities across the country.<sup>86</sup> The Administrative Council (*majlis al-idāra*) is the highest decision-making body in the organization, made up of its most important figures. The council is an elected body, headed by the *qayyim*, Abu Idris, and his deputy, Yasir Burhami, both of whom maintain these positions today. The first Administrative Council also included Muhammad Isma‘il al-Muqaddam, Ahmad Farid, Ahmad Hutayba, Sa‘id ‘Abd al-‘Azim, and Ali Hatim. The *qayyim* and his deputy are elected by the group’s general committee of preachers, made up of Salafi Call preachers from all over the country. The general committee of preachers vets those who seek to become Salafi Call preachers, judging them on their commitment to Salafism, their behavior, and their morals. The Executive Council (*al-majlis al-tanfīdhī*) centrally coordinates the affairs of the organization across the country. Its Provincial Committee coordinates on the local level and answers to the Executive and Administrative Councils. It also possesses various specialized committees, such as youth, social, and medical committees.

#### **F. Confrontation between Mubarak and Islamists**

The Salafi Call increasingly expanded its networks until the early nineties. However, by then, Mubarak’s regime became increasingly wary of the growing role of

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 46.

Islamic movements in Egyptian society, and thus restricted all Islamic activism.<sup>87</sup>

Confrontation between the Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak in the early nineties had a profound effect on the Salafi Call. The Muslim Brotherhood took advantage of the state's weak "social contract" and erected its own Islamic contract through its effective provision of welfare services.<sup>88</sup> It wasn't the mere provision of services that threatened the regime, but the politicization of the Brotherhood, which began mobilizing its lower middle class supporters against regime policies in an attempt to increase political reform and gain legal recognition. Moreover, the regime was faced with an increased threat from Islamist extremists, who attempted to assassinate Mubarak while he was visiting Ethiopia in 1995. In the mid-nineties Mubarak revoked his tolerant policies toward moderate Islamists and increasingly relied on coercion to maintain his rule.

Despite the group's apoliticism, the Mubarak regime forced the Salafi Call to disband its organization and cease all activities.<sup>89</sup> It stopped offering social services, its magazine was no longer published, and the Furqan Institute was closed. In 1994 a number of its leaders including Abu Idris and Sa'id 'Abd al-'Azim were imprisoned. According to Yasir Burhami, The Salafi Call relented as it saw confrontation with the government as futile and would only harm its ability to proselytize.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, it actively avoided confrontation because the group believes Muslim blood is sacred. Therefore, it avoided any

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<sup>87</sup> al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy*, 140.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 140-164. Like the state's "social contract," the Islamic contract is implicit, in that Islamic groups provide goods and services in exchange for political support.

<sup>89</sup> Ali 'Abd al-'Al in Zahran et al., *al-Salafiyyun fi Misr*, 46.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 49-54.



kind of national coordination, and resigned itself to preaching in its local mosques and offering religious lessons.<sup>91</sup>

### **G. Satellite Television and the “Salafization of the Religious Sphere”<sup>92</sup>**

After the Salafi Call was forced to dismantle its organization in the mid-nineties, the group would not be able to reorganize until after the fall of Mubarak in 2011. In the 2000s, however, the Salafi Call benefited from the overall rise in popularity of Salafism and the appearance of Salafi satellite television that its most prominent shaykhs used to expose the group and its ideas to the masses.

The reasons for the rising popularity of Salafism include, the return of middle class Egyptians working in the Gulf, who brought back Salafi culture and views, and the loss of credibility, in the eyes of Egyptians, of al-Azhar and the religious establishment, which came to be viewed as a “government agent.”<sup>93</sup> Salafism’s rise in popularity was also partly encouraged by the Mubarak regime. The regime continued to perceive the Brotherhood as a threat, especially after it won a fifth of the seats in the 2005 parliamentary elections. Therefore, according to Khalil al-Anani, an expert on Egyptian Islamism, Mubarak employed the political quietism of Salafism to counteract the political activism of the

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<sup>91</sup> Farid, “al-shaykh al-duktūr Ahmad Farid yarwī qiṣa iltizāmihi wa i’tiqālihi wa ṭardihi min al-jaysh.”

<sup>92</sup> al-Anani and Malik, “Pious Way to Politics,” 60.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 61; Nathan Field and Ahmed Hamam, “Salafi Satellite TV in Egypt,” *Arab Media and Society* 8 (Spring 2009).

Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>94</sup> He gave Salafis space to spread their views and ideas in order to diminish the social and political appeal of the Brotherhood.

Most importantly, Mubarak allowed Salafis to operate satellite television stations starting in the mid-2000s. After 2006, there were approximately 10-12 Salafi-themed television stations broadcasting into Egyptian households. These channels played a big role in expanding the appeal of Salafism in Egypt. The channels reached out to the masses in ways that local mosques and preachers never could.<sup>95</sup> Satellite television gave a national outlet to Salafi preachers and turned preachers like Muhammad Yaqub, Muhammad Hassan, and Abu Ishaq al-Huwayni into celebrities. Although all three are independent preachers, they all have informal connections with the Salafi Call. al-Huwayni, for example, was a student of the godfather of the Salafi Call, Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, and he also sometimes is a guest lecturer for the group. As well, Salafi Call leaders such as Yasir Burhami, ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Shahat, and Sa‘id ‘Abd al-‘Azim frequently appear on television. This gave the main figures of the Salafi Call exposure to the masses. Satellite television is partly responsible for making Egypt’s religious sphere more conservative and making Salafism the ideology of choice for religiously inclined Egyptians.

## **H. Conclusion**

As this chapter shows, the Salafi Call arose because of the way in which it dealt with Egypt’s changing political context, especially in relation to the state and the Muslim

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<sup>94</sup> al-Anani and Malik, “Pious Way to Politics,” 60

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 61.

Brotherhood. Initially, it was exogenous factors such as political and economic crises and defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War that provided an environment that promoted the rise of Islamic activism, out of which the Salafi Call emerged. But, it was constraints placed on Salafi students by the Muslim Brotherhood that caused the Salafi Call to turn into an organization and develop internal decision-making structures, in order to survive in relation to its much larger rival. The group grasped opportunities provided by Mubarak's tolerance of Islamic activism in the eighties to found a religious learning institution, expand its social services, and spread throughout Egypt. When Mubarak repressed Islamic activism, in the nineties, the group survived by actively avoiding confrontation and by reducing its activities to solely preaching out of mosques. Starting in the mid-2000s, Mubarak encouraged the "Salafization" of Egypt's religious by allowing Salafi satellite television stations to operate. Many Salafi Call shaykhs grasped this opportunity by preaching on television, thus exposing the group and its ideas to millions of Egyptians. It was the Salafi Call's latent mosque network and the national attention its shaykhs' were getting through television that allowed the group to effectively organize and take advantage of the political openings caused by the Arab Spring.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SALAFI CALL IN POST-MUBARAK EGYPT – 2011-2014

For the last fifteen years of the Mubarak era, the Salafi Call was in survival mode, restricted to only operating out of its local mosques. After Mubarak was overthrown in 2011, the group has become one of Egypt's most influential social movements because it embraced the newfound opportunities and strategically dealt with the state and the Muslim Brotherhood. Perhaps the Salafi Call is best known for its entrance into party politics through the Nour party, which the group is using to influence Egypt's political system in an Islamic direction, increase proselytization opportunities, and remain connected with the Egyptian public. The group also used political opportunities, created by the Arab Spring, to reconstitute its internal organization, found religious learning institutions, and reform its social services network. Yet, tension between the entrenched state and Egypt's main political player, the Muslim Brotherhood, beginning after Muhammad Mursi's election, sparked possibly one of the most difficult periods in the Salafi Call's history. Under Mursi's rule, the group felt that the Muslim Brotherhood was trying to restrict its political and *da'wa* activities. Therefore, when nationwide protests erupted on 30 June 2013, it decided to back the military's removal of Muhammad Mursi. The Salafi Call determined the state would be friendlier to the movement than the Muslim Brotherhood, and deemed supporting the state was the best way to maintain an open political space, protect its *da'wa* activities, and avoid repression, as the rest of the Islamist current, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, has been subjected to a widespread crackdown. By supporting the state, the

Salafi Call has become the most influential Islamic movement in Egypt's political arena. Moreover, this has allowed the Salafi Call to increase the reach of its religious activities and social services. Active support for the state has been necessary in post-Mursi Egypt to keep political space open, as not only Brotherhood-allied Islamist groups have been banned, but apolitical Islamic charity associations have been frozen.

#### **A. 2011 Uprising and the Turn to Party Politics**

The Salafi Call's embrace of the Arab Spring's political openings by forming the Nour Party is a major reason the Salafi Call has been able to expand considerably and become one of Egypt's most influential social movements. According to Yasir Burhami, political participation has not only allowed the Salafi Call to influence the political system but has also increased its power as a social force.<sup>96</sup>

Initially, the Salafi Call approached the January 2011 uprising very cautiously. Salafis, in theory, are opposed to revolutions and coups because they may cause Muslims to kill one another, and give rise to chaos and dissension in a Muslim society.<sup>97</sup> It is for this reason that the Salafi Call frequently calls on its supporters not to participate in protests. Furthermore, quietist Salafis support the existing authority, as long as it is nominally Muslim, and oppose violence against it as a means to avoid state repression. When protests began in late January, Burhami called on Salafi youth not to participate out of fear that they

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<sup>96</sup> Muhammad al-Burmi, "burhāmī: al-mushāraka al-sīyāsiyya zādat al-da'wa al-salafīyya quwwa," *Veto Gate*, October 8, 2013, accessed November 4, 2014, <http://www.vetogate.com/626184>

<sup>97</sup> Laurent Bonnefoy, *Salafism in Yemen: Transnationalism and Religious Identity* (London: Hurst and Company, 2011), 89.

would be arrested and tortured by the Mubarak regime.<sup>98</sup> However, by early February, the group estimated that anti-Mubarak protests would succeed and the Mubarak regime would fall, therefore it turned to supporting the protests, called for free and fair elections, and demanded that Egypt's Islamic identity must be protected in a post-Mubarak Egypt.<sup>99</sup>

In the succeeding months, the Salafi Call fully embraced politics. In May 2011, the Salafi Call formed the Nour Party. Especially after November 2011 parliamentary elections, in which the Nour Party won 111 of 498 available seats, it has become one of the leading actors in Egypt's political arena. However, the formation of Nour and its parliamentary success has taken many policymakers, commentators, and experts by surprise. The Salafi Call was thought to be apolitical because it did not participate in politics during the Mubarak era. Moreover, many thought the group shunned politics because of the Salafi concept *ḥizbiyya* (partisanship), which warns against forming political parties and political participation because they usurp God's role as lawmaker and split Muslims into parties which may divide the community and may ultimately lead to chaos.<sup>100</sup> Yet, Salafi Call leaders deny it is inherently apolitical.<sup>101</sup> Burhami clarified that the group saw Mubarak's system as corrupt and, therefore, avoided participation so as not to compromise on its principles and, added, there was no real opportunity to influence the

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<sup>98</sup> al-Anani and Malik, "Pious Way to Politics," 70.

<sup>99</sup> Umayma 'Abd al-Latif, "al-salafiyyun fī miṣr wa al-siyāsa," Doha, Qatar: al-Markaz al-'Arabi li-l-Abhath wa Dirasa al-Siyasa, 3-4.

<sup>100</sup> McCants, "The Lesser of Two Evils: The Salafi Turn to Party Politics in Egypt," 1.

<sup>101</sup> Dr. Bassam al-Zarqa, Vice President of Nour Party, in an interview with the author emphasized this point.

political order.<sup>102</sup> After the uprising, though, the Salafi Call determined it would no longer be forced to compromise on its principles and had a real opportunity to influence the new political order, especially a new constitution.<sup>103</sup> Burhami stated the group was obligated to participate to “direct the Egyptian people in a manner that conforms to Islam.”<sup>104</sup>

Moreover, Abu Idris, leader of the Salafi Call, claimed politics is a great tool for proselytization.<sup>105</sup> We see that the formation of the Nour Party serves multiple purposes for the Salafi Call. First, it is using Nour to influence Egypt’s new political system in an Islamic direction. Second, it is using this formal institution to expand proselytization opportunities on the ground. Finally, it is using the Party to remain connected and increase its exposure to the Egyptian public, as politics is constantly forcing the Salafi Call and its figures into the national spotlight.

## **B. Reconstituting its Organizational Structure**

Although much focus is placed on the Nour Party and the Salafi Call’s involvement in politics, the group also used the openness of post-Mubarak Egypt to reconstitute its entire internal organization. According to Abu Idris, it reactivated its nationwide networks and rebuilt its entire structure from March to May 2011.<sup>106</sup> He

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<sup>102</sup> Yasir Burhami, "istifsārāt hawl maqāl ‘ta‘milat hawl masa’la al-ikhtiyār’," *Sawt al-Salaf*, November 21, 2010, <http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=4929>

<sup>103</sup> McCants, “The Lesser of Two Evils: The Salafi Turn to Party Politics in Egypt,” 1.

<sup>104</sup> ‘Abd al-Latif, “al-salafiyyun fī miṣr wa al-siyāsa,” 8.

<sup>105</sup> Nazih al-Sabi‘i, “ḥiwār ‘jarīdat al-waṭan’ m‘ qayyim al-da‘wa al-salafiyya al-shaykh muḥammad ‘abd al-fatāḥ abu idrīs,” *Salaf Voice*, May 27, 2012, <http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=6259>

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

emphasized the highly organized nature of the group and confirmed that it has taken on a pyramid-like structure, from the local level, based at the mosque or local office, to its central organization. The highest decision-making body of the Salafī Call is the Administrative Council. It's an elected body that currently consists of the six founding members plus nine others.<sup>107</sup> After the uprising, the Salafī Call's *shūra* Council elected Abu Idris *qayyim*, who has been the only *qayyim* of the group since the seventies, and Yasir Burhami and Sa'id 'Abd al-'Azim as his deputies.<sup>108</sup> The Security Council (*majlis al-umanā*) creates the Salafī Call's ideological platforms and is made up of the six founding members. While the *shūra* Council consists of approximately two-hundred shaykhs from across the country, who advise and help form the decisions of the Administrative Council and elect the members on the Administrative Council.<sup>109</sup> The *shūra* Council meets annually, but also has emergency meetings during critical times, such as in the days leading up to Mursi's ousting.<sup>110</sup> The central organization of the Salafī Call is used, as Abu Idris says, to facilitate coordination and communication between all aspects of the organization, its political party, its propagation activities, and its social services.

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<sup>107</sup> Ahmad Zaghlul in an interview with the author.

<sup>108</sup> Although Abu Idris is the leader, he maintains a very low profile. He does not make public appearances and very rarely gives interviews. He says, he is involved in all aspects of the organization, but avoids the spotlight for personal reasons. Yasir Burhami, on the other hand, is constantly in the spotlight. He is widely considered the chief ideologue of the group and is frequently mistaken as its leader; As of April 2014, Sa'id 'Abd al-'Azim's membership is frozen for calling for the return of Mursi to the presidency.

<sup>109</sup> Ahmad Zaghlul in an interview with the author.

<sup>110</sup> Usama al-Mahdi, "shūra al-da'wa al-salafiyya y'qad ijtimā'an ṭārī'an li-baḥṭh al-mawqif min 30 yūnīū," *al-Masry al-Youm*, June 8, 2013, accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.almazryalyoum.com/news/details/216989>



### C. The Resumption of Religious and Social Services

The Salafi Call used opportunities created by the Arab Spring to resume its religious services – most importantly, reopening the Furqan Institute – and social services in order to increase the religious knowledge of Egyptians, spread the “correct” Islam, and build stronger ties with Egyptian communities.

After the January 2011 uprising, the organization and frequency of the Salafi Call’s religious activities have increased. The nature of the Salafi Call’s religious activities have remained the same such as calling on people to get closer to God, advising people to do good, and teaching the Islamic sciences. But now, they are using multiple outlets other than lessons and Friday sermons at mosques for *da‘wa* and religious education. The group now launches widespread campaigns on various issues such as calling people to pray, under the name “*ḥay ‘ala al-ṣalā’*,”<sup>111</sup> or urging people to repent in a campaign called “*hiyya binā natūb*.”<sup>112</sup> Moreover, the Salafi Call is constantly holding multi-day learning camps across the country to raise the religious knowledge of its ranks.

The group also used the openness of the Arab Spring to found religious learning institutes. By December 2013, the group operated fifty learning institutes across Egypt.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ahmad al-Limuni, “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya tastakmil fa‘āliyyāt ḥamla ḥayy ‘ala al-ṣalā’ bi-l-iskāndariyya,” *El-Fagr*, February 10, 2014, accessed April 7, 2014, <http://new.elfagr.org/Detail.aspx?nwsId=522141#>

<sup>112</sup> Nasma Ali, “‘hiyya binā natūb’ ḥamla jadīda li-l-da‘wa al-salafiyya,” *Dostor Asly*, March 25, 2014, accessed April 7, 2014, <http://dostorasly.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=25032014&id=22920a47-b990-4a11-b557-4e75a7a5600e>

<sup>113</sup> “m‘āhad al-du‘ā al-salafiyya tu‘lin al-walā’ wa al-tā‘a li-l-azhār,” *El-Bashayer Online*, December 8, 2013, accessed December 27, 2013, <http://elbashayeronline.com/news-317949.html>

The institutes are one of the few alternatives to al-Azhar for receiving a formal education in the Islamic sciences. The Furqan Institute for Preparing Preachers – a four year institute that trains preachers – is one of the Salafi Calls most well-known activities. It was closed since 1994, but after Mubarak’s fall, the group opened over thirty branches nationwide plus a branch in Khartoum, Sudan.<sup>114</sup> The Furqan Institute is one of the few institutes that the Ministry of Religious Endowments recognizes and allows to operate. Apparently as of 2014, 6,000 students are enrolled in Furqan Institutes across the country.<sup>115</sup> To become a student, one must go through an admission process and meet a number of requirements including: possessing at least a high school diploma, must have memorized at least ten chapters of the Qur’an, must possess good morals and ethics, and must submit a letter of recommendation from a shaykh.<sup>116</sup> Students attend lectures four days a week in various fields such as Qur’an, hadith, *tafsīr* (exegesis), *usūl al-fiqh* (theology), *tajwīd* (recitation), *khiṭāba* (the art of preaching), Arabic language, *‘aqīda* (creed), *fikr* (Islamic thought), and others.<sup>117</sup> Upon graduation the student is certified and is then able to preach at Salafi Call mosques throughout Egypt. Since the Furqan Institute is only meant for those who aim to become preachers, it also provides religious education to regular pious Egyptians through the Salafi Call Institute for Islamic Sciences and the Scientific Institute for Legal and Arabic Studies in various locations throughout the country.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Mahmoud al-Shahawi, “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya tatajih li tā’sīs tanzīm dawli,” *Moheet*, May 2, 2013, accessed August 28, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1hycmV8>

<sup>115</sup> Elforqan.org, accessed April 17, 2014

<sup>116</sup> Furqan Institute’s official website, accessed September 15, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1kEagqj>

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> “m‘āhad al-du‘ā al-salafiyya tu‘lin al-walā’ wa al-ṭā‘a li-l-azhār,” *El-Bashayer Online*.

After the Arab Spring, the Vanguard of the Salafi Call (*ṭalā'ī' al-da'wa al-salafiyya*), the group's youth branch, has been very active in connecting with Egyptian youth. According to Mustafa Diab, the Vanguard's director and Administrative Council member, the Vanguard aims to prepare Egypt's next generation of Salafis.<sup>119</sup> He says the goal is to instill in the youth correct Islamic creed, faith, morals, and proper social behavior. The Salafi curriculum is instilled through formal teaching, by way of lessons, assignments, and tests, and through recreational activities. Diab emphasized the highly organized nature of the Vanguard. It has a pyramid-like structure like the Salafi Call itself.<sup>120</sup> He leads the Vanguard, with provincial directors who answer to him, who in turn oversee teachers and mentors, who are involved at local mosques. He says over one-thousand mentors participate nationwide. The leaders of the Vanguard hold teaching methodology sessions for its teachers to increase their competencies. He believes the Vanguard is essential for the growth of the Salafi Call, saying that by being proactive and exposing the youth to Salafism, the children will most likely grow up Salafi.<sup>121</sup> He adds, if the youth were exposed to a different group, they would most likely become adherents of that group.

Furthermore, the Salafi Call used political openings to resume social services provision. After the uprising it resumed provision of goods and financial assistance to orphans, widows, and the poor, and providing medical services to the sick in small clinics, mainly emanating from its mosque complexes. One of its most ubiquitous activities in post-

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<sup>119</sup> Salah Laban, “ḥiwār m' al-shaykh muṣṭafa diyyab mas'ūl malaf ṭalā'ī' al-da'wa al-salafiyya fi masr,” *Islamyun.net*, March 20, 2013, accessed September 20, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1gFsFzp>

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

Mubarak Egypt is setting up temporary markets. The markets spring up at various times all over Egypt, providing all types of food items, clothing, etc. for reduced prices.<sup>122</sup> Now we are seeing that the markets are becoming more permanent in some instances, as the Salafi Call now holds a market one day a week in Bakus, a poor conservative neighborhood in Alexandria.<sup>123</sup> In regards to medical services, the group's medical committee (*al-lajna al-tibiyya*) operates medical caravans all over the country, offering a complete range of services including regular examinations, dental cleaning, surgery, and giving diabetes tests.<sup>124</sup> The Salafi Call is also involved in more enduring medical services beyond the clinic. In Alexandria, the Salafi Call funded the development of the city's second largest burn center.<sup>125</sup> The Salafi Call also said it would provide free care for burn victims at the center. Furthermore, in April 2013, it seems the group had plans to open full-function hospitals.<sup>126</sup> It has also begun engaging in wider-scale development projects in poor neglected areas. For example, in a small village in Damietta, the group undertook a major

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<sup>122</sup> "al-da'wa al-salafiyya wa hizb al-nūr yastakmilān "mukāfaha al-ghilā" qura kafr al-zayyat," *Akhbar el-Yom*, March 23, 2013, accessed September 15, 2013, <http://www.akhbarelyom.com/news/newdetails/147950/1/0.html#.UwzsQfldW8P>

<sup>123</sup> "al-da'wa al-salafiyya tunazzim aswāqan khayriyya bi-'ashwā'iyat al-iskāndariyya," *Egyptian People*, December 28, 2013, accessed January 20, 2014, [http://www.egyptianpeople.com/default\\_news.php?id=152291](http://www.egyptianpeople.com/default_news.php?id=152291)

<sup>124</sup> Kamil Kamil and Rami Nuwar, "al-nūr wa-l-da'wa al-salafiyya yunazzimān ḥamla li-l-tabarru' bi-l-dam bi-l-duqhaliyya," *Youm7*, January 14, 2013, accessed September 4, 2013, <http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=907675&SecID=97&IssueID=0>

<sup>125</sup> Hazim al-Wakil, "al-da'wa al-salafiyya wa-l-nūr bi-l-iskāndariyya yunazzimān ḥamla li-taṭwīr qism al-ḥurūq bi-mustashfa ra's al-tīn," *El-Watan News*, June 16, 2013, accessed June 17, 2013, <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/202067>

<sup>126</sup> In April 2013, the Salafi Call put out an employment call for doctors and nurses. Seen on a flier by the author and saved in the author's files.

project to provide electricity, lighting, and clean drinking water to over a hundred households.<sup>127</sup>

#### **D. Conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood**

Although post-Mubarak Egypt was initially characterized by openness, the competition with the Muslim Brotherhood once again posed a possible constraint for the Salafi Call. The Muslim Brotherhood became the most important political player in the country, and essentially became the leader of Egypt's Islamic current, as most other groups and parties – too small to operate independently – fell in line with the Brotherhood's policies. The Salafi Call and the Nour Party, though, estimated it had a big enough support base to remain independent, which brought the group into almost constant competition with the Brotherhood. It seems after Mursi assumed the presidency, the Muslim Brotherhood saw the Salafi Call's independence as a threat and thus tried to restrict its activities. Therefore, from the time Mursi assumed the presidency until he was removed a year later, the Salafi Call distanced itself from the Brotherhood as a means to maximize political and propagation opportunities.

The relationship was not completely hostile. The two groups put aside their differences when it came to promoting the "Islamic project" and enshrining Islam's role in public life. In March 2011, the two groups cooperated in mobilizing their support bases to vote "yes" for amendments to Egypt's 1971 Constitution. Both groups supported a "yes"

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<sup>127</sup> "al-da'wa al-salafiyya bi-dimyāt tunazzim qāfila ighāthiyya li-jazīra al-'azbī taḍamm 2.5 ṭun min al-muwwād al-istihlākiyya," *el-Balad*, December 4, 2013, accessed December 28, 2013, <http://www.el-balad.com/698133>

vote because this meant that Article Two, which affirms Egypt's Islamic identity, would be upheld. Furthermore, both groups made up a majority on the constituent assembly that drafted the December 2012 constitution. Both cooperated on drafting a constitution which Yasir Burhami described as the best document ever drafted in Egypt's history.<sup>128</sup> However, cooperation remained limited to these instances.

When it came to politics, both saw the other as aiming to limit its power.<sup>129</sup> The competition began prior to November 2011 parliamentary elections. In July 2011, the Nour Party briefly joined the Democratic Alliance, an electoral coalition of parties led by the Muslim Brotherhood. However, Nour decided to leave the alliance because it felt the Muslim Brotherhood did not allocate it enough seats on electoral lists.<sup>130</sup> Nour decided it could maximize the number of seats it contested and maximize its chances to affect the new political order by forming its own electoral alliance, called the "Islamic Alliance" with other smaller Salafi parties: al-Fadila, al-Asala, and Building and Development. From this point forward, Nour and the Brotherhood approached the elections as a zero-sum game.<sup>131</sup> According to one account, supporters campaigning for both parties engaged in deceptive

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<sup>128</sup> Naglaa Mekkawi, "A Love, Hate Relationship: Al-Nour and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," *al-Arabiya*, August 22, 2013, accessed February 5, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/alarabiya-studies/2013/08/22/A-love-hate-relationship-Al-Nour-and-Egypt-s-Muslim-Brotherhood.html>

<sup>129</sup> al-Anani, "The Salafi Brotherhood Feud in Egypt."

<sup>130</sup> Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy, "the Politicization of the Egyptian Salafiyya," Master's Thesis, George Washington University, 2012, 36-37, <https://www.gwu.edu/~imes/assets/docs/Capstone%20Papers%20-%202012/Boehmer,%20Murphy.pdf>

<sup>131</sup> Lacroix, "Sheikhs and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism," 4.

tactics to trick the other's constituency.<sup>132</sup> Muslim Brotherhood supporters went to neighborhoods that strongly supported Nour and told the people Nour's electoral symbol was the scale, which is in fact the Brotherhood symbol, in order to convince them to mistakenly vote for the Brotherhood. Nour supporters did the same in neighborhoods supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The relationship took a turn for the worse when the Salafi Call and Nour decided to support, in the first round of presidential elections, the relatively moderate Islamist Abdel Moneim Abul Fotouh instead of Muhammad Mursi, who is ideologically closer to the Salafis. According to the Salafi Call, this was a pragmatic decision and not a religious one, and articulated it was necessary to support Fotouh to prevent the Brotherhood from gaining a monopoly in Egyptian politics.<sup>133</sup> Fotouh lost in the first round, pitting Muhammad Mursi against Mubarak regime stalwart Ahmad Shafiq. According to former Nour Party President 'Imad 'Abd al-Ghafur, the decision to not support Mursi in the first round further strained the relationship between the two groups, and led to the exclusion of Nour members from Prime Minister Hisham Qandil's cabinet.<sup>134</sup> However, by August, Nour and the Muslim Brotherhood began cooperating in preparation for drafting the 2012

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Khalil al-Anani, "Egypt's 'blessed' Salafi votes," *Foreign Policy*, May 2, 2012, accessed August 26, 2013,

[http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/05/02/egypts\\_blessed\\_salafi\\_votes](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/05/02/egypts_blessed_salafi_votes)

<sup>134</sup> "New Brotherhood team hints at Salafi-Brotherhood rapprochement," *Egypt Independent*, August 30, 2012, accessed February 12, 2013,

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/new-presidential-team-hints-brotherhood-salafi-rapprochement>

Constitution. As part of this cooperation, Mursi appointed two Nour leaders, Bassam al-Zarqa and Khalid ‘Alim al-Din, as part of his presidential advisory committee.<sup>135</sup>

Although the two cooperated in mobilizing Egyptians to vote for the constitution, which passed with 64% of the vote, the relationship deteriorated in earnest after Mursi’s November 22<sup>nd</sup> constitutional decree. Mursi portrayed the decree as a measure to protect the democratic gains of the revolution by safeguarding the upper house of parliament and the constituent assembly from dissolution after the lower house of parliament was dissolved in June 2012 by the Supreme Constitutional Court. The decree, however, also granted Mursi sweeping executive powers that allowed him to make laws without judicial review. The decree led to increasing polarization between the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies and the opposition led by the National Salvation Front. After this, the Salafi Call sought to benefit from the mounting resentment against Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood, while the Brotherhood aimed to punish the Nour Party for not supporting its policies.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, the Brotherhood sought to encourage internal divisions within the Salafi trend.<sup>137</sup>

The conflict between Nour and the Brotherhood is partly to blame for causing internal divisions within the Nour Party. In late 2012, two competing factions emerged, one led by the President ‘Imad ‘Abd al-Ghafur and the other led by Yasir Burhami. Ghafur envisioned the Party should aim to be an inclusive representative of the entire Islamist current and thus develop a close relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood. Burhami, on

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> al-Anani, “The Salafi Brotherhood Feud in Egypt.”

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.



the other hand, believed the Party should maintain its independence from the Brotherhood's initiatives.<sup>138</sup> The competition was not limited to its orientation towards the Brotherhood, but also involved what role Salafi Call shaykhs should play in decision-making. Ghafur wanted the Party to be administratively separate from the Salafi Call, whereas Burhami believed the shaykhs should play a prominent role in developing Nour Party policies.<sup>139</sup> Ultimately, Burhami's faction was victorious, resulting in Burhami and Salafi Call shaykhs gaining greater control over the Nour Party. Ghafur resigned in December 2012, and was succeeded by Yunis Makhiyyun, a Salafi Call shaykh himself and former student of Burhami's. Ghafur and about 150 others defected from Nour and started the Watan Party.<sup>140</sup> One account claims that the Brotherhood facilitated the formation of the Watan Party to spread division within the Salafi ranks and to develop a Salafi ally that would be closely aligned with its policies.<sup>141</sup>

In early 2013, the Nour Party launched a political initiative, aiming to solve the impasse between the Brotherhood and the opposition.<sup>142</sup> It called for national dialogue, the

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<sup>138</sup> Jonathan AC Brown, "The Rise and Fall of the Salafi al-Nour Party in Egypt," *Jadaliyya*, November 13, 2013, accessed November 15, 2013, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/15113/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-salafi-al-nour-party-in-e>

<sup>139</sup> el-Sherif, "The Salafi Movement: Competing Visions (Part 1)."

<sup>140</sup> "New Salafi party to be announced Tuesday," *Egypt Independent*, December 29, 2012, accessed December 29, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/new-salafi-party-be-announced-tuesday>

<sup>141</sup> Abdullah Kamal, "What Makes Egypt's al-Nour Salafists Tick?" *al-Arabiya*, December 10, 2013, accessed February 5, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2013/12/10/What-makes-Egypt-s-al-Nour-Salafists-tick-.html>

<sup>142</sup> "Nour Party Initiative to be Discussed at Egypt's National Dialogue," *Ahram Online*, February 10, 2013, accessed February 11, 2014,

resignation of PM Hisham Qandil's cabinet, and a "unity" government put in its place. However, the initiative was perceived by the Brotherhood as an attempt by the Nour Party to increase its political power at its expense. Subsequently, Nour Party leader Khalid 'Alim al-Din was fired from his position as presidential advisor to Mursi for alleged and unproven charges of corruption and abuse of office.<sup>143</sup> However, Nour asserts this was actually an attempt by the Brotherhood to punish al-Din for his participation in negotiations with the National Salvation Front.

After 'Alim al-Din's firing, Nour leaders, including President Yunis Makhyyun, constantly criticized the Muslim Brotherhood as aiming to monopolize power and "Brotherhoodize" the state, by appointing only members loyal to the group to vacant posts.<sup>144</sup> The Salafi Call also accused the Brotherhood of trying to exert its influence over the Ministry of Religious Endowments after Brotherhood members were appointed to various high-level positions.<sup>145</sup> According to Mahmud 'Abd al-Hamid, a leading Salafi Call shaykh and a member on the Administrative Council, the Brotherhood was seeking to gain control of Egypt's mosques.<sup>146</sup> He feared the Brotherhood was going to use this influence to restrict the Salafi Call and its *da'wa* activities.

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<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/1/0/64542/Egypt/0/Nour-Party-initiative-to-be-discussed-at-Egypt-na.aspx>

<sup>143</sup> al-Anani, "The Salafi Brotherhood Feud in Egypt."

<sup>144</sup> "Nour Party threatens to reveal Brotherhood power scheme," *Egypt Independent*, March 5, 2013, accessed March 10, 2013, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/nour-party-threatens-reveal-brotherhood-power-scheme>

<sup>145</sup> "al-da'wa al-salafiyya tu'lin ḥarb ḍid akhwanat al-awqāf," *Watan News*, March 14, 2013, accessed April 2, 2013, <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/146556>

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

By April 2013, it was evident the Muslim Brotherhood was losing popularity. Thus, according to many analysts, Nour launched an international campaign to present itself as a “moderate” alternative to the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>147</sup> Nour sent delegations to meet with representatives of foreign governments, including the American ambassador to Turkey and representatives of the European Union. In the beginning of May, a delegation of leaders from Nour and the Salafi Call toured America to build links with the Egyptian American community.<sup>148</sup> Nour’s secretary of Foreign Affairs Amr Mekki stated the purpose of the trip was to connect religious Egyptian Americans with their “preaching masters” in the Salafi Call.<sup>149</sup> Nader Bakkar, Nour spokesman, denied the trip was political, but added the delegation would accept invitations to meet with American politicians. According S‘ad al-Din Ibrahim, the director of the Cairo-based Ibn Khaldoun Center, the Salafi Call approached and asked him to present the group to his contacts in the American government as a Brotherhood alternative.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Naglaa Mekkawi, “A Love, Hate Relationship: al-Nour and Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood.”

<sup>148</sup> Rana Muhammad Taha, “Al-Nour Party delegation to visit the United States,” *Daily News Egypt*, April 29, 2013, accessed April 30, 2013, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/04/29/al-nour-party-delegation-to-visit-the-united-states/>

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> “sa‘d al-dīn ibrahīm yakshaf: al-da‘wa al-salafīyya ṭalabat minī taqdīmahā li-amrīka kabadīl ‘an al-ikhwān,” *Watan News*, May 14, 2013, accessed May 17, 2013, <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/181045>

According to an Egyptian security source, the Muslim Brotherhood felt increasingly threatened by Nour.<sup>151</sup> Allegedly, Mursi's presidency ordered the observation of Nour Party leaders' movements and communication. The security source added, Khayrat al-Shatir, Brotherhood deputy supreme guide, threatened Salafi Call leaders saying "if you contact foreign governments again, we will imprison all of you. There is no place for you to rule in the era of the Muslim Brotherhood."<sup>152</sup>

Despite the hostile relationship between the Salafi Call and the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafi Call refused to support the Tamarrud campaign, which started in May 2013, calling for early presidential elections.<sup>153</sup> Leading up to June 30<sup>th</sup> and Mursi's ousting, the Salafi Call continuously recognized him as Egypt's legitimate president. The group took a neutral stance to the political polarization and Tamarrud's protests and the Muslim Brotherhood's counter-protests.<sup>154</sup> It refused to participate, saying protests will only lead to chaos, bloodshed, and economic collapse. Salafi Call leaders cited the Qur'anic invocation forbidding the spilling of Muslim blood as the major reason for its neutrality. It also refused the Muslim Brotherhood's framing as a conflict between believers and unbelievers. The group sought to convince its base that this was solely a political conflict. It clarified the opposition is not targeting shari'a and Islam, instead only opposes the Muslim

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<sup>151</sup> "shūf qillat adab al-ra'īs al-ma'zūl ma' al-salafiyyīn... faḍīḥa," *Elbashayer Online*, September 9, 2013, accessed September 25, 2013, <http://elbashayeronline.com/news-295576.html>

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Mekkawi, "A Love, Hate Relationship: al-Nour and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood."

<sup>154</sup> Basil el-Dabh, "Al-Nour calls for 'real' reconciliation," *Daily News Egypt*, June 12, 2013, accessed June 14, 2013, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/06/12/al-nour-calls-for-real-reconciliation/>

Brotherhood's exclusionary behavior and Egypt's worsening economic conditions during Mursi's presidency.

### **E. Mursi's Removal**

On 3 July 2013, after days of massive, nationwide protests, the army removed Muhammad Mursi from the presidency. Nour Party President Yunis Makhiyyun was positioned prominently behind 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi when he announced to the nation that Mursi was no longer president and the army was implementing a roadmap for Egypt's future without the Muslim Brotherhood. The post-Mursi period has undoubtedly been one of the most challenging and confusing time periods for the Salafi Call. It had to deal with numerous considerations when planning the best way to deal with the removal of Mursi and the new political order. Ultimately, according to Burhami, it decided to support the coup because it saw that this was the best way to protect its propagation activities and remain politically engaged.<sup>155</sup> Remaining politically engaged has been essential to protect its propagation activities as not only the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies have been banned but also the activities of politically quietist and neutral propagation organizations such as Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya and al-Gam'iyya al-Shar'iyya.

The main reason the Salafi Call supported the coup is its increasingly hostile conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>156</sup> As outlined above, during Mursi's year of rule,

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<sup>155</sup> "burhāmī: shāraknā fī-l-inqilāb ḥifāẓan 'ala al-da'wa," *Akhbarna*, November 12, 2013, accessed November 15, 2013, [http://www.akhbrna.com/egypt\\_news/40808](http://www.akhbrna.com/egypt_news/40808)

<sup>156</sup> Khalil al-Anani, "The Nour Party's Perilous Gamble," *al-Monitor*, July 22, 2013, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/nour-party-perilous-gamble-backing-morsi-ouster.html>

the Brotherhood became the Salafi Call's main adversary – more so than secularists, liberals, and the military – as they were both in direct competition for adherents and political power.<sup>157</sup> The Salafi Call feared that the Muslim Brotherhood was going to use its increasing control of state institutions to restrict the movement, especially its mosque-based and propagation activities.<sup>158</sup> The Salafi Call supported the coup because it estimated that the military would not pose a threat to its propagation activities, like the Brotherhood did.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, Nour's endorsement was essential for the military to give off the impression that the coup was not against Islam. The Salafi Call is much more compatible with the state than the Brotherhood, because the Salafis, according to its leaders, are not looking to govern, but are looking to participate in the political order to ensure a religious presence in parliament.<sup>160</sup> The Salafi Call will remain politically quietist, in exchange for a religious presence in parliament and propagation opportunities.

Yet, Nour and the Salafi Call are facing many challenges due its support for the coup. First, it has lost credibility with segments of its base.<sup>161</sup> In Egypt, there is a lot of overlap for Islamist groups. For example, before the coup, Nour supporters, for the most

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Rami Sa'ad, "ishti'āl al-ḥarb bayn al-ikhwān wa-l-salafiyyin...", *Youm7*, November 2, 2013, accessed April 8, 2014, [http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=1323819&SecID=12#.U0RC7\\_ldW8M](http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=1323819&SecID=12#.U0RC7_ldW8M)

<sup>159</sup> Abdel Rahman Youssef, "Egypt's Salafis: Inheriting the Brotherhood and Courting the Regime," *al-Akhbar English*, January 23, 2014, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/18360>

<sup>160</sup> Heba Saleh, "Egypt's Salafis Risk Credibility with Backing for New Regime," *Financial Times*, December 18, 2013, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/2df1c694-5203-11e3-8c42-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2uTiuBwAh>

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

part, had a favorable view of the Muslim Brotherhood, and vice versa.<sup>162</sup> However, Nour's support for the coup has led to a loss in popularity among those who support the Islamic current in general.<sup>163</sup> They view Nour and the Salafi Call as betraying the Islamic project. The strength of the Nour Party before the coup came from its perceived authenticity, due to its emphasis on not willing to compromise on matters of Islamic doctrine and its avoidance of politics in a previously corrupted system.<sup>164</sup> After the coup, though, supporters of the Islamic current see that it too has become corrupted and has sacrificed Islamic principles for political opportunism. Nour and the Salafi Call are constantly derided by Mursi supporters as traitors to the Islamic project and as "agents of the regime." The Salafi Call has acknowledged some loss of support, but it sees that most Egyptian Muslims are pious and peaceful and are not politicized like Mursi's supporters, thus it is seeking to maintain the support of the religious segment of the population that also supports the military and wants stability.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> This assessment comes from a Zogby poll. Before Mursi's ousting, 88% of those polled who identified as Nour Supporters also supported the Muslim Brotherhood. Whereas, 97% of those who identified as Muslim Brotherhood supporters also supported the Nour Party, "After Tahrir: Egyptians Assess Their Government and Their Institutions, and Their Future," *Zogby Research Services*, June 2013, accessed July 15, 2013, [http://zogbyresearchservices.com/zrs/Zogby\\_Research\\_Services\\_ZRS\\_Portfolio\\_Egypt\\_2013\\_files/Egypt%20June%202013%20FINAL.pdf](http://zogbyresearchservices.com/zrs/Zogby_Research_Services_ZRS_Portfolio_Egypt_2013_files/Egypt%20June%202013%20FINAL.pdf)

<sup>163</sup> Jonathan A.C. Brown in an interview with the Council on Foreign Relations; Zachary Laub, "Dim Prospects for Egypt's Salafis," *Council on Foreign Relations*, July 19, 2013, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/egypt/dim-prospects-egypts-salafis/p31127>

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> "al-da'wa al-salafiyya tuṭālib bi-l-ḥifāz 'ala al-jaysh wa-l-iḥtikām," *al-Masry al-Youm*, August 16, 2013, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/249794>

Support for the coup and involvement in politics has also caused internal divisions among Salafi Call leaders. Some leaders such as, founder Muhammad Isma‘il al-Muqaddam, were not initially against politics, but they see that politics, especially its support for the coup, has corrupted it, and has distracted the group from its traditional work of religious purification, *da‘wa*, and education. Yet, most of the Salafi Call shaykhs agree with the two leaders Burhami and Abu Idris’ vision that politics and organizational work aids the group in purification, *da‘wa*, and education. al-Muqaddam, who was active in giving lectures before the coup, has not made any public appearances since, out of protest for Nour’s positions, and has went into seclusion in order to avoid defection from the group.<sup>166</sup> Vice President Sa‘id ‘Abd al-‘Azim, although still a member of the Administrative Council, has all but defected since the crisis with the Brotherhood started during the 2012 presidential elections.<sup>167</sup> After Mursi’s removal, he repeatedly called on Egyptians to peacefully protest for Mursi’s return. The Marsa Matrouh branch of the Salafi Call, one of its most active branches, led by ‘Ali Taha Ghilab, refused the group’s positions surrounding the coup, and held protests in support of Mursi.<sup>168</sup> The central organization briefly froze the branch in August 2013 and its leader Ghilab resigned. However, he returned to his position of president of the branch in December 2013 after he acknowledged he could not support the actions of the Muslim Brotherhood and Mursi’s supporters and

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<sup>166</sup> Youssef, “Egypt’s Salafis: Inheriting the Brotherhood and Courting the Regime.”

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Mahmud Sadiq, “al-da‘wa al-salafiyy tujammid majlis idāra far‘hā bi-matruḥ bi-sabab ‘qd mu’tamar li d‘m mursi,” *El-Balad*, August 14, 2013, accessed August 27, 2013, <http://www.el-balad.com/584299>



gave his word that he would respect the stances of the Salafi Call's central organization.<sup>169</sup> Although there has been tension and disagreements at the highest levels of the organization, the leading shaykhs still remain committed to the idea of the Salafi Call. But, there has been some lower-level defections. The relative disunity after the coup has caused the central organization – led by Burhami and Idris' vision – to attempt to gain greater control over its shaykhs and politicians. Burhami warned Salafi Call shaykhs not to go against the positions of the central organization, telling shaykhs they represent the Salafi Call, not themselves.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, one unidentified source said that in the upcoming 2014 parliamentary elections, the Nour Party will only allow candidates to run under its banner who strictly adhere to the decisions of the Salafi Call central organization and the Nour Party's leadership.<sup>171</sup>

Since July 2013, Salafi Call and Nour supporters and their leaders have faced increased threats and violence from Muslim Brotherhood supporters. In July, members of the Salafi Call's "One Nation" (*umma waḥida*) relief campaign for Syrian refugees were

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<sup>169</sup> Kamil Kamil and Rami Nuwar, "al-da'wa al-salafīyya tu'īd al-shaykh 'alī ghilāb li-ri'āsa majlis idāra al-da'wa bi-matrūh," *Youm7*, December 28, 2013, accessed January 20, 2014, [http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=1422390&SecID=296#.Uw6Ok\\_IdW8M](http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=1422390&SecID=296#.Uw6Ok_IdW8M)

<sup>170</sup> Kamil Kamil and Rami Nuwar, "yāsir burhāmī: qirārāt al-da'wa al-salafīyya mabniyya 'ala al-mu'assiyya wa al-shūra," *Youm7*, October 28, 2013, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=1316513&SecID=319#.Uw6QwvldW8M>

<sup>171</sup> Hamdi Dabash, "yāsir burhāmī: al-nūr huwwa al-ḥizb al-awal fī miṣr wa sayāḥṣad aghlabiyya al-barlimān al-muqbil," *al-Masry al-Youm*, September 9, 2013, accessed October 2, 2013, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/261756>

attacked in Alexandria by Mursi protesters as their march passed by.<sup>172</sup> Brotherhood supporters have tried on numerous occasions to prevent Yasir Burhami from giving lessons and sermons in different locations throughout the country. According to one report, while Burhami was giving a speech in Minufiyya, the military uncovered an assassination plot on Burhami's life, and preemptively provided extensive security at the event to thwart the plot.<sup>173</sup> Burhami's house in Alexandria was also attacked by a mob with Molotov cocktails and guns, while he and his family were inside.<sup>174</sup> Houses of other leaders including Nour Spokesman Nader Bakkar have also been attacked.<sup>175</sup> In addition, multiple Nour conferences were attacked, which has necessitated extensive security coverage at all large Nour and Salafi Call gatherings.<sup>176</sup>

## F. Expanding Opportunities

Despite that the Salafī Call has faced numerous challenges, it has expanded opportunities in post-Mursi Egypt, much more so than any other Islamist group. Support for

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<sup>172</sup> Mahmud al-Tibakh, "al-da'wa al-salafīyya tutahim anṣār mursī wa-l-ikhwān bi-l-ta'addī 'ala ḥamla tāb'a lahā bi-l-iskāndariyya," *MSN Arabic*, July 21, 2013, accessed Jul 25, 2013, <http://on-msn.com/1mW9rgT>

<sup>173</sup> "al-dākhiliyya taḥbat muḥāwala ikhwāniyya li-ighṭiyyāl yāsir burhāmī khilāl ilqā' muḥāḍara fī al-munufiyya," *Akhbar Today*, December 16, 2013, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.akhbar-today.com/142984>

<sup>174</sup> Hazim al-Wakil, "burhāmī: hujūm al-ikhwān 'ala manzalī intiḥār...wa lan nunjir li-l-i'tidā' 'ala nisā'ihim," *el-Watan News*, December 26, 2013, accessed January 20, 2014, <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/380236>

<sup>175</sup> "al-nūr yastankir i'tidā' al-ikhwān 'ala rumūz al-da'wa al-salafīyya..." *Akhbarak*, November 8, 2013, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1iqPBDA>

<sup>176</sup> "ijrā'āt mushadada li-tā'mīn mu'tamar al-da'wa al-salafīyya ba'd tahdīdāt ikhwān al-suez," *al-Masry al-Youm*, January 3, 2014, accessed February 3, 2014, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/370594>

the coup and cooperation with the new regime in fighting violence against the state has been absolutely necessary to expand opportunities. As we will see below mere neutrality may not have been enough to maintain its *da'wa* activities, as politically quietist Islamic charities have been frozen. But the Salafi Call has been wary about giving off the impression that it supported the coup for political gain, therefore, it refused appointments to former PM Hazim Biblawi's cabinet.

The main political activity of Nour after the coup, was participating through one representative on Egypt's fifty-person committee to amend the constitution. Although the Salafi Call criticized its makeup of lacking Islamists, Burhami stated the group must participate in order to protect shari'a and the articles pertaining to Egypt's Islamic identity.<sup>177</sup> The Salafi Call was satisfied that shari'a and the articles of identity were protected, thus in December 2013 and January 2014, the Salafi Call undertook a nationwide campaign to urge Egyptians to vote "yes" for the amended constitution. The government welcomed the Salafi Call's campaign, as the January referendum was treated as a referendum for the favorability of the coup. In mid-January, it passed with 98.1% of the vote, with a turnout of 38.6% of eligible voters.

The Salafi Call is also cooperating with al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religious Endowments to confront violence against the state by Muslim Brotherhood supporters and jihadis. Starting in September 2013, the group started holding religious learning sessions on the jurisprudence of *takfir* (excommunication) and jihad in order to stop the spread of

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<sup>177</sup> Muhammad al-Fiqqi, "burhāmī: al-mushāraka fī lajna al-50 aqall al-ḍararīn ḥimāya li-l-sharī'a," *Shorouk News*, September 1, 2013, accessed September 15, 2013, <http://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=01092013&id=e10357aa-7e9d-436a-9cc8-645322a09d33>

violence against the state.<sup>178</sup> Salafi Call leaders say only proper religious education can treat violent extremism. Between September 2013 and March 2014 it held over seventy training camps across the country on the jurisprudence of *takfir* and has trained over 3,000 people.<sup>179</sup> In March, the Salafi Call announced it was launching an even more intensive, nationwide campaign called “Dangers Threaten Egyptian Society” to “immunize citizens against the dangers of the deviant ideas of (*takfir*).”<sup>180</sup> The group will use multiple avenues to reach Egyptians such as cultural lessons, sermons, seminars, conferences, camps, booklets, posters, representatives present in squares across Egypt, and the internet.<sup>181</sup> The Ministry of Religious Endowments is setting aside squares and government mosques for the campaign. The campaign will especially focus on Upper Egypt and Sinai. Moreover, the Salafi Call trained and certified 250 members at its Madrasa Shar‘iyya in Alexandria to penetrate takfiri centers and strongholds and convince them that *takfir* is against shari‘a.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Usama al-Mahdi, “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya tu‘lin ḥamla li-muqawama al-fikr al-takfirī bi-l-muḥāfazāt,” *al-Masry al-Youm*, September 8, 2013, accessed April 8, 2014, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/261002>

<sup>179</sup> “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya nunassiq ma‘ al-awqāf wa-l-azhār li-l-tanzīm ma‘ skarāt li-muwājaha al-takfir,” *Misr Day*, March 19, 2014, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www.misrday.com/Policy/1140134.html?ref=ticker>

<sup>180</sup> “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya: iṭlāq ḥamla mukhāṭir tuhaddid al-mujtama‘ al-miṣrī li-muwājaha al-takfir wa-l-ilḥād,” *al-Mogaz*, March 19, 2014, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://almogaz.com/news/politics/2014/03/19/1384993>

<sup>181</sup> “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya tunāqish barnāmaj mukhāṭir tuhaddad al-mujtama‘ al-miṣrī bi-ḥuḍūr misi’ūlī al-qaṭā‘āt wa-l-muḥāfazāt,” *el-Balad*, March 30, 2014, accessed March 31, <http://www.el-balad.com/878144>

<sup>182</sup> Usama al-Mahdi, “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya tu‘lin takhrīj awwal daf‘a li-l-madrasa al-shara‘iyya li-muwājaha al-takfir,” *al-Masry al-Youm*, March 21, 2013, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/414863>

By supporting the military's road map and the referendum and confronting violence against the state, the Salafi Call has not only kept space for propagation open, but has expanded it. In September 2013, the Ministry of Religious Endowments banned all preachers who did not graduate from al-Azhar, allegedly to prevent politically charged and violent sermons. However, the Salafi Call negotiated with the Ministry that its preachers who did not graduate from al-Azhar could take a competency test to allow them to continue to preach.<sup>183</sup> Furthermore, it negotiated that all Salafi Call mosques and religious institutes, including the Furqan Institute, would come under the supervision of the Ministry, allowing them to stay open.

The coup opened up opportunities in the field of social services as well. Not only was the Muslim Brotherhood and all its activities and social services banned, but the assets of politically quietist Islamic charity associations were frozen.<sup>184</sup> The judiciary froze the charities of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya and al-Gam'iyya al-Shar'iyya.<sup>185</sup> The Salafi Call mediated between the charities and government to allow them to resume activities.

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<sup>183</sup> "al-da'wa al-salafiyya tūwāfiq 'ala ikhdā' m'āhadhā al-da'wiyya li-ishrāf al-azhār," *Al-Mogaz*, September 23, 2013, accessed September 27, 2013, <http://almogaz.com/news/politics/2013/09/23/1108000>

<sup>184</sup> Stephen Brooke, "Egypt's Crackdown on Islamist Charities," *Foreign Policy*, December 27, 2013, [http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/12/27/egypts\\_crackdown\\_on\\_islamist\\_charities](http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/12/27/egypts_crackdown_on_islamist_charities)

<sup>185</sup> Muhammad al-Burmi, "al-da'wa al-salafiyya tarith tarika al-jam'iyya al-shar'iyya wa anṣār al-sunna al-muhammadiyya..." *Veto Gate*, January 19, 2014, <http://www.vetogate.com/817150>

Rumors spread that the Salafi Call is seeking to take control of the charities leadership positions and is seeking in general to gain greater influence in both charities.<sup>186</sup>

## **G. Conclusion**

This chapter argues that the Salafi Call has become one of Egypt's most influential social movement organizations because it grasped the opportunities created by Mubarak's removal and strategically dealt with the state and the Muslim Brotherhood. As Yasir Burhami said, the Salafi Call's entrance into the political arena, through the Nour Party, was essential not only to influence the new political order, but also to increase the social presence of the group. In addition to forming the Nour Party, the group also grasped the Arab Spring's opportunities by reforming its internal organization, building a network of religious learning institutes across the country, and resuming its social services. However, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood became a possible constraint for the Salafi Call. Ultimately, the group sided with the military in its removal of Muhammad Mursi in July 2013. Active support for the state has increased opportunities for the group, while the rest of the Islamist current has suffered a severe crackdown. In the next chapter, I will look at how the Salafi Call's unique leadership structure made up of shaykhs allowed the group to effectively deal with Egypt's changing political landscape and become one of Egypt's most important Islamist movements.

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

#### A. Summary

The thesis aimed to determine the reasons for the emergence and development of the Salafi Call to become one of Egypt's most influential social movements in its political, social, and religious fields. The thesis analyzed the historical trajectory of the Salafi Call, from its founding in the seventies until 2014, looking at how it engaged with opportunities and constraints in Egypt's larger political environment, particularly focusing on the group's relationships with the state and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The thesis argued that the Salafi Call's emergence and development, in its early history, and growth, after the fall of Mubarak, is attributed to the group's pragmatism in dealing with the political environment, which it displayed by adopting an organizational flexibility. Throughout its history, the group continuously gauged the regime's tolerance of Islamic activism, and scaled up its organizational structures to better administer its organization and come in contact with more people, during times of regime tolerance, and scaled down its organizational structures to operating solely out of mosques in order to survive, during times of regime repression. Through this organizational flexibility, the group was, for the most part, able to avoid repression and was able to maintain its ability to proselytize and educate Muslims on the "correct" Islam. In accordance with the concept of *hukm* in purist Salafi thought, the group deemed adopting oppositional and confrontational stances towards the state is counter-productive and would have resulted in the complete

dismemberment of the group. Because of the group's avoidance of politics and resignation to solely focusing on preaching and religious education at mosques during the Mubarak era, the group and its networks were little known to many Egyptians and many scholars and experts of political Islam. This can explain why its emergence in the post-Mubarak era took many by surprise.

The next section looks at the Salafi Call's organizational capacity and seeks to explain why the Salafi Call in particular was able to effectively deal with Egypt's political environment and emerge as one of Egypt's most important social movements after Mubarak's ousting. I argue that the Salafi Call's unique leadership structure, made up entirely of shaykhs, facilitated the creation of large nationwide grassroots networks, which provided the foundation for the group's organizational flexibility, and can explain the group's success in 2011 parliamentary elections and post-Mubarak Egypt in general.

## **B. Shaykhs as Leaders: Connecting with Egypt**

This section looks at the reasons within the Salafi Call's organizational capacity that enabled it to effectively deal with Egypt's changing political environment and emerge to become one of Egypt's most influential social movements. I argue that the main reason for the Salafi Call's emergence is its unique leadership structure made up of shaykhs. Traditionally, the Salafi Call's networks of support have revolved primarily around its shaykhs who preach and give religious lessons at mosques. This allowed the group to maintain a decentralized, loose nationwide leadership structure that did not provoke the Mubarak regime, allowing it to survive. The shaykhs, unlike the leaders of other organizations, take on multiple roles such as preaching, creating policy, and administration.



Once Mubarak was removed, this allowed the Salafi Call to quickly and relatively easily adapt to the political openings that came with Mubarak's ouster and move from decentralized to centralized organization within a matter of months. The shaykhs were able to maintain this loose structure because of the strong networks they built nationwide on the local level at mosques. Therefore, in the post-Mubarak era, the Salafi Call has increased the variety of its activities with the specific purpose of connecting more Egyptians with its shaykhs. The large networks of the shaykhs have ensured that the Salafi Call can make independent decisions in the political context, while other Islamist groups, without large networks of support, have been forced to seek alliances with the Muslim Brotherhood to benefit from the latter's networks.

### ***1. Shaykhs and Mosque-based Networks***

The Salafi Call is unique from other social movement organizations in Egypt in that its leadership is completely made up of shaykhs, who preach at mosques, create policy, and administer its services. This is different from groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, in which tasks are divided between businessmen and politicians, who run the organization and create policy, and shaykhs who interact with people at mosques. Although the shaykhs now take on multiple roles, their most fundamental task is preaching. Through preaching they have been able to develop strong ties to Egyptian communities and sustain and build networks.

As many authors point out, mosques and religious lessons are one of the central modes for Islamist groups to engage Egyptian communities and build social ties.<sup>187</sup> The importance of the mosque as a mobilization tool is unique in authoritarian Muslim societies. Because of the importance of Islam in the daily lives of most Egyptians, the regime cannot suppress and crackdown on mosque-based activities, as it would other forms of organization, without undermining its legitimacy.<sup>188</sup> Therefore, even when the prevailing political environment is not auspicious for Islamic activism, Islamist groups can practice a level of autonomy and maintain networks of support through mosques. Thus, in contemporary Egypt, shaykhs, as mosque leaders, play a central role in society. For Salafis, the term shaykh generally refers to one who has great knowledge in Islamic sources, irrespective of his age. In this capacity, a shaykh undertakes various roles at mosques such as preaching, giving Friday sermons, and giving religious lessons.

In *The Management of Islamic Activism*, Quintan Wiktorowicz discusses the importance of Salafi shaykhs and scholars in developing informal networks.<sup>189</sup> Wiktorowicz emphasized that the Jordanian Salafi movement relied on informal networks to spread the movement, mainly to avoid state repression, but also for doctrinal reasons.<sup>190</sup> He says that reliance on informal networks is natural for Salafi movements since the

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<sup>187</sup> Salwa Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State, and Islamism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 105; Guilain Denoeux, *Urban Unrest in the Middle East: A Comparative Study of Informal Networks in Egypt, Iran, and Lebanon* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 207-208.

<sup>188</sup> Denoeux, *Urban Unrest in the Middle East*, 208.

<sup>189</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 111-147.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

movement is characterized by the transmission of Islamic knowledge, therefore, greater organization is not necessary. Because of the importance placed on knowledge, the student-teacher relationship is very important for Salafis and is the main method in which knowledge is transferred and networks are built. Therefore, the shaykhs, who act as preachers, scholars, and teachers, are the glue that holds the movement together. In Jordan the movement is decentralized and segmented with no regulatory power directing it nationally. The movement is based around various scholars with their own followings. According to Wiktorowicz, the size of a shaykh's following is directly related to his level of religious knowledge and recognition. Thus a prominent shaykh with a large support base typically possesses high levels of knowledge and a lesser known shaykh is most likely not as learned. It takes years for a scholar to develop a following in the community, which he does through face-to-face interactions including giving lessons, lectures, and informal meetings. Typically, the shaykh relies on the word of mouth of his students and other scholars to attract more followers. He adds that many shaykhs have specific areas of expertise. Therefore, it is common for committed Salafis to study under multiple shaykhs at the same time. According to Wiktorowicz, since face-to-face interaction is essential for learning in the Jordanian case, the shaykhs have not been able to develop followings beyond their local geographical area.

The Egyptian Salafi movement is characterized by many of the same traits. Amr Ezzat, a researcher at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and expert on Egyptian Islamism, noted, just like the Jordanian movement, the Egyptian Salafi movement is

characterized by networks of support built around shaykhs and their local mosques.<sup>191</sup> He said, typically, the networks are decentralized and fragmented. However, in the case of the Salafi Call, he stated, there has traditionally been a loose nationwide connection between the shaykhs. Ahmad Farid said as much in his memoirs. Farid noted that although ostensibly the Salafi Call was fragmented during the Mubarak era, the shaykhs maintained personal connections with each other whenever possible to ensure the movement remained connected.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, even with very limited national coordination, the Salafi Call was able to survive on the local level through the shaykhs' interactions with local communities. Yasir Burhami states that the strength of the Salafi community lies in the fact that it does not need strong organization to survive due to the fundamental importance of the student-teacher relationship.<sup>193</sup>

According to Ezzat, the shaykhs were able to develop large followings during the Mubarak era because of their reputations for possessing deep Islamic knowledge and their own charismatic personalities.<sup>194</sup> In interviews with former Nour MP Gamal Metwali and Nour Vice President Basam al-Zarqa both emphasized that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Nour Party and Salafi Call leadership is their educational training in the Islamic sciences.<sup>195</sup> They say this focus on knowledge is what draws many to their

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<sup>191</sup> Amr Ezzat, researcher at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, in an interview with the author on June 6, 2013.

<sup>192</sup> Farid, "al-shaykh al-duktūr Ahmad Farid yarwī qiṣa iltizāmihī wa i'tiqālihi wa ṭardihi min al-jaysh."

<sup>193</sup> 'Ali 'Abd al-'Al in Mustafa Zahran et al, *al-Salafiyyun fi Misr*, 49-54.

<sup>194</sup> Amr Ezzat in an interview with the author.

<sup>195</sup> Both made a point that they have formal training in the Islamic sciences in addition to their university educations; Gamal Metwali, former Nour MP and writer on Salafi issues, in

movement, as opposed to other Islamist groups. Muhammad Isma‘il al-Muqaddam, the chief founder of the group, is hailed by some in the Saudi Salafi establishment as a world renowned hadith scholar.<sup>196</sup> al-Muqaddam’s reputation alone has drawn many to the movement. Yasir Burhami, Sa‘id ‘Abd al-‘Azim, and ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Shahat are regarded as some of the most charismatic figures of the Egyptian Salafi movement. Starting in the mid-2000s, the Salafi Call’s most charismatic and learned shaykhs began preaching on satellite television. This allowed the shaykhs to gain nationwide exposure and develop nationwide followings, as opposed to the geographical limitations placed on the Jordanian movement.

## **2. *From Preachers to Politicians***

When Mubarak fell in 2011, the decentralized, loosely connected networks of the shaykhs – built on their legitimacy derived from knowledge, charisma, and community involvement – allowed them to quickly turn the Salafi Call into a centralized organization with internal decision-making bodies and a political party. Essentially, this expanded the role of shaykhs from preachers to administrators and politicians, who then became involved in administering a large organization and affecting Egypt’s new political system. Having this network in place allowed the shaykhs to adapt quickly and deal effectively with Egypt’s potentially treacherous political environment.

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an interview with the author on May 24, 2013; Dr. Basam al-Zarqa, Nour Party Vice President, in an interview with the author on June 17, 2013.

<sup>196</sup> ‘Ala’ al-‘itar and Hanan Hujaj, “al-kharīṭat al-salafīyya fī miṣr,” *al-Ahram*, July 29, 2011, accessed May 20, 2013, <http://www.ahram.org/archive/Investigations/News/92245.aspx>

Grasping the openings of the Arab Spring, the shaykhs of the Salafi Call became what one Egyptian researcher calls “politico-shaykhs.”<sup>197</sup> When the Salafi Call formed internal structures and the Nour Party, they took on more political responsibilities. The shaykhs are directly dealing with Egypt’s political environment through the Nour Party. Additionally, the main decision-making bodies of the Salafi Call – the Administrative and *shūra* Councils – are effectively political bodies as well. Both are used to guide not just the activities of the organization, but also to guide the trajectory of the organization in regards to Egypt’s political environment. The *shūra* council is made up of approximately two-hundred shaykhs from across the country. Through voting, the shaykhs on the *shūra* council decide everything from the nature of the group’s religious campaigns to the group’s political activities, such as the formation of the Nour Party and political involvement, the Salafi Call’s stances on protests and the coup, and which presidential candidate it will endorse. This shows that even the shaykhs who do not have formal positions in the Nour Party are taking on political roles as well. Involvement in politics, even in unofficial capacities, has pushed many Salafi shaykhs into the national spotlight and has turned them into recognizable figures.

### **3. *Shaykhs and Media***

The shaykhs have expanded their media presence in the post-Mubarak era as a way to connect their leading personalities with Egyptians nationwide without the need for face-to-face interactions. The presence of the Salafi Call’s and Nour’s leading figures on

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<sup>197</sup> Tariq ‘Uthman, “al-sīr fi ḥalqa mufaragha: al-salafiyyun wa-l-mujtam‘ wa-l-sulṭa,” *Islamyun*, March 28, 2014, accessed April 10, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1noIrEi>

satellite television has increased since the January 2011 uprising.<sup>198</sup> Sa‘id ‘Abd al-‘Azim, one of the Salafi Call’s founders, managed a major Islamic television station called *amjād*.<sup>199</sup> Since the uprising the group has sought to found its own satellite channel to give its own shaykhs a platform and to convey the Salafi Call’s thought. In April 2013, the group announced it was planning to launch two stations.<sup>200</sup> The Salafi Call noted the programming would be less political than what aired on many satellite television channels and would instead focus on education, the Islamic sciences, and how to apply shari‘a to daily life.<sup>201</sup> The goal was to not only target Egyptian Salafis with these channels, but also Salafis and Muslims internationally, as the group planned to broadcast the channels to Asia and Europe, as well, and planned to translate the programming into multiple languages. However, the channels were never able to launch due to the coup. In March 2014, the Salafi Call announced again that it is thinking of founding a satellite channel to convey the “correct” Islam and confront “untruths” spread by other groups in the Islamic current about the Nour Party and the Salafi Call.<sup>202</sup> The group also started its own weekly newspaper after January 2011 called *al-fath* (the Conquest). The newspaper is a major mouthpiece for its leading figures. Burhami, al-Shahat, al-Muqaddam, Nader Bakkar, Yunis Makhiiyun,

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<sup>198</sup> After Mursi was removed from power on 3 July 2013 the military banned most Islamic satellite television channels. However, Salafi Call and Nour leaders still appear on other channels as guests.

<sup>199</sup> Ahmad Zaghul in an interview with the author.

<sup>200</sup> “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya tudshin qanātayn faḍā’iyyatayn qarīban,” *al-Mesryoon*, April 13, 2013, accessed April 15, 2013, <http://almesryoon.com/permalink/120857.html>

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya tasa‘ li-inshā’ qanā faḍāi’iyya,” *Erem News*, March 31, 2014, accessed April 4, 2014, <http://www.eremnews.com/?id=34049>

and others write regular columns. Salafi Call leaders also use Facebook and its websites, [anasalafy.com](http://anasalafy.com) and [salafvoice.com](http://salafvoice.com), in a major way to convey their ideas.

#### ***4. Interactions at the Local Level***

Despite that many of the Salafi Call's preachers have become national celebrities and well-known politicians, they still manage to maintain a strong presence among the people on the local level through attending and speaking at seminars and camps nationwide, continuing to preach and give lessons at their local mosques, living in their communities, and mediation efforts. Their continued work on the local level has allowed them to maintain and expand their networks. As well, it has made them more aware of the needs and burdens of their constituencies, making the Salafi Call more effective in administering its services.

Religious seminars and conferences, multi-day learning camps, youth camps, and political campaigns have been some of the Salafi Call's most prominent activities after the fall of Mubarak. The Salafi Call's shaykhs – its national, provincial, and local leadership – are very active in attending and lecturing at these various activities. In the words of Salafi Call leaders themselves, they say these activities are used to connect Egyptians with its leaders and shaykhs. Burhami and other leaders, including Ahmad Farid, Adil Nasr, leader of the Salafi Call in Upper Egypt, Sharif al-Hawari and Galal Morra, both Administrative Council members, and many others, are regularly present at events all over the country whether it is educational camps to raise the religious competencies of its members in places



like Asyut, Ziqaziq, Wadi Gadid, etc.,<sup>203</sup> or conferences in places such as Minya.<sup>204</sup> As part of the Salafi Call's campaign recent campaign against violence, the shaykhs have increased their lectures across the country, especially in an attempt to connect with the youth. For example, in November 2013 Burhami met with university students, urging them to remain committed to religious learning and good morals.<sup>205</sup> In April 2014, The Salafi Call announced that it is purposely sending many of its most prominent and well-known shaykhs to Upper Egypt, an area prone to takfiri groups, to confront violence.<sup>206</sup> Moreover, the Salafi Call holds camps specifically for its preachers to increase their religious and teaching competencies and to make them more effective in engaging the public.<sup>207</sup> In regards to the Salafi Call's youth wing Vanguard of the Salafi Call, Mustafa Diab, its

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<sup>203</sup> Mahmud Malik, "al-da'wa al-salafiyya wa hizb al-nūr bi-asyūt yunazzimān mu'askaran tadribiyyan isti'dādan li-l-intikhābāt," *el-Watan News*, January 8, 2013, accessed April 16, 2014, <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/110200>; Sara Rashad, "istimrār fa'āliyyāt mu'askar 'sābaqu' li-shabāb al-salafiyya bi-jāma' ziqāziq li-usbū' al-thānī," *al-Mesryoon*, February 10, 2014, accessed April 16, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1ezp4Z7>; Muhammad al-Burmi, "al-da'wa al-salafiyya tunazzim mu'skaran tarbawiyyan bi-l-wadī jadīd bi-ḥudūr al-sharīf," *Veto Gate*, November 21, 2013, accessed April 16, 2014, <http://www.vetogate.com/706721>

<sup>204</sup> Gamal 'Abd al-Magid, "burhāmī yunazzim mu'tamaran li-l-da'wa al-salafiyya bi-l-minyā," *Dostor*, January 7, 2014, accessed April 16, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1qK1ECn>

<sup>205</sup> "burhāmī yuṭālib shabāb al-jāma' bi-l-ihtimām bi-l-'ilm wa-l-'aml wa ḥusn al-khalq wa 'adm radd al-isā'a bi-mithlihā," *el-Balad*, November 15, 2013, accessed April 16, 2014, <http://www.el-balad.com/677095>

<sup>206</sup> Usama al-Mahdi, "taklīf qiyādāt al-da'wa al-salafiyya bi-l-nuzūl li-l-sa'īd li-muwājaha al-taṭarruf," *al-Masry al-Youm*, April 2, 2014, accessed April 16, 2014, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/421555>

<sup>207</sup> Mustafa Amin, "al-da'wa al-salafiyya bi-l-iskāndariyya tuqīm mu'askaran li-l-khuṭabā' wa-l-du'ā bi-burj al-'arab," *al-Bawāb News*, March 27, 2014, accessed April 16, 2014, <http://www.albawabhnews.com/485797>

director, says it organizes monthly lectures by its prominent preachers in order to connect the youth to the larger organization.<sup>208</sup>

Even though many of the Salafi Call shaykhs are now well-known nationwide, they still maintain close connections with their own local communities at mosques and through religious lessons. Salafi Call shaykhs still give Friday sermons in their local communities, and frequently these sermons are at the same mosque they preached out of for years.<sup>209</sup> The locations of Salafi Call shaykhs' Friday sermons are published every week, indicating that most major figures such as Burhami, Makhyyun (Nour Party President), Farid, Nasr, al-Shahat, and others preach every Friday.<sup>210</sup> As well, many of the shaykhs, including Yasir Burhami, still give regular religious lessons in their local communities.<sup>211</sup> It seems they take their local roots very seriously.

In addition to interacting with their local communities through Friday sermons and religious lessons, many of the Salafi Call leaders live in the communities themselves, allowing them to have their fingers' on the pulse of their communities. Burhami lives on the main thoroughfare in the Sidi Bishr neighborhood of Alexandria,<sup>212</sup> Sidi Bishr is a main

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<sup>208</sup> Laban, "ḥiwār m' al-shaykh muṣṭafa diyyab mas'ūl malaf ṭalā'i' al-da'wa al-salafiyya fi masr."

<sup>209</sup> Ahmad Zaghlul in an interview with the author.

<sup>210</sup> Mustafa Amin, "nanshar kharīṭat khuṭabā' al-jum'a min mashāyikh al-da'wa al-salafiyya," *al-Bawab News*, February 21, 2014, accessed March 22, 2014, <http://www.albawabhnews.com/409877>

<sup>211</sup> Hamdi Dabsh and Usama al-Mahdi, "burhāmī: rafaḍtu al-iblāgh 'an anṣār mursī b'ad tazāhirihiḥim ḍidī ḥata lā yusjanu," *al-Masry al-Youm*, November 8, 2013, accessed December 28, 2013, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/337498>

<sup>212</sup> Hazim al-Wakil, "burhāmī: hujūm al-ikhwān 'ala manzalī intiḥār...wa lan nunjir li-l-i'tidā' 'ala nisā'ihim," *el-Watan News*, December 26, 2013, accessed January 20, 2014, <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/380236>

stronghold of the group. Burhami claims that its leadership and most members on the Administrative Council are from the middle class. In a New York Times article by David Kirkpatrick, a Salafi shaykh says Nour owes its electoral success due to the fact that the shaykhs and leaders are a part of the community themselves and are part of Egypt's poor "silent majority."<sup>213</sup> Therefore, the constant interaction the shaykhs maintain with the public, both through preaching and living in the community, makes them more aware of the needs and burdens of the Egyptian people and makes them more effective in directing the activities and services of their organization.<sup>214</sup>

Also because of the shaykhs' community presence and their reputations as being humble and fair moderators,<sup>215</sup> they have been able to compound their legitimacy with their bases through mediating conflicts. The shaykhs are regularly engaged in mediation on the local level. Some examples of successful mediation efforts include reconciling a forty year tribal conflict in Marsa Matruh,<sup>216</sup> ending a blood feud between two Alexandrian families, returning a Coptic family's land that was appropriated in an unstable security environment

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<sup>213</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "In Egypt, A Conservative Appeal Transcends Religion," *New York Times*, December 10, 2011, accessed February 19, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/11/world/middleeast/salafis-in-egypt-have-more-than-just-religious-appeal.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/11/world/middleeast/salafis-in-egypt-have-more-than-just-religious-appeal.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

<sup>214</sup> Former Nour MP Gamal Metwali believes this is a major reason for the group's success.

<sup>215</sup> Husein Ahmad Zaky, Editor at the Egyptian al-Akhbar newspaper, in an interview with the author on May 15, 2013.

<sup>216</sup> Ahmad Sa'id Tantawi, "al-da'wa al-salafiyya tunhī nizā'an bi-matrouh istamara 40 'āman bayn qabīlatay al-muhāfiẓ wa-l-qata'ān," *Al-Ahram*, November 15, 2012, accessed February 1, 2014, <http://bit.ly/P5DHY4>

during the January 2011 uprising,<sup>217</sup> and negotiating an end to violence between pro- and anti-Mursi factions in a neighborhood in Cairo during the July 2013 uprising.<sup>218</sup>

### **5. Responsiveness to the Community**

The work of the shaykhs on the local level has made them aware and responsive to the needs of their communities. Former Nour MP Gamal Metwali said he believes this is one of the major reasons for the rising influence of the Salafi Call on the national level.<sup>219</sup> This has allowed the group to provide services fast, either during a shortage or a temporary security crisis. For example, in November 2011, the price of cooking gas almost tripled in price to around 75 Egyptian pounds (EGP). Therefore, in Imbaba, a poor neighborhood in Cairo known as an Islamist stronghold, the Nour Party offered to refill gas canisters for a third of the market rate at around 25-30 EGP.<sup>220</sup> Another example, occurring in January 2013, during violent unrest in Suez, security forces were overwhelmed, therefore, the Salafi Call dispatched what it calls “People’s Committees” (*lijān sha ‘biyya*) to provide security,

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<sup>217</sup> “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya tu‘īd qiṭa‘at arḍ mughtaṣaba li-usra masīhiyya bi-l-iskāndariyya,” *Shorouk News*, February 13, 2013, accessed August 25, 2013, <http://shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=13022013&id=56c63786-b3fa-4a94-b489-62a418b120ff>

<sup>218</sup> “al-da‘wa al-salafiyya bi-ḥawsh ‘āisa fī al-buhayra tanjaḥ fī tahdi‘a al-awḍā‘ bayn al-ikhwān wa-l-mutaḏāhirīn,” *Al-Mogaz*, June 30, 2013, accessed July 4, 2013, <http://almogaz.com/news/politics/2013/06/30/985998>

<sup>219</sup> Gamal Metwali in an interview with the author.

<sup>220</sup> James H. Sunday, a professor at the American University in Cairo, in an interview with the author on June 5, 2013.

protect public and private property from destruction, and direct traffic.<sup>221</sup> The Salafi Call set up a hotline to receive emergency calls and complaints. Gharib Muhammad, President of the Salafi Call's Administrative Council in Suez, said the group did this to reassure Suez's citizens and ease their fears.<sup>222</sup> Occurring roughly at the same time in Suez, microbus drivers went on strike, crippling the city's transportation network.<sup>223</sup> Gharib Muhammad said the group put its own minibuses out on the roads with its own drivers in order to transport stranded citizens to their homes.

## **6. *Self-sustaining and Embedded Organization***

This section looked at the reasons within the organizational capacity of the Salafi Call, trying to determine how it was effectively able to adapt to Egypt's changing political environment. It argues that the presence of charismatic, knowledgeable shaykhs, who make efforts to maintain strong, deep connections with their local communities, despite that many of them have reached celebrity status, is the major reason behind the Salafi Call's capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. This has allowed the Salafi Call to maintain large nationwide networks that facilitated quick organization, after the fall of Mubarak, into internal decision-making bodies and deal with Egypt's political changes. Because of these

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<sup>221</sup> Amr Ghanima, "lajān sha'biyya min al-nūr wa al-da'wa al-salafiyya li ḥimāya al-munsha'at bi al-suez," *al-Ahram*, January 26, 2013, accessed August 29, 2013, <http://bit.ly/113qHRJ>

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Rami Nuwar and Kamil Kamil, "al-nūr wa-l-da'wa al-salafiyya yukhaṣṣān siyārāt li naql al-muwāṭinīn bi al-suez," *Youm7*, January 27, 2013, accessed August 29, 2013, <http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=923491&SecID=97>

large networks the Salafi Call has been able to independently determine the best way for the group to navigate the political environment and did not have to blindly follow the Muslim Brotherhood, as other Islamist groups, lacking networks, have been forced to do.

Because the Salafi Call can sustain itself mainly through mosques by way of its shaykhs, the organization does not need large amounts of resources to maintain its position as one of Egypt's most influential social movement organizations. After the removal of Muhammad Mursi, rumors spread, in both the Egyptian and Western medias, that the Salafi Call is receiving large amounts of funding from foreign sources, especially Saudi Arabia. This argument may seem plausible due to the ideological similarities between the purist thought of the Salafi Call and the official Saudi *'ulamā,*' and the Saudi state's disdain for the Muslim Brotherhood and its oppositional and sometimes confrontational politics. However, there is no evidence the Salafi Call is receiving foreign funding. As Yasir Burhami states, the group does not need large amounts of funding because the group and its activities are primarily based around mosques and its shaykhs. Despite that many claim its success is due to Saudi support and funding, it seems that the Salafi Call is playing a large role in Egypt today because of its organizational simplicity, which does not require large amounts of funding. In other words, it seems its success is due to the fact that it is deeply embedded in Egyptian society, rather than claims that it is a foreign import from Saudi Arabia.<sup>224</sup>

### **C. Further Implications**

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<sup>224</sup> For a debate on whether Egyptian Salafism is rooted in Egypt or a Saudi import see, Gauvain, "Salafism in Egypt: Panacea or Pest?"

The study of the Salafi Call elucidates the plurality of actors who operate under the banner of political Islam. The group shows that, rather than being a united front, political Islamists differ in their strategies and tactics to reform society in an Islamic direction. Furthermore, the Salafi Call shows that Islamists are not always oppositional actors who are aiming to amass power at the expense of the state in order to impose the Islamic state from the top down. For the Salafis, the Islamic state is not necessarily the goal. Rather, purist Salafis, like the Salafi Call, seek opportunities to transform society from the ground up. Salafis believe, once society is transformed, starting with the individual, an Islamic state is inevitable. It seems that the relationship between Salafis and the state, i.e. Middle Eastern authoritarian governments, can be naturally symbiotic, in that Salafis provide the state with Islamic legitimacy and preach a non-confrontational form of Islam, while the government provides opportunities for Salafis to spread their version of Islam and allow a limited presence in parliaments to hold governments accountable to Islamic shari'a. Therefore, it seems, as the Arab Spring progresses, especially in the Egyptian context, we are not seeing the death of the Islamic project, rather a transformation of the Islamic project, which may survive if it does not engage in opposition politics and accommodates the state. This runs counter to the simplistic and untrue narrative that the conflict surrounding Mursi's July 2013 ousting is one between secularists and Islamists.

The thesis elucidated that the emergence and success of the Salafi Call boils down to its ability to seamlessly move between complex forms of organization, based on the Muslim Brotherhood's model, and simple forms of organization, based out of mosques, based on the traditional Salafi model. By adopting the Brotherhood's complex model of organization to increase its reach, the Salafi Call has shown that Salafism is not merely a

marginal movement relegated to the background, but can wield great influence on the culture and politics of Middle Eastern countries. It seems, however, the conditions for the Salafi Call's emergence and its adoption of greater forms of organization is unique to the Egyptian context and its long-term conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood. The only other examples of Salafis adopting higher levels of organization come from Gulf countries, especially Kuwait, and it seems this was facilitated mainly through government support and high levels of financial resources.<sup>225</sup> It does not seem likely Salafis in other countries will be able to achieve the level of influence possessed by the Salafi Call due to the lack of opportunities to develop unified organization and cooperation. Although the Salafi movement is well known in Tunisia, it has only received the support of a small portion of the population, plus the movement was constantly repressed by the Ben Ali regime, which never allowed it to form organizational links.<sup>226</sup> Thus the Tunisian Salafi movement will most likely remain fragmented. In Jordan, due to the state's strict control of Islamic activism and its symbiotic relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis were never given space to operate, resulting in a fragmented movement<sup>227</sup>. Although the Salafi Call shows that Salafis can reconcile their doctrine with politics and higher forms of organization and can use these modes to gain greater influence over society, its model is

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<sup>225</sup> Zoltan Pall, "Kuwaiti Salafism and its Growing Influence in the Levant," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, May 2014, accessed May 10, 2014, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/kuwaiti\\_salafists.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/kuwaiti_salafists.pdf)

<sup>226</sup> Monica Marks, "Who are Tunisia's Salafis?" *Foreign Policy*, September 28, 2012, accessed May 10, 2014, [http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/09/28/who\\_are\\_tunisia\\_s\\_salafis](http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/09/28/who_are_tunisia_s_salafis)

<sup>227</sup> Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*.



unique due to the specific environment in which it emerged, thus it is unlikely that this model will be replicated.

The model of the Salafi Call, however, highlights the resiliency of the Salafi movement and shows that it needs only limited resources to survive and even expand. Since the fundamental activities of Salafis are preaching and educating Muslims on Islam as it was practiced by the Prophet and his companions, the Salafi reformist project revolves around the mosque and preachers. Due to this simplicity, it can relatively easily embed itself into communities, thus it does not need large amounts of financial resources. The Salafi Call's strong connections on the local level across Egypt, suggests that the Salafi Call has essentially become a part of the fabric of Egyptian society. This betrays the popular argument that Salafism is a foreign Saudi import that owes its rising influence to foreign funding.

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## INTERVIEWS

Amr Ezzat, Analyst, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, interview by author, EIPR office, Garden City, Cairo. June 5, 2013, 5 pm.

Hisham Ghaffar, political Islam analyst and founder of onislam.net, interview by author, Groppi's Café, Downtown Cairo. June 6, 2013, 11:30 am.

Abd al-Fattah Madi, Professor of Comparative Politics at Alexandria University, interview by author, Alexandria University, Alexandria. June 11, 2013, 12:30 pm.

Gamal Metwali, former Nour MP in the dissolved Parliament, interview by author, Marsa Nahr al-Khalid Club, Maadi, Cairo. May 24, 2013, 5 pm.

James Sunday, Professor at American University in Cairo, interview by author, AUC, New Cairo. June 5, 2013, 12 pm.

Ahmad Zaghlul, Researcher, Author, and expert on the Salafi Call, interview by author, Groppi's Café, Downtown Cairo. June 10, 2013, 11:30 am.

Hussein Ahmad Zaky, Editor at al-Akhbar newspaper, interview by author, Groppi's Café, Downtown Cairo. May 15, 2013, 4:30 pm.

Dr. Bassam al-Zarka, Vice President of Nour Party, interview by author, Smouha, Alexandria. June 17, 2013, 10 am.

