



The Impact Of Radical Islamic Organizations On National Security And Stability In Egypt (Late 20th – Early 21st Century)

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Abstract: The article analyzes the impact of radical Islamic organizations on national security and stability in Egypt in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It also reveals the impact of religious extremism and terrorism on socio-political processes and their historical roots. In particular, the formation of the Muslim Brotherhood, its involvement in political life, the armed actions of organizations such as Islamic Jihad and Al-Jamaa al-Islamiya, which were active in the 80s and 90s of the 20th century, and the threats to the security of the state and society are shown. The complex situation in the country's fight against terrorism is described through the activities of the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis and Ajnad Misr groups that emerged after the Arab Spring.

Keywords: Religious extremism, terrorism, radical Islam, Muslim Brotherhood, national security, Arab Spring.

Introduction: When considering terrorist organizations and radical religious groups and movements operating in the Middle East, the significance of the threats they pose is not only related to the fate of the countries of the region, but also to the security and stability of the entire world in a broader sense. From this point of view, a scientific and critical study of the history and orientations of any fanatical organizations that threaten the national security and stability of the countries of the Middle East is of great theoretical and practical importance in understanding the nature and true nature of any threats.

Religious extremism and terrorism have been one of the oldest threats to the national security of the countries of the Middle East region, and it has not yet been "defeated." According to the RAND Corporation

research center in the US, 15,731 terrorist attacks were recorded in the Middle East region between 1990 and 2010, while the 2018 Global Terrorism Index (reporting period covers 2002-2017) recognized the Middle East and North Africa region as the region most affected by terrorism compared to other parts of the world. This statistic alone shows how serious the situation in the region is.

Sh. Yovkachev divides the modern Islamic movement in Egypt into 3 main streams:

1. Official Islam - in a spiritual form, serving the state. It is strongly bureaucratized and, due to the circumstances, is an integral part of the state apparatus;
2. Sufism - supported by followers of various orders (concepts of Sufism);
3. Radical (politicized) Islam - the most serious opponent of the Egyptian government, this stream includes the Muslim Brotherhood organization, illegal organizations and groups, fundamentalist societies and independent imams of private mosques who do not serve the state. In turn, radical Islamic streams are also divided into 3 according to the type and direction of their activities:
 1. "Muslim Brotherhood" association;
 2. Jihad currents whose main representatives are "Islamic Jihad", "Al-Jihad" and "Al-Jamaa al-Islamiya" organizations;
 3. Supporters of the Takfir direction, which promotes separation from society and uzlat, such as the "At-Takfir wal-Hijra" organization.
1. "Muslim Brothers" Association ("Muassasat al-Ikhwan al Muslimin"). The views and practices of most of the religious extremist and terrorist organizations in the Middle East region are partially based on the methods developed by the Muslim Brotherhood movement, which originated in Egypt, and its ideas served as a "chain" for other religious and political organizations.

The Muslim Brotherhood is one of the oldest and most prestigious Sunni organizations. It was founded in 1928 in the Egyptian city of Ismailia by Hassan al-Banna, and quickly gained popularity with its popular and understandable slogans condemning the British invaders and calling for Islamic justice. Hassan al-Banna proposed a program that the Muslim Brotherhood developed and considered the most acceptable way to rebuild not only Egypt, but the entire Muslim world.

Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood became the first mass organization in the 20th century to set itself the goal of building a state and society based on Islamic principles. Until 1938, the Muslim Brotherhood denied its political activities in society. Under the influence of extremist ideas and claims, the organization's style gradually changed from propaganda to violent action, and the main emphasis was placed on terrorism. From this period, it was observed that the "Muslim Brotherhood" organization has become a structure that widely uses the method of terror in political life. After that, the "Muslim Brothers" operate under the motto "Allah is our goal, the Prophet is our leader, the Qur'an is our law, Jihad is our great dream", and they recognize the main goal of building a single "Great Islamic State" of Muslims with its center in Egypt.

As a result of the revolution that took place in Egypt on July 23, 1952, the monarchy in the country fell and state power passed to the Egyptian Revolutionary Council. Supporters of extremist structures initially welcomed the July Revolution in the country, because in their opinion, the tyrannical regime that opposed Islam had been destroyed. However, after they realized that Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970), who came to power, intended to establish a secular state, not an "Islamic state", they carried out a series of terrorist acts and demanded a referendum on the establishment of an Islamic state in Egypt. On October 26, 1954, the conflict between the Egyptian government and the Muslim Brotherhood reached its peak. The leader of the Egyptian Revolutionary Council, Gamal Abdel Nasser, was assassinated by the Muslim Brotherhood. After that, the government started a brutal fight against the organization. Three thousand members of the union were arrested, six of them were executed. Among those arrested was Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), who was accused of conspiracy against the government.

One of the most prominent representatives of the organization, Sayyid Qutb, became the founder of the idea of modern radical Islam. In the 1960s and 1970s, his ideas spread beyond Egypt and began to serve as the guiding principles of many radical Islamic organizations (the Egyptian "Al-Jihad" and "Al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya" and international organizations such as "Al-Qaeda" and "Hizb al-Tahrir").

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood split into moderate and ultra-radical factions. It was during

this period that the organization's political activities expanded. This was due to President Anwar Sadat's (1970-1981) policy of conciliation towards fanatical movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood in the fight against "left" forces in the country. As a result, the sharp politicization of Islam led to the further rise of new forms of religious and political organizations that took "religious ideas" as their banner.

In the 1990s, unlike radical religious organizations, the organization gradually strengthened its position in various strata of Egyptian society. The organization maintained a strong position not only in cities, but also in remote rural areas.

In the first decade of the 21st century, against the background of the democratization of the political systems of the Middle East countries under pressure from external forces (especially the United States), the Muslim Brotherhood's opportunities to interfere in Egyptian politics increased. In the wake of the democratic processes in the region, the Muslim Brotherhood came out with its own program called the Reform Initiative. The emergence of this "initiative" in March 2004 coincided with the active discussion of the American "Greater Middle East" project. This project envisaged the implementation of democratic reforms in the countries of the region, including Egypt.

The Muslim Brotherhood's proposals for reforms have had a wide resonance in Egypt. Demonstrations have taken place across the country, demanding that the government initiate political and constitutional reforms. In the summer of 2004, the Muslim Brotherhood led a wave of popular uprisings in Egypt. For the first time since the 1950s, Muslim Brotherhood activists took to the streets. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood once again demonstrated its ability to influence and even control the mood of the Egyptian streets.

The Muslim Brotherhood's next step in the political arena was to prepare² for and participate in the parliamentary elections to be held in December 2005. Despite all the obstacles, supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, who ran as independent candidates in the December 2005 parliamentary elections, won 88 (about 20%) seats, forming the largest opposition bloc in parliament. Other officially operating political parties managed to win only 14 seats in parliament.

In 2011, the "Egyptian Spring" and the overthrow of the

Hosni Mubarak regime led to the recognition of the "Muslim Brotherhood" movement as legitimate. From November 28, 2011 to January 11, 2012, Egyptian parliamentary elections were held, in which the "Muslim Brotherhood" formed the "Freedom and Justice Party" on February 15, 2011 (officially announced on April 30, 2011). According to the election results, the "Freedom and Justice Party" won 235 of the 498 seats in parliament.

In the 2012 presidential elections, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi won with 51.73% of the vote. Mohamed Morsi formed his government on June 30, 2012. Since December 2012, the Egyptian people have been protesting against Morsi's policies. During his time, Egypt has faced serious economic problems: the country's foreign exchange reserves and tourism revenues have halved, public debt has risen to 90% of GDP, total external debt has grown to \$49 billion, and unemployment has reached 13.5% (for reference, unemployment was around 8% during Mubarak's time). The government's agreements with the International Monetary Fund to obtain a stabilization loan and all its attempts to balance the budget have failed.

On June 30, 2013, Mohamed Morsi was set to celebrate his first anniversary as president. However, on that day, millions of people in Cairo, Alexandria, and other cities demanded Morsi's resignation and attacked local Brotherhood offices. On July 1, Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, on behalf of the Egyptian military leadership, demanded that President Morsi restore order in the country within 48 hours. When President Morsi failed to comply with this demand, the army seized power on July 3 and removed representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood from power.

2. "Islamic Jihad", "Al-Jihad" and "Al-Jamaa al-Islamiya". In the 1980s, the "Forgotten Duty" and other books by the leader of the "Islamic Jihad" movement, Muhammad Abdul Salam Al-Farraj, served as the main ideological guide for many Egyptian extremists. Al-Farraj, in particular, believed that "force is the main way to the rebirth of Islam."

The most prominent extremist organizations in Egypt in the 1990s were Islamic Jihad and Al-Jamaa al-Islamiya. Despite their common views, these organizations disbanded in 1994. Al-Jamaa al-Islamiya, which was formed in the late 1970s, began to actively manifest

itself in 1987. According to law enforcement agencies, in the mid-1990s, Al-Jamaa had 15-20 thousand members. Its main area of activity was the southern provinces of Egypt, Al-Mina, Assiut, and Qena. The organization operated almost openly in small villages and had strong ties with extremists in Afghanistan, Bahrain, Denmark, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Turkey, the United States, and Yemen. The organization's program was to establish an Islamic state in Egypt. In 1996, Al-Jamaa issued a manifesto to Muslims around the world, vowing to attack US embassies and consulates around the world. Al-Jamaa's cleric, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, issued a fatwa to kill Hosni Mubarak. In 1992, Sheikh Omar issued another fatwa, banning Egyptian extremists from running for parliament. Since 1990, Sheikh Omar has lived in the United States, and in 1995 was sentenced to life in prison for "calling for jihad against the American government" and carrying out a series of bombings and assassinations in the United States. He is considered one of the organizers of the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City.

The militants carried out armed attacks on police stations, civil servants, military personnel, security personnel, Copts, foreign tourists, and anyone who criticized extremists. Al-Jamaa militants carried out most of the terrorist acts committed in Egypt in the 1990s. Along with its clandestine activities, the organization also carried out social activities and openly preached in mosques. This organization is the only organization that openly declared the Copts its enemy. After the failed assassination attempt on Hosni Mubarak in 1995, the organization was seriously damaged after targeted measures were taken by the security services. The organization split into two factions, each controlled by centers abroad. In March 1999, Al-Jamaa al-Islamiya announced that it had ceased carrying out armed terrorist acts both in Egypt and outside of Egypt. This step was taken at the request of six imprisoned leaders. This decision was a logical continuation of the "undeclared reconciliation" that took place in Egypt after several terrorist attacks involving Islamic militants. At the same time, there is reason to believe that the organization has not completely abandoned the use of force. It may have changed its tactics in order to regroup and gather strength. By making a reconciliation with the government, the militants hoped to release their comrades from prison, allow refugees abroad to return

to their homeland and work among the civilian population.

The roots of the Islamic Jihad organization date back to the 1970s. The organization's members were mainly engaged in the propaganda of "holy war", which emphasized the need to overthrow the existing state and political system in Egypt. There are reports that the organization changed its name to "Leader of Victory". According to some reports, in late 1999, a former member of "Al-Jihad" lawyer Mamdouh Ismail announced his desire to create a new extremist group - "Hizb al-Sharia" - and to politically legitimize Islamic views. In the early 1990s, the "Al-Jihad" organization split into small groups, both radical and moderate, and ceased to exist as a whole. Previously, "Al-Jihad" was not a single organization, but consisted of several groups.

Terrorist organizations operating in Egypt since the Arab Spring. There are two main terrorist groups operating in Egypt since the Arab Spring: Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) and Ajnad Misr. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis is a Sinai-based group that was renamed "Wilayat Sinai" in 2014 after its leader formally pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Although ABM is most active in Sinai, it has demonstrated the ability to carry out attacks in Egypt, including in Cairo. Ajnad Misr is a Cairo-based terrorist group that has claimed responsibility for a series of attacks in central Cairo, primarily targeting government and security targets (U.S. Department of State, 2015).

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis. The group has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks against Israeli interests, including the July 2012 attack on the Sinai pipeline that exports gas to Israel and the August 2012 rocket attack on the southern Israeli city of Eilat. In October 2013, the group claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing targeting the South Sinai Security Directorate in the city of El-Tor, killing three people and injuring more than 45. In January 2014, the group shot down an Egyptian military helicopter, killing five soldiers on board; and claimed responsibility for four car bomb and grenade attacks in Cairo, killing six people and injuring more than 70, most of them civilians.

The ISIL has also carried out attacks on government officials: in September 2013, the Egyptian Minister of Interior was assassinated, and in January 2014, the head of the Interior Minister's technical department was assassinated. In February 2014, the ISIL claimed

responsibility for a tour bus bombing in the Sinai Peninsula, killing an Egyptian driver and three South Korean tourists, their first attack on foreign tourists.

In October 2014, the IDF beheaded four men it claimed were spies for Israel. In October, the IDF also claimed to have attacked a security checkpoint, killing more than 26 Egyptian soldiers and wounding 26 others, including civilians.

It is estimated that the IDF has several hundred fighters in Sinai and branches in the Nile Valley. Although IDF operations are based outside the Sinai Peninsula, the group's operations extend to Cairo and the Egyptian Nile Valley and Gaza borders. Although the source of IDF funding is largely unknown, there are indications that IDF may receive funding from external entities (US State Department, 2015).

"Ajnad Misr". The only terrorist group operating in the Greater Cairo area. On 23 January 2014, Ajnad Misr announced its existence via Twitter. Since then, Ajnad Misr has been the most active terrorist group operating in Egypt outside the Sinai Peninsula.

Ajnad Misr differs from other terrorist groups operating in Egypt in that it does not fully demand the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. The group also laments the failure to achieve the "goals of the revolution," using the language of the January 25, 2011 revolution. In addition, unlike some other jihadist groups, Ajnad Misr is sympathetic to civilians, even those who oppose the group. Ajnad Misr claims to direct its hostility primarily at state actors. The group targets individuals it views as criminals; this includes Brigadier General Ahmed Zaki, who was killed in an attack on April 23, 2014, and whom the terrorist group accuses of detaining and torturing Egyptian youth.

On 2 April 2014, Ajnad Misr carried out a series of bombings at Cairo University, killing one policeman and wounding others. Ajnad Misr had planned a series of bombings outside the Ittihadiya Palace in Heliopolis to mark the anniversary of the mass protests demanding Morsi's ouster. An Interior Ministry bomb disposal expert was killed while trying to defuse the explosive device, and other personnel were injured. An hour later, a second bomb exploded, wounding a policeman. A third bomb disposal expert was killed while trying to defuse the explosive device. Ajnad Misr announced the attacks on social media and later claimed to have defused some

of the devices to reduce civilian casualties.

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