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### Ideological Reorientation and Counterterrorism: Confronting Militant Islam in Egypt

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## Ideological Reorientation and Counterterrorism: Confronting Militant Islam in Egypt

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*During the 1990s, Egypt fought a bitter campaign against militant Islamist groups in which over a thousand people died. Since the end of the insurgency in 1997, Egypt's two fiercest Islamic terrorist groups, first the Islamic Group (Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiyya) and then Islamic Jihad, not only ceased their violent activities but also produced and published texts revising their religious beliefs on the use of violence. Based on the counterterrorism experience of Egypt, this paper defines and describes a counterterrorism strategy of ideological reorientation. We define ideological reorientation as a counterterrorism approach that seeks to change core ideological or religious beliefs of the terrorist group, thus bringing the beliefs of group members in line with societal norms. While we cannot causally attribute the groups' decisions to lay down arms to ideological reorientation versus other regime actions (like repression), the Egyptian experience is highly suggestive. First, it indicates that the ideology of religiously-based groups is not exogenous and fixed, as is often assumed, but rather endogenous and flexible. Second, the Egyptian experience suggests that ideological reorientation may be more effective at stemming militancy in the long run compared to rival approaches.*

**Keywords** Egypt, ideological reorientation, insurgency, Islamic Group, terrorism

The last three decades have witnessed a significant increase in violence based on religious ideology in what David Rapoport calls “the religious wave of modern terrorism.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, during the 1990s, the proportion of religious terrorist groups among active international terrorist organizations increased considerably. By 2004, 46 percent of terrorist groups were religiously based.<sup>2</sup> Given the appreciable rise in religious violence, what types of state strategy have been most effective for managing religious terrorism? One school of thought in counterterrorism strategy favors employing repression combined with a policy of “no-negotiation” to deny and deter

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extremists. A second school of thought advocates implementing measures that would ameliorate political, economic, and social conditions which are thought to give rise to terrorism. Neither approach, however, directly targets the critical motivating force which legitimizes violence for most terrorist groups: ideology. While most previous approaches to combating religiously-based terrorist activity assume that religious ideology is exogenous and fixed, we argue that religious beliefs are endogenous to regime interaction with the terrorist group. This analysis has powerful policy implications for countries battling terrorism. It suggests that the strategy of “never negotiating” may be counterproductive in the long run because religious terrorist groups—like members of any other group—may change their beliefs and ideology.

During the 1990s, Egypt fought a bitter campaign against militant Islamist groups in which over a thousand people died. Since the end of the insurgency in 1997, Egypt’s two fiercest Islamic terrorist groups, first the Islamic Group (*Al-Gama’at al-Islamiyya*) and then Islamic Jihad, not only ceased their violent activities but also produced and published texts revising their religious beliefs on the use of violence. Islamic Group and Jihad prisoners were subsequently released into Egyptian society and no terrorist act has been committed by an individual associated with these two groups since 1997. Based on the counterterrorism experience of Egypt during the last two decades, this paper defines and describes a counterterrorism strategy of *ideological reorientation*. We define ideological reorientation as a counterterrorism approach that seeks to change core ideological or religious beliefs of the terrorist group, thus bringing the beliefs of group members in line with societal norms. This approach focuses on the rehabilitation and reeducation of terrorists through a number of channels. State coercion in the Egyptian case preceded efforts at ideological reorientation though it may not be a necessary condition in other cases.<sup>3</sup>

These recent developments in Egypt are significant for a number of reasons. First, the Egyptian experience marks one of the earliest counterterrorism campaigns in which a major religiously-based extremist group changed its ideology. Moreover, no other religious terrorist group of this size to this date has offered a program of religious re-interpretation on the scale of the experience in Egypt.<sup>4</sup> Second, these developments challenge the prevailing views on radical religious organizations. The conventional wisdom suggests that religious militants are willing to bear higher human costs to pursue their goals than their secular counterparts, in part due to promised rewards in the afterlife.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, we might expect these religious zealots to prefer death to a change in their ideology and violence may be viewed as a sacramental act in response to a theological imperative.<sup>6</sup> Yet the experience in Egypt suggests that even previously deeply-held religious beliefs are mutable. Third, there is an emerging trend in the Muslim world to develop counterterrorism programs that focus on reeducation and rehabilitation in line with Egyptian experience. Counseling and rehabilitation programs in Yemen, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Indonesia have met varying levels of success. Saudi Arabia and Singapore have the two most developed and effective counseling and rehabilitation programs.<sup>7</sup> Since 2003, Singapore’s Religious Rehabilitation Program and Saudi Arabia’s counseling program have employed Muslim clerics to educate detainees and refute their extremist ideologies. Both programs bring the extended family and community into the rehabilitation process. While Yemen’s program has had problems with recidivism,<sup>8</sup> the programs in Saudi Arabia and Singapore have been largely successful at de-radicalizing individuals through intensive religious debate and psychological counseling.<sup>9</sup>

This paper focuses on the Egyptian case to highlight this emerging trend of ideological reorientation as a counterterrorism strategy. We will argue that the Egyptian regime used a combination of strategies to induce a change in extremist ideology regarding the use of violence. On the one hand, the Mubarak regime ruthlessly repressed Islamic extremists, arresting, torturing, and often killing large numbers of group followers. At the same time, however, the regime was engaged in a behind-the-scenes campaign to convince both the leadership as well as the rank and file of Egypt's key Islamic groups of the religious prohibition against the use of violence targeting civilians and the state. Because both repression and negotiation went on simultaneously, it is difficult, if not impossible, to discern the individual causal effect of either on Egypt's eventual ability to moderate Islamic militancy. As a result, we believe that the Egyptian experience is suggestive, but not conclusive, regarding the effectiveness of ideological reorientation in stemming Islamist violence. Given the research design challenge posed by this case, the primary goal of this paper is not to provide a single explanation for the decrease in terrorist violence but rather to define and describe an emerging counterterrorism strategy—ideological reorientation—which has potential applicability to a wide variety of cases.

### Theoretical Views

How do governments counter the threat posed by domestic militant groups? The debate about how to stop or prevent terrorism can be divided into two schools of thought: the “hard” approach, which relies on coercion, and the “soft” approach, which seeks to ameliorate the root causes of terrorism through negotiation and conciliation.<sup>10</sup> The hard approach aims to deny and deter the enemy and follows a policy of no concessions. For the deterrence aspect of the hard approach to work, the state must develop a reputation for punishing militants or raise the cost of any attempted terrorist activity (target hardening, for example, might include adding police officers to tourist sites). From a strategic perspective, arguments for the use of repression usually revolve around two concepts: 1) the notion that raising the cost of terrorism decreases the likelihood of a group to engage in it; and 2) the alternative, that rewarding violent activities (through negotiation, for example) provides incentives for the continued use of terrorism.

The soft, or conciliatory, approach, on the other hand, focuses on negotiating or bargaining with militant groups.<sup>11</sup> Peter Sederberg argues that there is a tendency to overvalue the effectiveness of repression while dismissing the efficacy of conciliatory gestures.<sup>12</sup> The logic underlying the soft approach is that terrorist activity would cease if the conditions that caused it initially were eliminated. In other words, a decrease in violence could be achieved by acceding to the terrorists' demands. The conciliatory approach also tends to focus more on the causes of terrorism such as political, social, and economic grievances, loss of identity, territory, group rights, restriction of civil liberties, etc. In fact, the Bush Administration has argued that providing political expression through democracy would stem terrorism in the long run.<sup>13</sup>

There is considerable empirical and theoretical disagreement over whether either of these approaches is effective. In seeking a reduction in terrorist violence using repression, governments may actually strengthen the group by attracting newly radicalized adherents. This contention is supported by game-theoretical models of terrorism which formally demonstrate the logic that crackdowns increase mobilization by the terrorist group.<sup>14</sup> Other support for this belief is found in the strategies of terrorists

themselves who sometimes try to provoke attacks which would in turn mobilize the population against the state. Finally, some argue that the hard approach, which features costly retaliation by the state, may also prolong or escalate the conflict.<sup>15</sup> Criticism of the soft approach, that conciliation will encourage more terrorism, forms the foundation and the logic upon which the hard approach lies. This position has been the official Israeli and U.S. approach to terrorism.<sup>16</sup>

Given the uncertainty over what type of counterterrorism approach to pursue, states facing domestic militancy are often in a bind. On the one hand, the hard approach raises the cost of engaging in terrorist activity for militants with the risk of potentially radicalizing individuals who are currently moderates. On the other hand, the soft approach rewards violent activities, potentially providing incentives for the continued use of militancy. Strikingly, neither of these approaches directly confronts the issue of how ideology, particularly religious ideology, motivates terrorist activity.<sup>17</sup> A counterterrorism approach that changes the ideological orientation of militants may enjoy more long-term success in its battle against extremists. The following sections describe Egypt's experience de-radicalizing militant Islamic groups. The perceived success of this approach has encouraged other Muslim countries to consider similar tactics.

### Regime Relations with Islamic Militant Groups

The current Egyptian regime has a long and complicated history of interaction with domestic Islamic militant groups. Both the Islamic Group (IG) and Islamic Jihad—Egypt's two primary militant groups—have their origins in the student organizations established at Egyptian universities in the 1970s from which they openly or secretly recruited. These student groups were established with the tacit approval and support of the Sadat regime to provide a counterweight to Nasserist and other groups on campus. Like other political Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, members of these militant groups believed that Egypt should be a religious state ruled according to the dictates of Islamic law. Unlike the Brotherhood, however, both the IG and Jihad called for armed confrontation against the Egyptian government for the regime's failure to strictly implement Islamic law as well as its peace agreement with the state of Israel.<sup>18</sup> While members of the IG and Jihad have sought guidance in the writings of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, they increasingly turned to the works of Sayyid Qutb, al-Mawdoudi, and Ibn Taymiyya for inspiration and ideological grounding.

Despite the shared aims and frequent cooperation between Jihad and the IG, there were notable differences between these two distinct organizations.<sup>19</sup> Operationally, Jihad worked clandestinely, whereas the IG had both a militant and social services branch. These differences also reflect their strategies for establishing an Islamic state. The smaller, more decentralized Jihad cared less about its influence in society and more about the immediate goal of eliminating the Egyptian regime. While the IG had a particularly strong presence at universities in upper Egypt, Jihad has its roots in university groups that operated in Cairo and its environs.<sup>20</sup>

A number of clandestine and more radical organizations emerged throughout the 1970s in addition to the two primary groups. Some of these smaller organizations included the Islamic Military Organization, *Takfir wal Hijra* (Excommunication and Exile), and *Al-Nagoun min al-Nar* (Salvation from Hell). United by the primary objective of removing the secular regime and establishing an Islamic state in its place,

these groups fell into broad, overlapping categories which included: Takfiri (excommunication), Jihadi, and Salafi streams. These streams also contributed to divisions along organizational, operational, and ideological lines. The group, *Takfir wal Hijra*, or Society of Muslims as they called themselves, represented the takfiri strain and declared that Egyptian society was apostate and thus punishment by death was acceptable. This neo-Kharajite group's most influential act was the kidnapping and execution of the former Minister of Religious Endowments and Azhari shaykh, Hussein Al-Dhahabi, in 1977. *Takfir wal Hijra* virtually disappeared after Egyptian security services executed the group's leader, Shukri Mustapha, and imprisoned many of his followers. However, the group's extremist ideology has had a lasting impact on individuals and other terrorist groups.

Following the assassination of Sadat in 1981, hundreds of Islamists were arrested and put on trial. While imprisoned, the leadership of these militant groups wrote monographs outlining a religious ideology that supported the use of violence against the state. One of the most important monographs is the IG's *Mithaq al-Amal al-Islami*, written in 1984 by Nageh Ibrahim and others, under the supervision of spiritual leader Omar Abdel Rahman. The *Mithaq* describes their primary goal of establishing Islam as a totality and political rule through Islam.<sup>21</sup> Denis Sullivan and Sana Abed-Kotob write that the group calls for *jihad* in order to achieve this goal and puts forth a two-step process to achieve an Islamic state, the first of which entails a gentle preaching of Islamist ideology followed by the use of violence and physical force if non-violent tactics are not successful.<sup>22</sup>

The crackdown which followed Sadat's assassination ushered in a quiet period for regime relations with militant Islamic groups.<sup>23</sup> For example, the IG did not engage in significant violent action, suggesting that the group had entered some sort of agreement with the regime to limit violence. Mustapha Kamel al-Sayyid writes:

This was probably due to a tacit understanding that local security forces would tolerate the Islamic Group as long as the group limited its activities to preaching in Upper Egypt. It is certain that senior police officers met with some leaders of the Islamic Group in order to convince them of the benefits they would get if they ceased armed operations. In return, the Islamic Group leaders asked for the release of their colleagues in prison and an end to the practice of torture. Talat Fuad Qassem, leader of the Islamic Group's military wing, explained that this policy of restraint was adopted to deter the government's attacks on the members of the organization.<sup>24</sup>

This suggests that a bargain was struck between the two sides, despite the IG's militant Islamist status. The IG would limit its preaching to Upper Egypt in exchange for some freedom of activity. During this same period, Mubarak pursued a policy of political liberalization, allowing religious critics public outlets for their opposition, including the possibility of participating in parliament and publishing opposition newspapers.<sup>25</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood enjoyed considerable freedom of political participation, most notably winning thirty-five legislative seats in the 1987 parliamentary elections. The agreement between the regime and the IG to limit the group's activity to Upper Egypt may have shored up the regime's confidence to pursue liberalization and to even allow the participation of moderate Islamist groups in the political process.

Despite the relative success of moderate Islamists in the formal political sphere, IG clashes with the security services began again soon thereafter. What led to the end of tacit cooperation between the IG and the Mubarak regime? Al-Sayyid suggests that the reason for the break in the peace is that in 1987, the IG moved its strongholds from Minya and Assyut in Upper Egypt to Cairo, particularly the Ain Shams district. "This move broke the tacit agreement with the security forces. Clashes started when the security forces tried to dislodge members of the organization from the Adam Mosque in Ain Shams, where the IG held its weekly seminar."<sup>26</sup> Gilles Kepel writes that "in the fall of 1988, at Heliopolis near Cairo, the security forces had to invade a quarter in which the IG had forcibly seized control. This signaled that the organization now had the capability to come out of its rural bastions in Upper Egypt and penetrate working class areas of the capital."<sup>27</sup> The IG also came to occupy elements of Imbaba, where rural migrants from Upper Egypt lived in squalid conditions.<sup>28</sup>

Until the late 1980s, the IG had kept a low profile and had limited its activities to Upper Egypt. By moving into areas of Cairo, however, the IG had crossed a government redline.<sup>29</sup> In the summer of 1987, the regime engaged in a massive operation to arrest Islamists, including moderate members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and in total some 3,000 people were detained. Maye Kassem writes that the official justification for the arrests was as a response to several assassination attempts by Islamists in May of 1987.<sup>30</sup>

Even at this point in the conflict, there was some suggestion that IG members and the regime engaged in a bargaining dialogue to end the violence. In an interview by Hisham Mubarak, a top IG military wing leader says that an important official from the state security forces visited him while under house arrest in October 1988. Talat Fuad Qassem said:

He (the state security forces official) told me it was necessary to stop the violence undertaken by the Islamic Group in the countryside, at Ain Shams, and in other regions. I specified our conditions: first, releasing group prisoners, including those who had not yet been sentenced; second, lifting the ban on our propagandizing and rescinding the order to close our mosques; and third, ending state torture and the taking of hostages. Of course, these conditions were not met, and the security around my house intensified. After my escape and re-arrest in 1989, I was visited by the same man who demanded again that we end the violence, especially around Ain Shams, where there had been a notable escalation in group activities against the police. I repeated our conditions and he his refusal."<sup>31</sup>

While no agreement was reached, the two sides were in a process of continued negotiation. What followed was a tit-for-tat of political violence and assassinations. In August 1990, the spokesman for the IG was killed by government agents. In October the IG claimed responsibility for assassinating the Speaker of the People's Assembly (though the target of the attack was the Minister of Interior). From 1992 to 1997, political violence reached a peak with the largest number of attacks perpetrated against foreign tourists, government officials, and secular intellectuals. Most prominent among these attacks were the assassination of secularist writer Farag Foda in 1992 and the attempted assassination of novelist Naguib Mahfouz in 1993.

The experiences of IG and Jihad members in Afghanistan would also have an impact on the nature of the insurgency in the 1990s. Throughout the mid-1980s, some Jihad and IG leaders traveled to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviets and support the efforts of the *mujahideen*. In 1986, Ayman al-Zawahiri, a leader of Jihad who would later become Al-Qaeda's number two, fled to Afghanistan to rebuild Jihad and plan the overthrow of the Egyptian government.<sup>32</sup> By the 1990s, Zawahiri had finished reorganizing Jihad and was sending militants to Egypt to carry out acts against the government.<sup>33</sup> While more than 90 percent of the attacks during the insurgency (1992–1997) were carried out by the IG, Jihad played a role in the insurgency and was involved in some of the important operations.

### Egypt's Two-Pronged Response

Faced with escalating political violence and a failure to reach a negotiated understanding with the militant Islamist groups, the government was forced to formulate a response strategy for dealing with the threat. While the initial response of the Mubarak regime was to engage in a head-on confrontation with the entire Islamist movement,<sup>34</sup> strategies associated with ideological reorientation became increasingly apparent. The evidence that we present suggests that the Mubarak regime was engaged in a multi-faceted approach to deal with domestic terrorism—simultaneously repressing such groups while at the same time maintaining a level of dialogue and discussion with militant group leadership within Egyptian prisons.

One Egyptian official has described this as a systematic approach to dealing with terrorism where repression set the stage for a religious reorientation.<sup>35</sup> We make no causal claims regarding which factor—repression or reorientation—led the Islamic Group to renounce violence since it is difficult, if not impossible, to disaggregate the impact of either repression or ideological reorientation.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, it seems that efforts at reorientation could take place outside of the repressive apparatus, though this does not appear to be what happened in the Egyptian case.

### *Responding with Force*

During the 1990s, the Mubarak regime dealt harshly with both militant Islamists and Islamist sympathizers.<sup>37</sup> Moderate Islamists and family members of suspects alike were targeted in an attempt to “silence and intimidate any and all Islamic opposition.”<sup>38</sup> Kassem writes, “The more repressive the measures implemented by the state, the more the spiral of violence escalated.”<sup>39</sup> In a particularly striking example (of what was likely a common occurrence), Kassem describes a point in the conflict when the actions of the Egyptian security forces surely spurred Islamist resistance. During the period of clashes, security forces dislodged militants from their homes and confronted them in their mosques. While the arrest of men was considered an acceptable practice, the government's strategy of rounding up and arresting female family members became a motivating factor in the escalation of violence. A militant standing trial accused of killing a police officer said, “I killed him because he came and arrested my wife and dragged her into the street in her night-clothes in front of all the men to see. I did it to defend my honor.”<sup>40</sup> This quotation suggests that government crackdowns may have produced the opposite effect of what was intended by spurring further violence.

The 1998 publication of former Brigadier General Hamdy al-Batran's exposé of regime repression in rural Egypt entitled *Yowmiyat dhabit fil aryaf* (Diary of an Officer in the Countryside) provides a compelling account of repressive methods. Although it was categorized as a work of fiction, the account is believed to be largely autobiographical. Al-Batran describes the everyday atrocities that occurred as the Mubarak regime engaged in its fight with Egypt's militants, including unjustified arrest and detention<sup>41</sup> as well as prison abuse.<sup>42</sup> In one striking passage, Batran writes about the search for a suspected terrorist:

The soldiers descended upon the streets beating and kicking anyone they ran across. The investigating officers, intelligence officials, and some of the central security officers searched the houses of the village one by one . . . During the search, the policemen threw the contents of the houses outside . . . Instructions were issued to take all of the village men between fifteen and forty-five to the police headquarters . . . The officers found the home of a suspected terrorist and an older man was dragged out. It was clear that he was severely beaten and showed no resistance . . . He was asked about the whereabouts of his son, and he answered that he didn't know. He was insulted, mocked, and then the lower part of his body was stripped and he was beaten severely on his buttocks. The officers threatened to bring his daughter to the station and do to her what they did to him. The man trembled and fell down on the ground . . . A group then went to the man's house with a bulldozer, agricultural tractors and other vehicles. The security services stormed into the house and evicted its dwellers. The major general ordered that the bulldozer pull down the house.<sup>43</sup>

Mass arrests and intentional provocations led to heavy casualties and the imprisonment of thousands of prisoners. The government also used executions to eliminate and possibly deter others. After terrorism-related clashes led to fifty deaths in the first six months of 1992, the government drew up a new anti-terrorism law which introduced the death penalty and allowed the security services to arrest a suspect for up to three days without charging him.<sup>44</sup> In 1993, thirty-eight Islamic militants were sentenced to death and between June and the end of that year, twenty-nine of them had been executed.<sup>45</sup> These tactics were coupled with torture and intimidation within the prisons. Human rights groups, like Amnesty International, the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, and Human Rights Watch, have publicized the widespread nature of torture and ill-treatment within the prisons. Prisoners were often subjected to forms of punishment and coercion which led them to suffer from permanent health problems.<sup>46</sup> Despite the intensity of repression, Islamic militant groups continued their insurgency and enjoyed considerable sympathy in many parts of the country.

### ***Government Facilitation of Ideological Reorientation***

By the mid-1990s, the Mubarak regime was involved in the violent suppression of a domestic Islamic insurgency that threatened the regime on multiple levels. The Islamic extremists targeted the state both directly (through assassinations and direct assaults on state institutions) and indirectly (through an attack on tourism that

provided a vitally important source of foreign exchange for Egypt). While the regime's repression of militant Islam has been fairly well-documented, the experience of militant group members within Egyptian prisons is less well-understood.<sup>47</sup> In this section, we argue that the Mubarak regime facilitated the ideological transformation of Islamic militant groups using a number of specific strategies. Below, we examine both the covert and overt channels by which the government aided militant groups in their reevaluation of religious ideology and ultimate decision to lay down arms. These activities took place within prisons, suggesting that repression was a precondition for such an approach in the Egyptian case.

#### *Acquisition of Books and Religious Texts*

Before their imprisonment, most militant Islamic members had only limited formal religious education<sup>48</sup>—quite ironic given their deep level of commitment to change based on religious conviction. The government helped imprisoned IG and Jihad members obtain books and other religious texts and gave them free access to materials that allowed them to expand their religious knowledge.<sup>49</sup> This included seminal Islamic texts as well as standard reference books on Islamic jurisprudence and interpretation.<sup>50</sup> While IG documents published in the 1980s were influenced by religious scholars like Ibn Taymiyya, following the reevaluation, IG chief theologian Nageh Ibrahim suggested that previous IG interpretations had suffered from situations where “the text is sound but its application is to a reality other than that to which it ought to be applied.”<sup>51</sup> For example, a member of the IG historic leadership, Ossama Hafez, commented that Ibn Taymiyya witnessed Tartar attacks on the Islamic state and that the calls to mobilize took place within a very specific historical context that is no longer applicable today.<sup>52</sup> Access to religious texts made it possible for the IG leadership to reach a new level of understanding regarding prior scholarly works. In particular, increased knowledge allowed the group members to put the teachings of Islamic ideologues in a more nuanced and historical context. According to a former IG member, the leadership changed its views after first studying simple and then more complex Islamic texts.<sup>53</sup>

#### *The Role of Intermediaries*

The regime also made use of moderate intermediaries to influence the religious views of the group. Religious scholars from both inside and outside of al-Azhar tried to convince militant group veterans to end violent confrontation. An overt example of this occurred in 1993 when three prominent Islamist scholars, including Shaykh al-Sharawi, Shaykh al-Ghazali, and Shaykh al-Nimr, tried to mediate between the IG and the government.<sup>54</sup> This attempt failed,<sup>55</sup> in part because these scholars were seen as out of touch with the concerns of rank and file IG members.<sup>56</sup>

While the 1993 delegation of state-sanctioned religious scholars represented a very overt example of the use of intermediaries, the government engaged in more quiet mediation efforts as well. According to one state official with close ties to the security apparatus, the regime used members of the Muslim Brothers as the intermediaries to change the religious ideology of IG members. According to this individual, the government cut a deal with the Brotherhood, not the IG, and that in exchange for convincing the IG of this new ideological stance, the Brotherhood would be given space to operate politically and within civil society.<sup>57</sup> Members of the IG have also publicly discussed a Mediation Council which met and was composed of scholars, religious figures, and members of the IG, like Safwat Abdel

Ghani.<sup>58</sup> In a formal address at an Egyptian prison, IG leader Karam Zohdi mentions the efforts of this Mediation Council in his discussion of the non-violence initiative.<sup>59</sup>

The state security services also facilitated the ideological turnaround of the IG and were said to play a key role in IG affairs.<sup>60</sup> The security services encouraged the ideological revisions and provided the IG leaders with any assistance they needed to further their initiative, particularly after the September 11th attacks when it was clear that these revisions contained an implicit criticism of the ideas of Al-Qaeda.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, former members of the IG in prison insist that security service representatives were not present during study and teaching sessions with their shaykhs.<sup>62</sup>

#### *Maintenance of Militant Group Organization and Leadership Structure*

While the use of intermediaries to negotiate between the state and the IG was a very active gesture, the non-actions taken by the government also had a profound effect on the decision to pursue a non-violent strategy. The most significant “non-action” was the government’s decision to allow the IG to maintain its organization and leadership structure. The members of the IG were allowed to engage in religious study together within prisons and prisoners were permitted to debate one another on issues related to Islamic interpretation.<sup>63</sup> By allowing the IG to remain cohesive within the prisons, the regime was able to use the leadership council of the group to disseminate changes to ideology once those ideological transformations had been made. This strategy paid considerable dividends for the government. By maintaining the organizational integrity of the IG, the dissemination of the new initiative to end violence was facilitated significantly.<sup>64</sup> This is closely related to the next issue of discussion, the prison tours and publication of new ideas.

#### *Prison Tour and Publication of Ideas*

The importance of maintaining the organizational unity of the IG became apparent when the regime allowed the historic leaders of the IG to tour Egypt’s prisons in order to discuss new interpretations of religious ideology. The security services allowed IG leaders like Karam Zohdi, Nageh Ibrahim, Ali al-Sharif, and Ossama Hafez to move freely among prisons to debate doctrinal points with inmates and brief their followers on new ideas.<sup>65</sup>

But leaders were not immediately successful in convincing the rank and file to accept the new ideas. The members felt shock and betrayal upon hearing about the ceasefire initiative (1997) and new ideas for the first time. Although the leadership held an almost holy status and the movement was nearly synonymous with Islam, “*al-jama’a muradif lil islam wal islam maradif lil jama’a*,”<sup>66</sup> the members could not imagine a different world view or religious program. As a result, the re-education process proceeded slowly and deliberately over the next five years from 1997 until 2002.<sup>67</sup> According to one participant, education/learning sessions in which a shaykh discussed one subject were conducted in 15-day intensive periods for six months.<sup>68</sup> No subject was off limits.<sup>69</sup>

Toward the end of this period (1997–2002), the security services also allowed two high-profile interviews to be conducted by Makram Mohammed Ahmed, editor-in-chief of the popular weekly newsmagazine *al-Mussawar*, with imprisoned IG leaders who answered questions regarding how the group could reconcile their previous tactics with this new approach. The announcement of the initiative was also followed up by the publication of a series of books outlining the new non-violent approach to

affecting change in Egyptian society. These books could not have been published and widely circulated without the authorization of the government.<sup>70</sup>

The six books listed below describe various aspects of the group's transformation:

1. The Initiative to End the Violence, Legal Perspective and Pragmatic View
2. Shedding Light on the Errors of *Jihad*
3. Advice and Enlightenment on Mending the Ideas of the Devout
4. The Impermissibility of Exaggeration in Religion and the Sinfulness of Contesting the Faith of Co-believers
5. River of Memories
6. The Riyadh Bombings: Rulings and Repercussions

While the publication of these books clearly helped the government publicize the success it enjoyed in rehabilitating the IG, it also provided a crucial opportunity to the group. Abdel Maguid has argued that the IG now offers something that groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and *Wasat* party have thus far been unable to offer, a coherent intellectual and theological position, as outlined in the six-book series.<sup>71</sup>

#### *Improvement of Prison Conditions and Releases*

Some have suggested that the government and Islamic militant groups also engaged in a form of tit-for-tat bargaining on issues like living conditions and prisoner release. While there is no hard evidence of such a bargain, it does appear that IG members enjoyed improved prison conditions after the announcement of the initiative to end violence. Karam Zohdi states in an address at the Wadi al-Natroun prison in 2002 that living conditions have improved considerably and thousands of brothers have been released from detention.<sup>72</sup> He even goes on to joke that conditions are so improved that some former prisoners are even nostalgic for prison life.<sup>73</sup>

The Egyptian press also reported the release of three of the historic leaders of the IG, including group leader Karam Zohdi. Publication of the books outlining the initiative coincided with the release of Zohdi and others, providing some circumstantial evidence that a deal was struck between the IG and the state security services.

#### *Moderating Islamic Jihad and other Organizations*

While the Islamic Group was the first militant organization to revise its doctrine, the Egyptian regime used a very similar strategy to reorient members of Jihad and other Islamic militant groups. In summer 2007, Sayyid Imam Al-Sharif (Dr. Fadl), one of Jihad's chief ideologues, published his doctrinal revisions. His views strongly reflect the ideas previously published by the IG leadership. Imprisoned members of Jihad were offered lectures on jurisprudence as well as intensive seminars on religion based on Sayyid Imam's revisions.<sup>74</sup> In August 2007, the former leader of *Al-Nagoum min al-Nar* announced his support for non-violence.<sup>75</sup> This group had been associated with the attempted murder of the former Minister of Interior as well as an assassination attempt against journalist Makram Mohammed Ahmed. The historical leadership of the IG were also reportedly explaining doctrinal revisions to members of *Takfir wal Hijra* and other Salafist groups.<sup>76</sup> Just as moderate Islamists had been used by the government as intermediaries with the IG, similarly, the IG leadership now serves as an interlocutor with still radicalized groups.

## The New Ideology of Former Extremist Groups

By 1997, the regime's history of contentious interaction with IG had reached an interesting and somewhat unexpected crossroads. Following years of repression and conflict, the IG had put forth an initiative to end violence and the group had declared an unconditional cease of all armed operations both within Egypt and abroad. By 2002, the regime had released many of the rank and file IG members, allowed the historic leadership to tour prisons in order to speak to other IG members, and permitted the publication of a series of books describing a new ideological perspective. In a sense, the regime had rehabilitated their nemesis of the 1990s and successfully negotiated a new cooperative arrangement with them. In this section, we briefly discuss the content of the new IG initiative as evident in their six-book published series and in two prominent interviews which summarized these views that were published in the widely-circulated newsmagazine, *al-Mussawar*.<sup>77</sup> We also briefly discuss the ideological revisions put forward by the primary Jihad ideologue, Sayyid Imam.

The ideological review undertaken by the groups considers a number of different areas. We have chosen to focus our comments on reinterpretation by these groups regarding two key conceptual areas: 1) *jihad* (armed struggle) and revolt against the state and 2) *takfir* (the branding of Muslims infidel) and the related concept of *hisba*. While connected, each will be dealt with in turn.

### *Jihad and Revolt Against the State*

The execution of *jihad*, particularly with regard to *jihad* against the state, was a major justification on the part of the IG for its decade-long conflict with the Egyptian government. In the group's 1984 manifesto (*Mithaq al-'Amal al-Islami*), Nageh Ibrahim and his co-authors argue that *jihad* is a struggle to change the ways of those who have abandoned the good (*al-ma'ruf*) in favor of the forbidden (*al-munkar*) and that when gentle guidance does not succeed in influencing reform to the "sound" Islamic path, the use of physical force and violence are justified.<sup>78</sup> The IG saw armed struggle as necessary for the birth of an Islamic state and was a justified reaction to a nation-state that had abandoned rule by Islamic law since the Napoleonic code was adopted in the late nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup> The IG had previously also relied on the Koranic verse that stipulates that "those who do not rule by means of what God has revealed are the nonbelievers" and argued that this verse applied to the regime in Egypt. Upon reevaluation, however, the IG came to argue that the verse only applies to the ruler who says that the rule of God is not valid and that a ruler that does not reject the rule of law may still be considered a Muslim ruler and therefore it is not permissible to revolt against him.

Safwat Abdel Ghani describes the IG's new interpretation of the concept *jihad*. While armed struggle was previously thought to be not only justified but also necessary for achieving the goals of the group, the ideological review of the group calls into question the permissibility of killing civilians under the auspices of *jihad* at all. He argues that *jihad* is a means to an end, an end which is defined as the guidance of mankind and the *da'wa* (i.e., the call to God). Abdel Ghani says that "killing is not intended per se, rather killing is considered a place where evil lurks even if it should be the murder of a nonbeliever. But Islam, when it permits the killing of a nonbeliever and other than he, permits it only out of necessity (*maslaha*)."<sup>80</sup> Killing

of civilians, hence, is prohibited, even for the purpose of punishing the state. Abdel Ghani goes on to say, "The fighting which occurred split of the *umma* (the Islamic nation) and harmed the interests of society and did not realize benefit for the people. Consequently it becomes an action without meaning and legally forbidden Since it lead to greater detriment." Underlying this discussion is an implicit cost-benefit analysis. There is a sense that *jihad* is prohibited when its costs outweigh its benefits and a sense of rationality that is not necessarily expected from the leadership of a religious extremist group. Revolt against the state, as well as any action that harms the religion and divides the *umma*, is prohibited from both a legal and practical perspective. IG leader Karam Zohdi and consultative council member Ossama Hafez further clarified the group's position on *jihad*. They argue that there is a distinction between Islamically-sanctioned *jihad* and Islamically-prohibited *jihad* and that *jihad* is only justified for the stopping and prevention of external violence, particularly to repel external aggression. The use of *jihad* as a justification for a civil war between Muslims is strictly prohibited.

### **Takfir (the Branding of Muslims Infidel) and the Related Concept of Hisba**

Part of the justification for *jihad* against the state involved a belief that the ruler and his corresponding institutions should be considered heretical or infidel. In addition to reassessing its position on *jihad*, the IG also reconsidered its stance on *takfir*, or the branding of Muslims as infidel. This concept had been used to justify the killing of government officials on the grounds that they had accepted secular law.<sup>81</sup> It was also used to call for the annulment of marriages of well-known writers and artists who had criticized the group's conception of Islam. The IG had previously used the concept of *hisba* as the legal basis for its right to file for divorce on the part of the wives of these individuals, since a Muslim woman could not be married to a non-Muslim male (and these men had lost their status as Muslims as a result of their writings). For example, militant Islamists sought a divorce of Islamic studies scholar and intellectual Nasr Abu Zeid from his wife on the grounds that a Muslim woman could not be married to an infidel.

The concept of *hisba* was also used to justify a type of vigilantism on the part of militant Islamists. Hashem Abdel Thahir recalls examples of abuses undertaken in the name of *hisba*, including the killing of Christians or the beating of young women who relinquished Islamic dress. Zohdi argues that *hisba* is not for individual people and that the *hisba* renderer needs to have studied the matter correctly and know the regulations of *hisba*. The IG leadership suggests that it is not the role of the *hisba* renderer to spy on people and hone in on their indiscretions since this type of activity conflicts with the actions and intentions of the prophet.

Makram Mohammed Ahmed asks a pointed question regarding the use of *hisba* given the existence of the state. The leadership responds by arguing that given the widespread nature of objectionable behaviors and the inability of state authorities to police all corners of Egypt, the role of the *hisba* renderer is to assist the institutions of the state in undertaking their job. Hafez argues:

The basic rule is that society has established authorities specializing in undertaking the task of *hisba* like the police authority, the supply authority, and the censorship administration; it is their job to confront all

types of crimes which all of society stands against and opposes. As far as the role of the ordinary individual in this issue is concerned, if he finds a reprehensible act underway, he must call the authorities to end this crime. If the reprehensible act seems like it is going to end before the arrival of the proper authorities . . . here the role of the *hisba* renderer is to stop the act and help the authorities apprehend the criminal.

The ideas presented in the *al-Mussawar* interviews and six-book series interview mark a significant departure from the group's previous ideology, and bring the IG more in line with non-violent Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>82</sup> In addition, the IG appears to be committed to cooperation. The lack of armed resistance to the government since the Luxor attack in 1997 is perhaps the best evidence that the IG leaders and membership have agreed to cooperate with the regime. Also, the years of effort put into writing and revising the books associated with the initiative suggest the group's commitment to cooperation. A second reversal would leave the IG with little credibility regarding either its ideology or its scholarship. This change in ideology also gave the group an opportunity to end its confrontation with the government without conceding defeat—the ideological turnaround could be justified on Islamic grounds. This was a major psychological benefit for the group since it brought an end to the acts of retribution that are common following killings in Middle Eastern societies. Finally, the increasingly violent nature of the Islamist movement abroad suggests that the IG would want to distance itself from the worldwide terrorist networks. In sum, the initiative represents the IG's decision to once again cooperate with the Mubarak regime. Although not given the status of a political party, the IG is able to operate in the public sphere. In addition, the group's core message is being publicized in major news outlets as well as through the publication of books.

Islamic Jihad also published a series of revisions regarding the use of violence in Islam. Sayyed Imam al-Sherif, the leading ideologue of Jihad and a mentor of Ayman Al-Zawahiri, produced a book in summer 2007 on the group's new ideology. The book was serialized in the Egyptian daily *al-Masry al-Youm* as well as on the official website of the Muslim Brotherhood ([www.ikhwanonline.com](http://www.ikhwanonline.com)).<sup>83</sup> Imam argues that violence against the state is both religiously prohibited and counterproductive for the Islamic *umma*. Imam refutes the arguments sanctioning attacks on government employees and officials, tourists, civilians, and non-Muslims. He also emphasizes that the declaration of *takfir* is not a political matter but rather should be based on a legal judgment. Imam lays out a series of rules limiting the use of the concept of *takfir*. In particular, he draws a distinction between a Muslim who has committed a sin and one who is an infidel. Even when it can be proven that someone is an infidel, the feasibility of punishment must be considered; in particular, if the disadvantages of punishing the individual outweigh the advantages, then punishment should not be imposed. He further emphasizes that patience and tolerance are keys to entering heaven.

Debate regarding these revisions has centered on the issue of whether the revisions offered by these groups are sincere or strategic. Diah Rashwan, a senior researcher at the Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, contends that these changes are sincere and mark a historical turning point.<sup>84</sup> Amr al-Shoubaki, also of the Ahram Center, argues, "What we are witnessing here is not merely an ideological change but a conversion from a profound conviction that change

[establishing an Islamic state] can only be achieved through armed struggle to a realization that the use of violence is forbidden. Faith, in short, cannot be forced but must be adopted.”<sup>85</sup> Whether sincere or opportunistic, these revisions have had a profound impact on the viability of a militant Islamic movement in Egypt.

## Conclusions

The phenomenon of terrorism undertaken in the name of religious fundamentalism is one that has had an impact on both the Western and Islamic worlds alike. Egypt has used repression in combination with negotiation and ideological reorientation to combat terrorism committed by religious extremist groups. Egypt's two fiercest Islamic militant groups, first the Islamic Group and then Islamic Jihad, not only ceased their violent activities but also recently produced and published doctrinal revisions regarding the impermissibility of violence. While we cannot causally attribute the groups' decisions to lay down arms and pursue non-violent politics to a particular regime action, the Egyptian experience is highly suggestive. First, it suggests that the ideology of religiously-based groups is not exogenous and fixed, as is often assumed, but rather endogenous and flexible. Second, one may infer that ideological reorientation enjoys a long-run efficacy compared to rival approaches; this is particularly apparent when contrasted with repressive strategies which both scholarly and journalistic accounts suggest may actually increase levels of religious radicalism in a country. Indeed, according to an Egyptian press report, the British Home Ministry is currently studying a proposal to enlist the aid of religious scholars from Egypt's pre-eminent state religious institution, al-Azhar, to work on ideological revision with Muslim prisoners in the UK.<sup>86</sup> It may also be possible for Western countries to call upon their local Muslim populations to participate in counseling and rehabilitation programs.

Although the Egyptian regime has been largely successful in its efforts to defuse local Islamic militancy, the regime still faces the enormous challenge of reintegrating former IG and Jihad militants, as well as individuals jailed for their alleged involvement with these groups who were not in fact group members. After spending years in jail under difficult conditions, these individuals may find it very difficult to rejoin society with few employable skills and often limited education. While the security services have provided modest stipends to some former prisoners, some newly released prisoners report that conditions were actually easier inside of prison than in society.<sup>87</sup> Failure to integrate these individuals into Egyptian society may recreate the same conditions which led them to join the IG and Jihad in the first place. Assessing the long-term failure or success of Egypt's experience in ideological reorientation as a counterterrorism tool provides a promising area of future research.

## Notes

1. David C. Rapoport, "Four Waves of Terrorism," in Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes, eds., *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of Grand Strategy* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 46–73.

2. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 86.

3. Throughout this manuscript we use the term terrorist, militant, and insurgent interchangeably. This usage is not meant to reflect any particular political opinion; rather, it simply represents a paucity of terms to express the non-governmental use of violence against the state and civilians.

4. According to some estimates, there may have been around 30,000 IG members and supporters in Egypt during the 1990s.

5. For more discussion on Religion, Violence, and Sacrifice, see essays in Mark Juergensmeyer, ed., *Violence and The Sacred in the Modern World* (London: Frank Cass, 1992); Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); David Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," *American Political Science Review* 78, no. 3 (Fall 1984); David C. Rapoport, "Messianic Sanctions for Terror," *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 2 (1988); Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Mark Sedgwick, "Al-Qaeda and the Nature of Religious Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 4 (Autumn 2004); Svensson Isak, "Fighting with Faith: Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 6 (December 2007).

6. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 88 (see note 2 above). In her article about religious civil wars, Toft succinctly states that there are three factors that make religiously motivated violence a concern for policy makers. First, the promise of martyrdom undermines strategies of deterrence and bargaining. Second, religious civil wars are more destructive. Third, "religiously motivated violence tends to fuse temporal and religious authority, which in turn can produce more authoritarian forms of government." See Monica Duffy Toft, "Getting Religion," *International Security* 31, no. 4 (2007), 100–101.

7. Rohan Gunaratna and Mohamed bin Ali, "Countering the Ideology of Jama'a Islamiyya: A Point by Point Approach," *The Icfai Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 1, 65–84, April 2007, accessed [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=992113](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=992113); Mohammed Hanif Bin Hassan, "Key Considerations in Counterideological Work against Terrorist Ideology," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 6 (2006); Mohammed Hanif Bin Hassan and Kenneth George Pereire, "An Ideological Response to Countering Terrorism—The Singapore Perspective," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 17, no. 4, 458–477 (December 2006). For an interesting article on leftist, secular terrorism in the Italian context, see Franco Ferracuti, "Ideology and Repentance: Terrorism in Italy," in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1990). This article is not discussed because it deals with secular ideological terrorists who repent and are released into society. This article focuses on the reinterpretation (and subsequent publication) of texts, which are central to the terrorist group's operational and ideological program. This type of reinterpretation and reexamination of text would never occur in a secular ideological terrorist group.

8. Gregory Johnsen, "Terrorism in Rehab," *World View Magazine On-line* 17, no. 3, Summer, <http://www.worldviewmagazine.com/issues/article.cfm?id=139&issue=34>; see also, Simon Montlake, "U.S. Tries Rehab for Religious Extremists," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 9, 2007, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1009/p01s04-woap.html?page=1>

9. As Rohan Gunaratna claims, "Deprogramming is not 100-percent successful. Among suspects that you rehabilitate, some will go back (to militancy). But it's the only intelligent thing to do." Quote from Simon Montlake, "U.S. Tries Rehab for Religious Extremists," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 9, 2007, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1009/p01s04-woap.html?page=1>. More details about Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group can be found on their website, <http://www.rrg.sg/main.asp>. For more on the Saudi program see Christopher Boucek, "Extremist Reeducation and Rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 16, August 16, 2007, [http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/TM\\_005\\_016.pdf](http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/TM_005_016.pdf) and "Jailing Jihadis: Saudi Arabia's Special Terrorist Prisons," *Terrorism Monitor* 6, no. 2 (January 24, 2008) <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373926>

10. This broad distinction is for illustrative purposes. G. Miller points out that state policy lies along a continuum. See Gregory Miller, "Confronting Terrorisms: Group Motivation and Successful State Policies," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2007); Paul Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2001).

11. Peter Sederberg, "Conciliation as Counter-Terrorist Strategy," *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 3 (1995), 295–312; Harvey Lapan and Todd Sandler, "To Bargain or not to Bargain: That is the Question," *American Economic Review* 87, no. 2 (1988).

12. Sederberg, "Conciliation as Counter-Terrorist Strategy" (see note 11 above), 295.

13. Thomas Carothers discusses the tension in the Bush administration between the neo-Reaganites who believe democracy promotion is a solution to terrorism and those who take a realist approach. See Thomas Carothers, "Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2003. There is a large academic literature on the relationship between democracy and terrorism. For an article that sparked this debate, see William Eubank and Leonard Weinberg, "Does Democracy Encourage Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1994).

14. Rui de Figueiredo and Barry Weingast, "Vicious Cycles: Endogenous Political Extremism and Political Violence." Working Paper, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California Berkeley (2001).

15. Marwan Khawaja, "Repression and Popular Collective Action: Evidence from the West Bank," *Sociological Forum* 8, no. 1 (1993).

16. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (see note 10 above), 35.

17. There is a sizable literature on religion, violence, and terrorism. One important collection is *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World* edited by Mark Juergensmeyer and mentioned above; see also David C. Rapoport, ed., *Inside Terrorism Organizations* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), which contains a number of articles that deal with religious motivations for terrorism. R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). In a critique of Robert Pape's argument that it's not religion but the response to foreign occupation that best explains suicide bombing, Assaf Moghadam points to the importance of religion in the ideology and mission of Al-Qaeda, see "Suicide Terrorism, Occupation and Terrorism: A Critique of Dying to Win," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 8 (2006), 717.

18. It has been suggested that the militant approach of IG and Jihad members stems from a generational gap separating these groups from their ideological parent organization, the Brotherhood.

19. In addition to the important distinction between the Islamic Group and Islamic Jihad, it is also notable that these groups have both expatriate and local leadership. The focus of this paper will be primarily on the local leadership of the two groups.

20. The IG and Jihad joined forces in 1981 prior to the assassination of President Anwar Al-Sadat but split again in 1984 as a result of a dispute over who should lead the joint organization.

21. Denis Sullivan and Sana Abed-Kotob, *Islam in Contemporary Egypt: Civil Society vs. the State* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 84.

22. *Ibid.*, 85.

23. Mustapha Kamel al-Sayyid, *The Other Face of the Islamist Movement*. Working Paper, Democracy and Rule of Law Project (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 14.

24. *Ibid.*, 14.

25. John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

26. Al-Sayyid, *The Other Face of the Islamist Movement* (see note 23 above), 14.

27. Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 282.

28. Kepel, *Trail*, and Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Weaver writes that eventually the IG came to create "a state within a state" within areas like Imbaba, Mary Anne Weaver, *A Portrait of Egypt: A Journey Through the World of Militant Islam* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 147–148.

29. See Jeffrey Ian Ross, "Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism: Towards a Causal Model," *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 3 (1993). Ross argues that urban areas are more likely to suffer from terrorist violence than rural areas, though this does not seem to be the case with the IG in Egypt. A number of factors contribute to this fact. Given the authoritarian nature of the regime, militant activities in the capital city were seen as considerably more threatening to the regime than violence in the "periphery" (i.e., upper Egypt). In addition, the rural areas provided places for fugitives to hide, mostly sugarcane fields, whereas urban areas tended to be infiltrated to a greater degree with intelligence officers. In addition, grievances tended to be a more salient feature of life in upper Egypt than in

the urban areas, a factor discussed by Mamoun Fandy in "Egypt's Islamic Group: Regional Revenge?" *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 4 (1994), 607–625.

30. Maye Kassem, *Egyptian Politics: The Dynamics of Authoritarian Rule* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 151.

31. This quotation appeared in an interview by Hisham Mubarak, which appeared in the *Middle East Report*.

32. Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 94.

33. Gerges, *The Far Enemy* (see note 32 above), 95.

34. Kepel, *Trail* (see note 27 above), 294.

35. Author interview, Cairo, Egypt, June 4, 2005.

36. In "Lions tamed? An inquiry into the causes of de-radicalization of armed Islamist movements: The case of the Egyptian Islamic Group," *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 4 (Autumn 2007) Omar Ashour faces a similar dilemma. Ashour argues that "four independent variables might have led to the ideological transformation" observed by the IG including state repression, selective inducements, interaction with the "other," and leadership. Ashour does not consider ideological reorientation as an independent variable despite the fact that the historical leadership of the IG contends that this is their primary motivation for laying down arms. In fact, Islamic Group members sentenced to death who had little material incentive to change their ideological orientation also supported the revisions. See Makram Mohammed Ahmed, "Makram Mohammed Ahmed interviews the historic leadership of al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya inside the Scorpion prison," *al-Mussawar*, June 21, 2002.

37. Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, *Islam in Contemporary Egypt* (see note 21 above), 89.

38. Esposito and Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (see note 25 above), 184.

39. Kassem, *Egyptian Politics* (see note 30 above), 155.

40. *Ibid.*, 153.

41. Hamdy al-Batran, *Yomiyat dhabit fi al-Aryaf (Diary of an Officer in the Countryside)* (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1998), 23.

42. Batran (see note 41 above), 57–58.

43. Author's translation, excerpted from Batran (see note 41 above), 189–196.

44. Ami Ayalon, "Egypt" in *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol. 16, 1992 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 369.

45. Ami Ayalon, "Egypt" in *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol. 17, 1993 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 289.

46. Author interview with former IG member who spoke about his prison conditions, Cairo, Egypt, December 7, 2007.

47. It is said that Mubarak also sent clerics into the jails in the 1980s. However, there was not enough reliable information about this program to include in a discussion.

48. See Wahid Abdel Maguid, "Egypt's *Gama'ah Islamiyah*: The Turnabout and its Ramifications," Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Issue 1, Nov. 2003 <http://acpss.ahram.org.eg/eng/ahram/2004/7/5/EGYP16.HTM> and Bin Hassan, "Ideological Considerations." This is not to say that militant group members were not well educated; many were, in fact, engineering school graduates. They did not, however, tend to have extensive, formal religious education. For example, Mohammed Farag, who wrote the very influential *al-Farida al-Gha'iba* (The Neglected Obligation), was an electrician but experts claim his command of sources and argument was very sophisticated. One notable exception is Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman, the "blind cleric," who served as the IG's leading ideologue in the 1980s. Rahman taught at the Asyut branch of al-Azhar University.

49. Al-Sayyid, *The Other Face of the Islamist Movement* (see note 23 above).

50. See "Makram Mohammed Ahmed Interviews the Historic Leadership of the Islamic Group inside Scorpion Prison," *al-Mussawar* (June 21, 2002, in Arabic).

51. Makram Mohammed Ahmed, June 21 2002; the works of Ibn Taymiyya are often cited as a justification for calls to armed struggle by Islamic militant groups.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Author interview with former IG member, Cairo, Egypt, December 7, 2007.

54. Al-Sayyid, *The Other Face of the Islamist Movement* (see note 23 above), 15. Sharawi appears to have been a key mediator prior to this attempt as well. In an interview, Karam Zohdy states that attempts to find a "correct Islamic legal solution" to the group's situation

began in the 1980s. See “Makram Mohammed Ahmed writes from the Wadi Al-Natroun Penitentiary: The Rank and File has a Discussion with their Leadership in the Courtyard of the Penitentiary,” *al-Mussawar* (June 28 2002).

55. Raymond William Baker, *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

56. Author interview with former IG member, Cairo, Egypt, December 7, 2007.

57. Author interview, Cairo, Egypt, June 4, 2005.

58. Hisham Mubarak, “What does the Gama’a Islamiyya Want?” *Middle East Report* (January-March 1996).

59. Makram Mohammed Ahmed (see notes 36 and 50 above), June 28, 2002.

60. Abdel Maguid 2003, *Egypt’s Gama’ah Islamiyah* (see note 48 above).

61. *Ibid.*

62. Author interview with former IG member, Cairo, Egypt, December 10, 2007.

63. Al-Sayyid, *The Other Face of the Islamist Movement* (see note 23 above).

64. The role of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman is not discussed because the authors could not find enough conclusive evidence to make claims about his impact on the historical leadership and the rank and file.

65. Abdel Maguid, *Egypt’s Gama’ah Islamiyah* (see note 48 above).

66. Ali Abdel Hamid Bakr al-Fiqi, “Min’unf ila muraja’a dirasa hala al-jama’a islamiyya fi misr,” (Cairo: International Center for Future Studies, 2007), 27. This publication can also be found at <http://www.icfsthinktank.org/Arabic/Publications/Default.aspx?lang=ar&pubID=4&from=1%2f1%2f2006&to=1%2f1%2f2008&id=153> (online since 2/20/2007).

67. *Ibid.*

68. Interview with former IG member, Cairo, Egypt, Dec 11, 2007.

69. Ali Abdel Hamid Bakr (see note 66 above), 27.

70. None of these books have been translated into English, though they are widely available and read in Egypt.

71. Abdel Maguid, *Egypt’s Gama’ah Islamiyah* (see note 48 above).

72. Makram Mohammed Ahmed, *The Rank and File has a Discussion, June 28, 2002.*

73. Makram Mohammed Ahmed, *The Rank and File has a Discussion, June 28, 2002.*

74. *al-Masry al-Youm*, September 17, 2007.

75. *al-Masry al-Youm*, August 7, 2007.

76. *al-Masry al-Youm*, Oct 17, 2007.

77. Unless otherwise mentioned, description and analysis of the new IG ideology are based on the author’s translation of the book series and the two-part *al-Mussawar* interview.

78. Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, *Islam in Contemporary Egypt* (see note 21 above).

79. Al-Sayyid, *The Other Face of the Islamist Movement* (see note 23 above).

80. The concept of *maslaha*, however, is not further elaborated.

81. Al-Sayyid, *The Other Face of the Islamist Movement* (see note 23 above).

82. Radical Islamists outside of Egypt, particularly those associated with Al-Qaeda, have called into question the sincerity of the turnaround. They say that the government co-opted the group’s leaders during their twenty plus years in prison and are now using the group as a tool of the government. On the other side of the ideological divide, secular intellectuals are skeptical of the initiative for other reasons; some have argued that the non-violence initiative is little more than a “cloak” to secure early release for Gama’a leadership and to hide the planning of future attacks. A number of Egyptian political commentators, however, view the initiative as being largely genuine (al-Sayyid 2003, Abdel Maguid 2003). For a summary of Egyptian Islamists’ relationship to Al-Qaeda, see Sherifa Zuhur, *Egypt: Security, Political, and Islamist Challenges* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 75–77.

83. For a summary of the Jihad revisions in English, see Diaa Rashwan, “Egypt’s Contribute Commander” in *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2008.

84. Interview with author, Cairo, Egypt, December 10, 2007; see also Diaa Rashwan, in *al-Masry Al-Youm*, November 26, 2007, <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=84244>

85. Quoted in Jailan Halawi, “Revisions and reintegration,” January 3–9, 2008, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/print/2008/878/eg10.htm>

86. *al-Masry Al-Youm*, July 11, 2007.

87. *Egypt Today*, October 2007.