

## **Analysis to the Hegemony of Extremists after Arab Spring: Case Study of the Extreme-Islamism in Egypt**

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### **Abstract**

*The geopolitical importance of Egypt makes this research vital to examine the future of Egypt and the MENA region after the Arab-Spring. The author of this paper uses qualitative research method by deploying comparative interdisciplinary-historical research approach to analyze the start and the evolution of extreme Islamist groups in Egypt. This case study uses moral disengagement theory (Bandura, 1996, 1999) to shed light on the ideological evolution of extremism in Egypt. When data is triangulated in this qualitative research, literature and data showed that the extreme-Islamism ideology is a distortion to Islam and; therefore, it became apparent how extremists falsely justify their violence.*

**Keywords:** Muslim Brotherhood, Extremism, Terrorism, Islamists, Middle East, Moral Disengagement

### ***Introduction and Literature Review***

#### **Preliminary: The Scope of this Study**

This study is not another anti-Islam or anti-Muslims propaganda; especially, that the author himself is a moderate Muslim; however, he is not an Islamist. In conducting this qualitative research, I intend to use various lenses to understand the rise and the evolution of the hegemony of extremist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups in Egypt. Therefore, unless I intend to show an important nexus between the Egyptian groups and their sister-groups in other countries, I will intentionally exclude analyzing extreme Islamism of non-Egyptian origins. The goal of this case study is to assist in understanding extreme-Islamism adverse to the mainstream Islam; therefore, understanding the concept here should help in preventing similar groups from threatening international peace and it should assist in preventing them from recruiting moderate Muslims to convert them into extremism.

The new waves of Arab Spring swept the Arab World to tumble the long-lived dictators pursuing freedom and social equality (Al-Aswany, 2011); Egypt was among these countries. This qualitative study is within the domain of International Terrorism and international extremism studies; despite the fact that I have focused on several Egyptian extreme groups. It might appear that I have used many prominent clerics from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood; however, understanding the evolution of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood will contribute to understanding the expansion of the Egyptian and international Islamic extremism and Islamic international terrorism. Furthermore, many of the ideologists and clerics of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood have been inspiring and inciting extreme Islamism as I will be discussing later in this paper. The purpose of using the Moral Disengagement theory is to explain how the leaders of extreme Islamic groups became the dominant political power in Egypt. Moreover, to how did these groups impacted extremism growth in Egypt. In answering the research question, I conducted historical analysis to show how the extreme Islamism evolved to become a dominant political power resources in Egypt.

Furthermore, based on the collected data, I examined the reasons that influenced the public opinion to tolerate these extremists' emergence as a dominant power. This study is not to criticize Islam or Muslims. Therefore, to counter Islamic extremism, one has to understand Islam itself. Indeed, Sharia-law denounces act of terrorism.

The New York Daily News on November 21, 2012 showed a photo of a parade of six Palestinians corps dragged in the streets of Gaza by Hamas militants.

This brutality and graphic way of exhibiting the corps was the result of a savage street-execution style by shooting these six Palestinians for the allegation of spying for Israel with no trial (Kalman & Seimaszko, 2012); indeed, Hamas misleadingly justifies this murder under the name of Islam. However, no support from the Islamic Sharia or acts of the prominent historical Islamic figures justifies this vicious behavior. For example, the victorious Saladin forgave the prisoners of war upon recapturing Jerusalem from the Crusaders; moreover, he and the wealthy Muslims paid the ransom of the captured poor crusaders so they can return to their families (Curry, 2002). The action of Hamas and other groups is not justified under any moral stand, including Sharia. Their self-sanctioning disengagement mechanism and the moral disengagement are the two elements enable to, falsely, misinterpret the Sharia to justify their crimes.

Many courts and legal systems incorporated counter-international terrorism in their legal systems because of the increase of the extreme ideologies and because of the harm that these ideologies inflict beyond its countries of origins. For example, as Nino (2007) stated that the Italian Supreme Court, the Court of Cassation, stated “purpose of international terrorism must be understood as ‘violence aimed at undermining the principles of the Italian Constitution and establishing a system of terror against people, international states and (organizations)’” (p. 148). Researchers and legal analysts in homeland security in the United States and elsewhere should not only focus on the homegrown terrorism, but also on the international terrorism regardless of its origin.

Therefore, studying the rise of radical Islamists to power in Egypt sheds light on the embark and the growth of the Islamic extremism; additionally, it should help in building counter-measures to prevent similar organizations from recruiting new members who enter into these organizations under the false claims of religion. Many of these organizations use Islamic beliefs in a combination with the indigenous population socioeconomic disadvantage to invoke their extremist ideology on targeted Muslim population. The father of the contemporary Islamic extremism is one of the Brotherhood ideologists, Sayyed Qutb, who was not only one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, but also he became the Godfather of the Al-Qaeda and other similar extremists, even after his execution in 1966. Qutb described the contemporary societies as reverting to the age of *al-Jahyyliah* (pagan ignorance). Therefore, he called his follower to abandon the society (Calvert, 2009; Wright, 2008); moreover, Qutb called his follower to revolt on the rulers who invoke and foster such societies.

### **The Importance of Egypt in the Region:**

Osman (2010) Suggests that Egypt is highly regarded by all western civilizations, not only because of its strategic location, but also, because of its ancient Egyptian civilization; Therefore, Egypt was always an important regional trade and cultural hub from the time of the Pharaohs and the Greeks until now. Therefore, after the destruction of the long-lived Pharaoh dynasties, the Greek and the Romans conquered Egypt subsequently. Finally, Egypt became part of the new Islamic empire in the seventh century A.D. The Greeks, and the Roman took advantage of the strategic location of Egypt; this strategic location continued to maintain its importance in the new Islamic Empire (Osman, 2010). Therefore, all the new Caliphates and Islamic kingdoms, such as the Fatimid’s, the Ayyubids, the Mamelukes, and the Ottomans used Egypt either as a defensive base to defend other places in the new Islamic Empire or a staging point to expand to new territories.

After the new Islamic empire had expanded beyond the Arab Peninsula into North Africa, the Arabization and Islamization of Egypt started concurrently (Mansfield, 2003). Thereafter, Egypt played a significant role in protecting the Islamic empire, For example, Egypt under Saladin’s dynasty, during the twelfth and the thirteen centuries, stopped the expansion and defeated the Crusaders (Curry, 2002; Mansfield, 2003). Moreover, the Egyptian forces in Egypt under the Mamelukes of Egypt crushed the Mongols in Ain Jalout, in Palestine, 1260 AD (Mansfield, 2003). Therefore, they stopped the Mongols from expansion and restored the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad. Culturally, The Arab conquerors created two most import cultural hubs to reach from Egypt the Muslim World: first was Al-Fustat Mosque (also known as the Mosque of Amr Ibn Al-Aase), and second was al-Azhar Mosque, later became university. Al-Fustate was the name of the first capital of Egypt after the Arab invasion in AD 641.

The importance of Al-Fustat as a cultural hub continued till the establishment of al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo in 970, the mosque immediately evolved from a mosque to a mosque and Madrasah, and; finally, evolved to become the oldest prominent Islamic University in the world for over a thousand year (Wright, 2008). Muslims all over the world seek al-Azhar's religious opinions in different social and religious issues. The head of al-Azhar, Sheikh al-Azhar, is the highest religious authority in Egypt, if not the highest moderate Sunni-Islamic authority.

Bulfin (2011) suggested that the current importance of the western world of Egypt occurred after the French campaign from 1798 – 1801. Napoleon's campaign on Egypt fuelled the western fascination of the Egyptian culture. Moreover, it made the western nations realize the importance of the strategic location of Egypt. After the failure of the French campaign on Egypt, the Ottoman Sultan appointed an Albanian governor to rule Egypt for a fixed term. However this new governor, whose name is Mohammed Ali, declared himself as the ruler of Egypt where he was able to use the French expertise to build the first Egyptian Army and Navy, which made mainly of Egyptians. Although Egypt gained autonomous-governance separate from the Ottoman Empire, it was still part of the Ottoman Empire, and the Ottoman Sultan continued to be regarded as the legitimate Islamic Caliph. Therefore, until the First World War, despite his weakness, Muslims looked at the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire as the Caliph of the Islamic World, including Egypt.

### **Summarized History of the Islamists in Egypt**

After the death of Prophet Mohammed in 632 AD, there was at least one Caliphate until the disappearance of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1928 when Turkey chose to shift from the Islamic government to a secular government structure (Table I). Therefore, for the first time the Islamic Caliphate, *al-Khilafa al-Islamia*, was vacated; therefore, there was no Islamic Caliph for the first time. Since Egypt played a predominate role in preserving Islam for centuries, a young Imam, Hassan al-Bana, presented a new Islamic model in Egypt in an attempt to fill this vacuum (Al-Jazeera TV, 2009). Therefore, he established the Society of Muslim Brotherhood (in Arabic: *Jamaat al-Ikhwan al-Muslmeen*). The Muslim Brotherhood is allegedly divided into three wings: First, Religious Wing, which constitutes the main body, consists of the members and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood; second, Political Wing, which is used as the political front and the speakers of the group. Moreover, the members of this wing engage in political coalition, lead political parties, and run for political offices (Sa~da al-Balad, 2013). Finally, the Paramilitary Wing (also known as the secret wing), allegedly carried out political assassinations, such as the assassination of Nuqrashi Pasha in 1948, and attempt to assassinate President Nasser in 1954. The Muslim Brotherhood ideology opened the door to radical Islamists to follow.

The dispute between the Brotherhood and Nasser continued to escalate. Finally, Nasser jailed its leaders and executed its top ideologist, Sayyed Qutb, in 1966. However, the radical ideas of Qutb continued after his death. Several terrorist groups emerged on the foundations of Qutb's ideology. Examples of the notorious organizations that emerged on Qutb's ideology during and after the 1970s were the Excommunication and Exodus [*Takfeer wal-Hijra*], the Islamic Organization of Technical Military Academy [*Tanzeem al-Fania al-Askaria*], The Jihad Organization [*Tanzeem al-Jihad*], The Islamic Group [*al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya*], and other smaller terroristic cells (Mannes, 2004). The results of the creation of extreme Islamic groups based on the extreme ideology of Qutb and other extreme clerics is the increase of assassinations and assassinations attempts in Egypt of Egyptian civilians and non-Egyptian tourists (Mannes, 2004). Moreover, the Egyptian Jihad Organization assassinated President Sadat and other civilian bystanders in 1981. After Arab Spring, almost all members of the extreme Islamists have been freed, or vindicated from their violent crimes that they committed.

As some countries, such as Sudan and Iran, shifted to extreme-Islamism, there is a concern whether Egypt will become another Sudan or Iran. The Iranian revolution started as a liberal driven revolution seeking democracy and freedom; however, the power shifted to the Islamists.

## **Moral Disengagement Theory**

### **Building the conceptual Base**

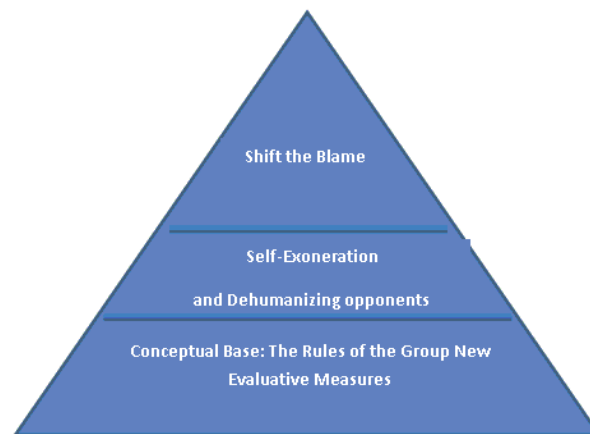
In Bandura's (1991) important seminal work, he analyzed the development of human cognitive moral behavior. Therefore, the conception of the individual becomes the main vehicle to justify the illicit action on cognitive basis, even in their justification to conducting terroristic acts under the name of religion.

This cognitive justification occurs in a process of invoking new moral framework to numb the struggle with *self-censure* (Bandura, 1991; Bandura, 1999), which leads to moral disengagement (Bandura, 1991). Therefore, leaders of extreme groups cognitively reason the instigation of their illicit ideology through disabling the self-regulatory mechanism by distorting the interpretation of Islamic rules to recruit more people to their cause.

The main conceptual basis for the moral disengagement is achieved by promoting the idea that the contemporary society is a flawed (Qutb, 2005a, 2005b), and the society where we live is morally moving backward toward the age of ignorance, or as they called it the *age of al-Jahylyiah*.

Bandura, Barbaranellie, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) suggested “moral standards are constructed from information conveyed by direct tuition, evaluative social reaction to one’s conduct, and exposure to the self-evaluative standards modeled by others” (p. 364). Moreover, members of an extreme or terrorist group rely on the new set of moral standards created by the leaders of the group to establish new conceptual foundations, and; therefore, justify the group’s illicit actions. The group models new standards to its members; consequently, the members of the extreme groups subject their action to evaluative measures established by these new guidelines (Figure 1). Furthermore, in the next stage of the moral disengagement process, is when the perpetrator shifts the guilt to others, such as individuals or societies.

**Figure 1: Taxonomy of Extremists’ Moral Disengagement**



The members of the extreme groups use this *self-exoneration* process to shift the blame on the victim or to blame other individuals and entities, such as the society, for their crimes (Bandura, 1996). Seabright and Schminke (2002) implied that the perpetrator dehumanizes others by depriving the victims of their human qualities; therefore, the members of the extreme and the terrorist groups to justify actions against others conduct the process of dehumanizing. Therefore, the extremists’ leadership invokes moral disengagement when the members of the extreme or the terrorist groups dehumanize their human targets. Therefore, the members of the extreme groups turn the perpetrators into freedom fighters, instead of the murderer or the terrorist.

It is necessary to distinguish between active members of an extreme-group, on one hand, and groups’ supporters and sympathizers, on the other hand. While the supporters, generally, are not held legally liable of the illegal actions of the extremists; these extremists are motivated by the support they get from their sympathizers. Therefore, they practice the moral disengagement process on their supporter through the same process that they use with their own members. Extremists use several media outlets to convey their messages. Therefore, as in figure one, the process start with creating a sub-culture through establishing new interpretations to the Qur’an and to the Sunnah. Once the first established, it becomes easier to invoke the self-exoneration, dehumanization of the opponents, and the shift of the blame from the extremists to the victim or any citizen who tolerates *al-Jahylyiah society*. Qutb claimed that any society that promotes democracy and sovereignty to the state and the people is forbidden; as according to his interpretation, the sovereignty only to Allah (Choueiri, 1996; Qutb, 2005b). Therefore, according to Qutb and his followers, true Muslims should vacate the society and excommunicate citizens.

## **The Issue**

### **Case Study: The Evolution of the Extreme-Islamism in Egypt**

The literature and the data collected shows that extremism in Egypt increased after the Arab Spring; the literatures also showed the geopolitical importance of Egypt, which made extreme ideology of the Egyptian extreme clerics' influential on other groups in the MENA region and beyond. Therefore, analyzing the dominance of Egyptian extreme Islamists and their rise to power in Egypt is not a mere domestic issue; it is indeed an international concern. Most of these extreme groups started either by the Muslim Brotherhood members or on the foundations of the Brotherhood extreme ideologists. The Society of the Muslim brotherhood, also known as the Muslim Brotherhood or just the Brotherhood, since its existence in 1928 went through different phases and worked with and against different political powers. For example, it built an alliance with the Egyptian monarch before the Egyptian revolution of 1952; furthermore, the group worked with the Nazi (Vidino, 2010), with Nasser, with Sadat, etc. However, they end up also working against all whomever they built an alliance with at the end. The Muslim Brotherhood was responsible of the assassinations of, or attempts to assassinate, prominent figures in Egypt. Moreover, the extreme ideological foundations of the Muslim Brotherhood were the driver to establishing other non-Egyptian organizations, such as Hamas in Palestine.

In Egypt, there are several extreme and terrorist groups were found on the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, such as the Jihad Organization and other terrorist groups.

The literature and the collected data show that the Egyptian Jihad and al-Qaeda came to life on the same foundations of the brotherhood. The Jihad organization was responsible for the assassination of President Sadat in 1981, and al-Qaeda carried international terroristic attacks and still fight next to the Taliban in Afghanistan. The data collected from public media showed that the members of al-Qaeda, Tanzeem al-Jihad, and al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya are appearing on Egyptian television channels, and are leading demonstrations in public places in Egypt. Furthermore, they presented a plan to fill the security vacuum by creating their own vice-force.

## **Methods**

### **Research Design and Data Resources**

This paper includes answers to the following research questions: How did the extreme Islamism evolve to attain dominance over the political power resources in Egypt? What are the extremists' conceptual foundations and the factors that made some Egyptians accepting the message of these organizations?

Generally, case study research clearly elucidates the "presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies" (Yin, 2009, p. 19). Therefore, in explaining a complex issue like the evolution of extreme-Islamists, it was necessary to choose a qualitative case study to immerse in the collected data. Furthermore, the author conducted this case study based on historical analysis relying on archived records; qualitative researchers, such as Stan (2010), consider data is a means to using the past to give an explanation to the present. Since the issue of evolution the extreme-Islamists to have hegemony over the powers in Egypt (Elbaradei, 2012), archival records will play a significant role in this case study. The author of this paper used the archived data collected to his advantage as they are available on public domain in both Arabic and English, which can be examined several times to ensure the accuracy of the research questions (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The author's proficiency in both Arabic and English made him able to have first-hand understanding to the contents of the archived data. The archived data here are made of different artifacts: photos, audio recording, video recording, treatises, personal communication posted on a public domain, and interviews.

### **Independent third parties' and Eye Witnesses' testimonies**

The author of this paper used witnesses' testimonies on public domain in the forms of the conducting Internet anthropological methodology as suggested by Salmons (2009); testimonies of eyewitnesses will be driven off participants' comments and interactions online: such as Facebook, news and media outlets, and the Middle East Media Research Institute (MERMI). Therefore, over fifty resources were scanned; however I selected twenty participants who were interviewed in different liberal and secular Egyptian and Arabic media from 14 participants (N =14) that Shed light on issues analyzed here. The main reason of exclusion was the possible unfounded bias opinion against Islamists that what was presented as facts by the participants was hard to triangulate.

Moreover, reaching the twenty eyewitnesses testimonies satisfied the data saturation. Therefore, it was not easy to verify the events stated in their testimonies. The testimonies represented the opinion and analysis of public figures, scholars, and other citizens; these testimonies were available on public domain. Since this study was completed to validate the data collected, the author of this paper will use content analysis approach (Marshall & Rossman, 2010; Kohlbacher, 2006). Therefore, all artifacts gathered collected, coded, and triangulated to ensure its reliability.

The eyewitness testimonies showed public disenchantment and suspicious of the extreme Islamists (EI) and the possibility of committing deception. In this research, the testimonies and statements of independent third parties and the eyewitnesses alleged that the Islamists in Egypt have promoted violence and inequality. These statements and testimonies covered the period from the late 1920s until April 2013.

### **The extreme Islamists' speeches**

There is testimonial data collected from independent third parties and eyewitnesses through different artifacts showed negative opinion about the EI. Moreover, the author of this article conducted data collection to speeches of the EI leaders to triangulate the data to verify the reliability of the eye witness testimonies to ensure that such data collected from eye witnesses triangulated by the sources of the EI's testimonies.

There are several speeches collected of the leaders of the EI; the number of used speeches was 12 participants (N=12). The speeches presented by prominent Islamist televangelists, leaders, and ideologists.

### **Documentary reviews**

To increase the reliability of the data collected, I augmented the eyewitness testimonies and the Islamists' speeches with a documentary analysis to letters and ideological treatises of major prominent extremists. Among these prominent ideological treatises that I relied on was in the Shade of the Qur'an [Fi Zilal al-Qur'an] (Qutb, 2005- Reprint), the Milestone [Ma'alim Fi al-Taryyq] (Qutb, n.d.), and the acquittal [al-Tabriah] (A. al-Zawahiri, 2008). These treatises were among the important documents relied on by the most notorious extreme figures who are considered the godfathers of the contemporary extremists and terrorists groups, including al-Jihad, Al-Qaida, and Hamas.

### **Results**

The eyewitness' testimonies revealed two significant aspects of the Islamists in Egypt since the early 1930s when the Muslim Brotherhood cooperated with the western entities secretly, such as the German Nazi (Vidino, 2010), yet openly called westerners evil; moreover, Qutb stated that the contemporary societies are reverting to the ignorance age [*Jahilyyah*]. This self-deceptive process is inflicted on their follower to invoke moral disengagement (Bandura, 1996); therefore, these new deceptive conceptual framework that justifies attacking the West or attacking the Middle Eastern societies, which the later considered heretic.

The speeches of the prominent Brotherhood televangelists and other extremists, from 1930s to recent 2012 focused on attacking two facades: First, calling to withdraw from the contemporary Egyptian societal structure as they consider such society contaminated by Western *Jahilyyah*; second, they repeatedly overstate anti-Semitic and anti-minorities provoking remarks. Therefore, based on the data analysis, from the Islamists' speeches, third parties' statements, and the eyewitness testimonies, it was clear that extreme clerics strengthen the effect of moral disengagement in many ways. (a) Enhancing the control over their followers; therefore, extreme-clerics become the only religious authority, which makes it easy for extremists to induce moral disengagement into their followers. (b) Extremists invoke the moral disengagement through shifting the blame and dehumanizing the victims. Therefore, extreme Islamists and terrorist groups establish a new fallacy that the only way to achieve change is through violence. Moreover, they falsely claim that the West, the society, or the politicians compelled them to choose the violence path. (c) The groups generate emotionally driven false slogan to sustain public support, such as *Islam is the Solution*, and the idea of the *Islamic Caliphate*, etc.

While every Muslim believes in the invoking strong ties with God by following the religion of Islam, the extreme-preachers use these emotional ties of their followers to their advantage. Moreover, to ensure the obedience of their followers, they regularly invoke the ideology of '*Kharijite*,' which a term for a Muslim who abandon Islam; therefore, no sin to kill whoever go against the Caliph.

After dominating the Muslim Brotherhood and other Extreme Islamists the media and the political infrastructure, the term Kharijites surfaced along with other anti-Semitic and anti-minorities terms. In an essay published in the Times Oman, Mottaleb (2012) criticized the speech and the religious fatwa of an Islamist supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood who tried to demand liberal political and secular activists and demonstrators not to demonstrate against Brotherhood regime; he further stated that those who decide to go for political protest become Kharijites.

Finally, to complete the triangulation, I analyzed several extreme Islamists' treatises and written messages from Islamists' clerics to the follower, one can see how the contemporary extreme Islamism started as a peaceful movement, under the name of the Society of Muslim Brotherhood, by Hassan al-Bana; however, it changed course to become a violent organization. Thereafter, other Egyptian and international terroristic and EI groups have evolved from the ideology of the Brotherhood. In this research, I examined two important ideological treatises by Sayyed Qutb: In the Shad of Qur'an (2005) and the Milestones (n.d.), it was clear how distorted his interpretation to the Qur'an and to the instruction of the Prophet of Islam. It was clear that this distortion to complete an important phase of the moral disengagement process, which promote the idea of dehumanizing the adversary through calling the adversaries with non-human characters, such as what Mursi statement against Jews that the descendants of "apes and pigs" (2010). Moreover, make the contemporary society and the Western ideology as pure evil. Mannes (2004) explained how the Muslim Brotherhood unleashed violence against Egyptians in 1945, which led the Egyptian government to dissolve it.

Shortly, thereafter, the government allowed the MBH to reconvene as a religious organization. However, Nasser dissolved the Brotherhood again because of their conflict with leaders of the 1952 revolution, their attempts to force the government to Islamize the state, and because of the MBH attempt to assassinate politicians (Nasser, 1956).

Finally, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed growing Islamists violence actions against the Egyptian society; these waves of violence were motivated with a new, but long lasting, ideology known as the *Takfeer* (excommunicate), and then *Hijrah* (exodus, which means depart the society). This new moral disengagement mechanism concluded that the Islamic societies plagued by Western sins and that rules of these societies do not confirm with Islam; therefore, they incited their follower resist these governments. After the new process of *Takfeer and Hijra*, the radical Islamists were able to justify the killing of their Egyptian counter parts.

Indeed, based on the qualitative data collected, the society of the MBH and other Islamists obtained political hegemony over the powers in Egypt currently the MBH dominate the executive legislative branches, and attempt to reconstruct the judicial branch. The author of this paper concluded these results because of the following: First, the group never denounces the ideas of Qutab; on the contrary, Qutb is considered a hero whom they call the martyr [*shaheed*]. Moreover, they called the assassin of Sadat, Khaled al-Aslambouli, a martyr; despite his execution for the murder of Sadat and others who were around him during the Sixth of October Parade. Second, MBH moved into eliminating all powers in the country, which appear to be a move towards full hegemony. Third, among the extreme Islamists that enjoyed freedom under the MBH were convicted-terrorists belonging to different factions such as Tanzeem al-Jihad and the Jama'a Islamia. These internationally outlawed organizations speak freely about their ideology openly without any legal consequences.

### **New Conceptual Base**

In creating the extreme Islamism's conceptual base (figure 2), the Extreme Islamists create their own conceptual framework, which they claim is based on rules of Islam. Therefore, the extreme Islamists rely on the dual concepts: The Excommunication and Exodus [*al-Takfeer wal Haijra*]. Figure-2 shows how the extreme Islamism stand between mainstream Islam and their EI followers and supporter to filter the information passed to them. Therefore, it creates a new generation of people like them.

### **Discussions**

#### **Limitations and Ethical Implications**

To protect human participants, the author of this paper limits his research to analyzing data available on public domain in different media to avoid endangering participants. Therefore, readers should be aware that such limitation was ethically motivated and is intentional. However, to eliminate this limitation, I triangulated all sources to ensure the accuracy and reliability.

Using the term participants to the individuals whose statements and speeches used in this research may give a false impression that the author conducted face-to-face interviews; however, none of the interviews, statements, or other testimonies were the product of direct interview. Nevertheless, I investigated the credibility of the resources; for example, claims pro or against the Extreme Islamists were verified either by finding a direct speeches or interviews by the Islamists on public domain media.

Moreover, I analyzed several written documents, including ideological treatises to verify the conceptual base of the Extreme-Islamists. Another unintended limitation is the author’s prior knowledge to the issue of the case study. I teach Middle Eastern related topics, and I authored political commentary essays, among other materials. However, I used my prior knowledge to the advantage of the research, as this prior knowledge of the issue enabled me to explore different resource. Moreover, my proficiency in Arabic and English enabled me to understand resources for both sides without the need to translation, which also helped me in triangulating the translated data to ensure their accuracy.

Furthermore, I intentionally excluded research on the impact of western extremists on fueling the Islamists recruiting; however, I believe that further research should be conducted in the role of extreme-western groups. The author intentionally decided to eliminate analyzing the impact of some extremists and some extreme policies in the West that may be contributed to the flourish of Islamic extremism, such as burning of the Qur’an, anti-Hijab laws in France, and other Islam-phobic measures.

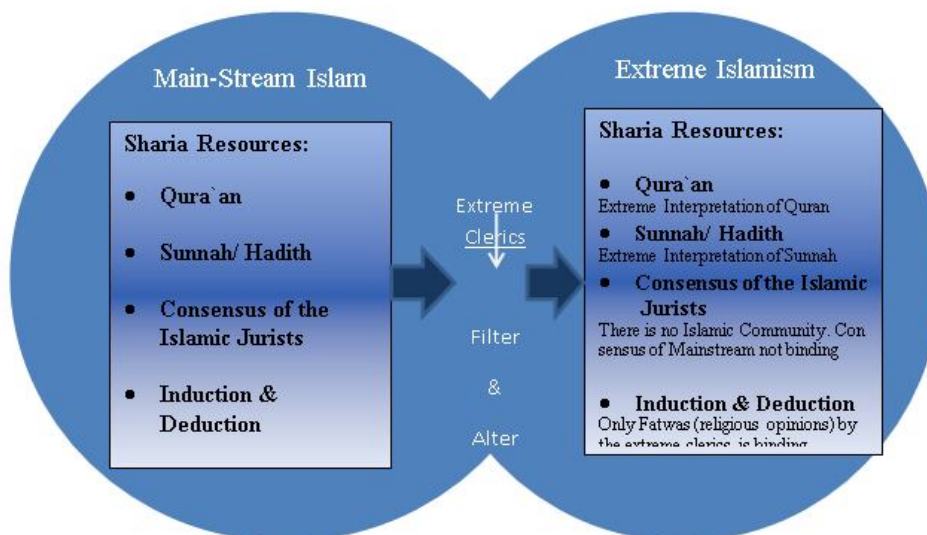
The reason of the intentional exclusion of these incidents from this study because it is not within the scope of this study; discussing multiple issues will result in losing the focal points discussed in this case study. Indeed, such relationship between the increase of Islamic extremism and the increase of anti-Islamic assertions should be subject to a separate study.

**Data Analysis**

**The Historical Analysis of the Extreme Islamism in Egypt**

This study is based on the theory of moral disengagement (Bandura et al, 1996; Bandura, 1999). The data collected showed how the EI used different tactics to invoke the conceptual framework of moral disengagement to incite the extreme Islamists to put the society and the West on the adversarial side (figure 1; figure 2). Therefore, the Muslim Brotherhood ideologists, such as Qutb (2005; n.d.), calls the contemporary society a pre-Islamic *Ignorance Age [al-Jahyyliah]*; furthermore, cleric of EI claim that Islam is the solution to restore a better society. Early stage of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and after the decline of the Ottoman Empire, for the first time, Muslims found themselves without a Caliph. Because of the absence of the Caliphs –Al-Khilafah – the Islamic World felt ominously in dire need to new leadership to fill the Caliph’s place.

**Figure 2**  
Building Extreme Conceptual Framework Based on Moral Disengagement





Therefore, the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to fill this gap in 1928. When it was established by its first leader, Hassan Al-Bana, he presented the movement as a peaceful movement. Although he did not declare himself as a Caliph, the progress of his movement and the creation of a paramilitary wing of the Brotherhood made the king of Egypt feel that Al-Bana is attempting to hijack the Caliphate. Quickly the movement grew and, consequently, the paramilitary wing became stronger and more secretive even for the Brotherhood's leadership. Eventually, the wing carried many assassinations against political figures, such as the killing of Naqrashi pasha, other leaders of the Brotherhood itself, and the attempt of killing the former Egyptian president Nasser (Al-Sadat, 2011). There has been eyewitness testimonies claimed that the secret wing assassinates the creator of the MBH, Imam al-Bana, after he later called the assassins of the Egyptian Prime Minister "not Brothers and not Muslims" (Atwa, 2009). Radicalism reached its peak after Sayyed Qutob's radical interpretation to Islamic rules. Clerics' fatwas free extremists from self-censuring; therefore, these fatwas enable them justifying the act of violence against Islamic and western societies. Among the data collected; a speech by Safwat Hijazi (2012), one of the prominent Muslim Brotherhood clerics, in the speech he claimed that capital of the new Brotherhood Caliphate is not going to be Cairo, the current capital of Egypt, but it will be Jerusalem (Hijazi, 2012). Such premature and irresponsible public call could have put Egypt in a predicament with Israel and would have endangered the peace treaty between the two countries.

### ***Creating Conceptual Framework: The Extremists Subculture***

According to the social cognitive theory (Bandura 1991, 1999), when a perpetrator commits a malicious act, he or she disengage the self-sanction mechanism to enable defusing the sense of responsibility; misrepresent the illicit action, and conducting process of shifting the blame and dehumanizing the victims (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Therefore, the process of establishing the extreme-Islamism framework goes through this process of disengaging one's self-sanctioning to justify taking actions to dominant the expansion of extreme ideology. Mohammed al-Zawahiri, the brother of the leader of the al-Qaeda, has been freed and conducting interviews on TV and other media outlets. In one of his interviews, he clearly stated that he "is in agreement with al-Qaeda ideology;" he further stated that al-Qaeda follow "the apostle and Sunnah principles" (al-Zawahiri, 2012). Extremists justify their diversion from Islamic tradition by claiming that Jihad is a mandatory element of Islam, just like prayer, etc. Al-Zawahiri and other extremists claims that no secular legal and political systems align with Islamic rules (M. al-Zawahiri 2012, Hijazi, 2010). Therefore, democracy, elections, and contemporary secular political institutes are against Islam and, according to them, they should be completely removed from Islamic societies' practices.

Although both mainstream Islam and extreme-Islamism rely on the same conceptual base, extremism created through building new extreme conceptual framework (figure 2). The new extreme conceptual framework is the first stage of using moral disengagement approach to justify the new extreme concepts (figure 1). The extreme clerics rely on establishing issuing religious opinions (*Fatwas*) to create a new interpretation to Islamic rules. The Extreme Islamists create their first stage of the Extreme Islamist Taxonomy in different ways (figure 1; figure 2). However, in the ideological creation phase, the emphasis was on establishing a separate foundation from other groups in society.

For examples, the Muslim Brotherhood and other extreme Islamists used the slogan Islam is the Solution or Excommunication and Exodus. At this stage, new conceptual framework established on how interact with other groups and individuals in the society, how to treat minority, and how to withdraw from the society. Generally, extreme False-Jihad concept is not fully articulated, and; therefore, the members at this stage are not fully indoctrinated into their extreme ideology. The goal of this stage is to create at this level group of extreme clerics who, eventually, become the only authorities on the religious and daily issues.

### ***Creating new interpretation to Islam: Excommunication and Exodus***

The extreme Islamists excommunicate (*takfeer*) the entire society, and call for a voluntary exodus from the society (*al-Hijra*). After the excommunication and exodus, the extremists claim that they are saving the Islamic society (A. al-Zawahiri, 2008; Na'im, 2012; Sidamed, & Ehteshami, 1996). In the process of saving and re-Islamizing the Egyptian society, the process begins with the excommunication, departing the society, and; finally, return to the society through extreme-ideology to dominate its institutions. The extreme Islamists in February 15, 2013 demonstrated in support to the Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi asking him to use an iron fist when dealing with the protesters.

Furthermore, Islamists carried the poster of Osama Bin Laden in the streets; meanwhile some of the Islamists protesters kissed the poster. The fatwas of the Jamaa Islamia's leaders and the Shura council were blindly followed in the decisions to conduct violence against civilians, according to al-Zumur (July 2012) who is one of the leaders of the group. The reasoning for this full obedience is the reliance of the ideology of excommunication and exodus; according to this principle, the extreme group declares the entire society to be heretic. Therefore, the clerics of this organization build a false-legitimacy to issue religious fatwas to declare Jihad on anyone who opposes them, even if this person is the head of the state, such as former President Sadat. In an interview with an Egyptian scholar, al-Kharabawi (2012), stated that a faction of the Muslim Brotherhood excommunicated the Islamic society; according to al-Kharabawi this new group emerged in the 1970s under the name the Society of Excommunication and Exodus (EE). Al-Kharabawi mentioned that the EE promoted the idea that Islam vanished after the four Righteous Caliphs in the 700 A.D.; therefore, the founder of the group asked his follower to use violence to restore Islam back.

### ***Fatwas against minorities and women.***

In order for the extreme-Islamists to retain control over their followers, they start by confining a parallel body of knowledge in their Muslim sub-community, which mean excluding other Muslims and non-Muslims. Moreover, they also exclude women from any decision making or playing any significant role. It appears that the reasoning for that is to ensure that the decision of declaring Jihad and conducting Jihad is only in the hands of their leaders. The Egyptian Islamic Legitimate Body of Rights and Reformation, *ILBRR*, (Akhbar Misr, 2012) declared, in a *fatwa*, that Muslims are religiously forbidden from congratulating non-Muslims on their religious holidays, such as Christmas. This fatwa emerged from the extreme Islamists' interpretation to the Hadith by Prophet Mohammed. The Hadith states, "Every Nation –religious' adherent- has its own religious-festivity" (Mohammed PBUH). Therefore, it was clear that a new extreme framework emerged by changing the meaning of the original hadith. This fatwa is similar to the fatwa of one of the most atrocious extremists Anwar al-Waki (2011) who provoked the notion that Muslims should never trust "the infidels" even if these were neighbors. It is clear that extreme-ideologists adapt the same messages.

Extreme Islamists in many occasions emphasized on a lower status for women, in comparison to men. Sheikh Mohammed al-Haweeni (Sife Eleslam, 2011) in one of his teaching sessions, criticizing women acting as religious scholars, stated:

A woman (TV anchor) facing the camera and speak to millions of people all over the world! What kind of knowledge such woman has? Cognition is only for men. Any woman, with all due respect to women because I do not want any women to feel that I am singling them out, any woman – despite how high she reaches – is only an imitation [to men] with no foundation. There is no woman sought knowledge firmly attained good perceptions [on important matters].

Egyptians clerics and Egyptian public opinion became angry with the West when Terry Jones burned the Quran, and after showing a movie insulting the Prophet Mohammed. Nevertheless, Egyptians were also furious when an Egyptian Islamist- televangelist, Abu-Islam, burned the bible by the US Embassy in Cairo.

Abu-Islam (2012) called minority Egyptian Christians "non-believers and idol worshipers," among other humiliating speeches.

### **Dehumanizing Non-extreme Islamists**

In the cognition of the questionable acts, the extremists select a mechanism of dehumanizing their opponents to disable their supporters' disgust towards the questionable acts (Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2011).

For a long time, Islamists did not differentiate between the Zionism as a political movement and the Judaism as one of the Abrahamic religions (Fahmi, 2013); therefore, Morsi (2010a) called Muslims to nurse their children "hatred to the Zionists and Jews;" moreover, in another he called Jews the decedents of "apes and pigs" (Morsi, 2010b). Therefore, the Islamists isolate Quranic verses and the Sunnah of the prophet and; subsequently, change the interpretation to meet their purpose of dehumanizing the minorities, such as Jews, Christians, and women.

### **Shift the Blame**

In the earlier stage of creating acceptance to extremism, EI clerics shift the blame on the victims to justify their crimes.

For example, the Muslim Brotherhood, allegedly, before and after the official declaration of the state of Israel in 1948 attacked Egyptian Jews and bombed Jewish properties in Egypt. Even before the declaration of the state of Israel and before the Arab-Israel War in 1948 (Fahmi, 2013), the Muslim Brotherhood took advantage of the evolution of violence against the Palestinian by the new Zionist movements in Palestine to incite anti-Semitic sentiments against Egyptian Jews.

One of the examples of shifting the blame tactics was used by al-Zumur, one of the leaders of the Islamic Society (*al-Jamaa Islamia*) and the political spokesperson for the society. When the interviewer in a TV program in July 2012 about the reason the Jamaa killed President Sadat in 1981, he shifted the blame to President Sadat that Sadat himself contributed to his own assassination. Mr. A. al-Zumur was among the defendants, and found guilty, for aiding and abating in the assassination of President Sadat in 1981; moreover, his cousin, Mr. T. al-Zumur, was the second defendant in the same. Both of them were found guilty and were sentenced to life in prison for conspiracy to commit the assassination. After the Arab Spring, both Zumurs were freed. They have been conducting TV interviews and leading Islamists' demonstrations.

One of the contemptible examples of shifting of the blame clear in Mohammed al-Zawahiri's statement who shifted the blame of the terrorist attack of 9/11 on the United States, not on al-Qaeda. He further said that al-Qaeda did not initiate the aggression, but United States, according to him, the United States brought it on itself by staying in Islamic lands (M. al-Zawahiri, 2012). Extremists use similar muddy interpretation to justify their murders against civilians.

### **Self-Exoneration**

In his justification to the 1981 assassination of President Sadat, M. al-Zumur (2012) justified the killing of Sadat by alleging that there was no legitimate channel available because of the tyranny of the regime. Therefore, by shifting the blame to the regime, he concluded that the criminal actions of the Jamaa Islamia and Tanzeem al-Jihad were permissible and that the killing of Sadat was justified. Furthermore, he said that it was "a duty" to stand to and to kill Sadat. After the Arab Spring and the dominance of Islamists, extreme-clerics promoted a distorted interpretation of Jihad on a large scale in the media, and on a more limited scale within mosques.

Extreme Islamists groups that Egyptians and the international community used to consider them terroristic are gaining legitimacy and; therefore, recruiting more members openly. For example, The Society of the Egyptian Jihad, which conducted several terrorist operations in the past, is seeking legitimacy under the name of *the Islamic Party* (Sa~da al-Balad, 2013, February 22). The claim of self-exoneration of the previous terroristic actions against the unarmed citizens is the new attitude to justify gaining legitimacy.

### **Conclusion**

I distinguished between moderate Muslims and moderate Islamists, on one hand, and the extremists, on the other hand. After conducting this qualitative content analysis and historical analysis, it was clear that extreme-Islamists use Moral Disengagement process to keep their followers adhering to a specific path. Therefore, one may become skeptical how the situation may develop in Egypt.

The main concern would be whether Egypt will become another Sudan or Iran. The Iranian revolution started as a liberal driven revolution seeking democracy and freedom; however, Iran during the revolution period, developed to become a lawless state. The current cooperation between the Brotherhood, Hamas, and other radical organizations raises concerns on the real intention the Muslim Brotherhood. The ousted Islamists' regime did not provide new interpretations to negate the radical interpretations of Sayyed Qutb and other ideologists. On the contrary, new versions of invoking violence openly surfaced in the public domain.

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**TABLE I**  
**Evolution of Political Islam and the emergence of Extreme-Islamists**

Political Islam: Making Empire & Caliphate	Transition: from Political to Extremism	Hegemony of Extreme-Islamism
622 – 1924	1928 – 1970	1970 – Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>622:</b> Prophet Mohammed PHUH migrated from Mecca to Medina; first Islamic government.</li> <li>• <b>630:</b> Muslim recaptured Mecca and established safe pilgrimage routes to Mecca. Arab tribes vowed allegiance to the new Islamic government.</li> <li>• <b>632:</b> The death of the Prophet. Start of Caliphate.</li> <li>• <b>656:</b> The first political disputes between Islamic leaders after the Rightly Guided Caliph (Khalifaa Rashid) Uthmann Bin Afan is Murdered.</li> <li>• <b>657:</b> The dispute over the Caliphate between Ali Bin Abi-Talib and Mo`awia Bin Syfian.</li> <li>• <b>661:</b> Mo`awia became the Caliph; started the Umayyad Dynasty (Sunni Caliphate) in Damascus, Syria.</li> <li>• <b>680:</b> The Islamic schism into Sunnah (Sunni) and Shia (Shi`a) after the Killing of Husayn, the son of Ali.</li> <li>• <b>750 - 1258:</b> Abbasid Caliphate (Sunni Caliphate) located in Baghdad. Ousting the Umayyad Caliphate.</li> <li>• <b>908 - 1171:</b> The Fatimid Caliphate in North-Africa (Shia Caliphate); concurrent with Abbasid Caliph.</li> <li>• <b>1299 – 1924:</b> Ottoman Caliphate (Sunni Caliphate).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1924:</b> The End of Caliphate; the start of Secular Turkey. Caliphate Vacuum.</li> <li>• <b>1928:</b> Hassan al-Banna founded the Society of the <i>Muslim Brotherhood (MBH)</i> with plan to fill the Caliphate vacuum.</li> <li>• <b>1936:</b> The MBH enters the political arena. MBH back the Palestinians against Zionism.</li> <li>• <b>1939:</b> the establishment of the MBH secret apparatus.</li> <li>• <b>1948:</b> Unleash assassinations wave by the MBH against government and judicial figures.</li> <li>• <b>1949:</b> the assassination of the MBH founder. The dissolution of the MBH till allowed reconvening back as religious-only group in 1950.</li> <li>• <b>1952:</b> The Egyptian Revolution cooperate with the MBH.</li> <li>• <b>1953:</b> MBH reinitiate the Secret Body and vow to carry assassination against the figures of regime. Sayyed Qutub became the main Jihadist Ideologist for the group.</li> <li>• <b>1954:</b> MBH attempts to kill President Nasser.</li> <li>• <b>1964:</b> Nasser issued amnesty and release MBH from prisons. Sayyd Qutb continued to call for Jihad against the government.</li> <li>• <b>1965:</b> MBH committed three more failed attempts to assassinate Nasser. Sayyed Qutb and other MBH leaders were executed.</li> <li>• <b>1970:</b> Nasser died; Sadat became president.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1975:</b> Sadat issued a general amnesty and the return of the multi-party system.</li> <li>• <b>1976:</b> The MBH held few seats in the parliament.</li> <li>• <b>1979:</b> MBH opposed the Peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.</li> <li>• <b>1979:</b> Offshoot of MBH, a terrorist group known as the Excommunication and Exodus (Takfir wal Hijra) committed series of terroristic attacks.</li> <li>• <b>1981:</b> The assassination of President Sadat by Extreme Islamists, the organization of Egyptian Islamic Jihad.</li> <li>• <b>1989:</b> The emergence of Returnee from Albania led by Zawahiri. Group committed a series of assassinations and tourists massacre in Luxur, South of Egypt.</li> <li>• <b>1998:</b> The merge of Islamic Jihad and al-Qaeda. Zawhiri of Jihad and Bin Laden of al-Qaeda issue the Fatwa of killing Infidels; known as: The World Islamic Front Against Jews and Crusaders</li> <li>• <b>Jan 2011:</b> Arab Spring and the ousting of President Mubarak. Muslim Brotherhood became dominant Islamist player.</li> <li>• <b>July 2012:</b> The inauguration of Mohammed Mursi as the Egyptian President.</li> <li>• <b>July 2012:</b> Safwat Hijazi one of the spokespersons of the MBH called for reviving the Islamic Caliphate with the Capital in Jerusalem.</li> </ul>