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## **Chapter 8: Does Participation Lead to Moderation? Understanding Changes in Egyptian Islamist Parties post-Arab Spring**

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Is it still important to consider the issue of participation and moderation in post-Spring Egypt? The question of inclusion and moderation was at the heart of debates about the prospect of the ‘taming’ of Islamist movements and parties throughout the early 2000s, that is at a time when democratisation seemed to be a possibility, albeit a distant one. In the post-Spring era, which saw the return of an authoritarian regime under President ‘Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi, there seems to be little taste for discussing whether there is still scope for the inclusion of Islamists in the political system.

Yet, there is good reason to stipulate an ongoing relevance of this topic, particularly when studying Egypt’s Islamist parties in the post-Spring setting. Firstly, the change of context, that is from a semi-authoritarian multi-party-system under Mubarak to a democratising system during the Arab Spring and finally to a much more politically restrictive framework under al-Sisi, allows us to investigate the trajectories of Islamist parties and, in reference to pre-Spring analyses, to appraise their commitment to democratic values.<sup>1</sup> A second reason is related to the fact that there are a range of Islamist parties in post-Spring and post-coup Egyptian politics. Aside from the al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood; MB) and its subsidiary *Hizb al-Hurriyya wa al-‘Adala* (Freedom and Justice Party; FJP), which were banned following the coup of 2013, there exists a wide spectrum of religious-based parties, which is, as Lynch rightly remarked, ‘unchartered’.<sup>2</sup> When mapping these, one encounters a paradox. Salafi parties, which are ultra-conservative in their religious interpretations and are regarded as fundamentally incompatible with a democratic stance,

participated in the first post-coup parliamentary elections of 2015. Many of the so-called moderate Islamist parties, on the other hand, boycotted these elections, thus deliberately excluding themselves from the formal political contest. This brings us to a third reason for why it remains important to engage with the participation-moderation debate. Returning to previous assessments allows us to debate whether the conceptual framework continues to hold traction.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the post-Spring constellation of Islamist parties provides us with material to reflect on the issue of strategic versus ideological moderation and that of sequencing which, as Schwedler points out, constitute key aspects of the moderation debate.<sup>4</sup> The aim of this chapter is to critically examine the ‘participation-moderation’ thesis and, moreover, to engage in an original analysis of the political trajectories of Islamist parties in post-Spring Egypt. Focusing on those Islamist parties which demonstrated considerable influence in the period of democratic transition, in particular, the 2011/12 parliamentary elections as well as in the post-coup parliamentary elections of 2015, we can see that Salafi parties choose to participate for strategic reasons while reformist Islamist parties opted for non-participation. While the participation-moderation thesis remains a good starting point for analysing Islamist movements, the chapter reveals that the model has conceptual limitations with regards to the predicting ideological reform.

### **Pluralisation of Islamist parties in post-spring Egypt**

Egypt saw a sharp increase in new political parties in the post-Spring era. About 80 new parties received their official licence in 2011, with slightly fewer new registrations of Islamist parties compared to those on the secular side.<sup>5</sup> Overall, the spectrum of Islamist parties experienced a pluralisation, when more than 30 were registered in the course of 2011, of which about 20 took part in the contest for seats in the parliamentary elections of the same year. These included not only the Muslim Brotherhood-linked FJP, but also so-called

reformist Islamist parties that are, for the most part, Brotherhood offshoots such as *Hizb Misr al-Qawmiyya* (Strong Egypt Party; Strong Egypt), *Hizb al-Tayyar al-Misri* (Egyptian Current Party; ECP) and *Hizb al-Wasat* (al-Wasat). Furthermore, the post-Spring transition also saw the first-time formation of Salafi parties, amongst them the Alexandria/Delta based *Hizb al-Nour* (Party of Light; al-Nour) and *Hizb al-Bina' wa al-Tanmiya* (Building and Development Party; BDP), which represents the official outlet of the *Jama'a al-Islamiyya* (GI), as well as subsequent off-shoots of these parties, notably *Hizb al-Asala* (Authenticity Party; al-Asala) and *Hizb al-Watan* (Homeland Party; al-Watan). Beyond these, the table below illustrates that a large number of Islamist parties appeared on the formal political scene post-2011. Only a few of these gained seats, but the mere fact that a range of Islamist parties aimed for inclusion in the political process shows a shift in their strategic thinking and behaviour insofar as participation in formal processes became a viable option for them which allowed them to bring forward their political agenda.

*Table 1: Islamist Parties in the Post-Spring Era*

Party Name	Legalised/ Banned	Theology-based orientation	Political spectrum <sup>6</sup>
Hizb al-‘Adala al-Ijtima’iyya (Social Justice Party)	1993	Socialist	Left
Hizb al-Amal al-Islami al-Masri (Egyptian Islamic Labour Party)	2011	Reformist with socialist tendencies	Left
Hizb al-Amal al-Jadid (New Labour Party)	2011	Reformist with socialist tendencies	Left
Hizb al-Asala (Authenticity Party)	2011	Salafi	Centre-Right
Hizb al-Bina’ wa al-Tanmiya (Building and Development Party)	2011	Salafi (GI)	Right
Hizb al-Fadila (Virtue Party)	2011	Salafi	Right
Hizb al-Hurriyya wa al-‘Adala (Freedom and	2011;	MB; orthodox tendencies	Centre-Right

Justice Party)	banned 2013	amongst leadership	
Hizb al-Islah al-Misri (Egyptian Reform Party)	not	Orthodox with reformist tendencies	Ultra-Right
Hizb al-Islah wa al-Nahda (Reform and Renaissance Party)	2011	Reformist tendencies; remains orthodox on key-issues	Centre-Left
Hizb al-Islah wa al-Ta'wiyya (Reform and Awakening Party)	2011	Socialist	Ultra-Left
Hizb al-Islami (Islamic Party)	not	Salafi	Ultra-Right
Hizb al-Jihad al-Dimuqrati (Democratic Jihad Party)	2012	Salafi	Centre-right
Hizb al-Misr al-Fatah (Young Egypt Party)	2011	Socialist	Left
Hizb al-Misr al-Mustaqbal (Egypt's Future Party)	2011	Reformist with revolutionary tendencies	Left
Hizb al-Muhafdhin (Conservative Party)	2011	Orthodox	Right
Hizb al-Nahda (Renaissance Party)	2011; merged with Hizb al-Wasat in 2013	Reformist with orthodox tendencies	Right
Hizb al-Nasr (Victory Party)	2011	Sufi	
Hizb al-Nour (al-Nour Party)	2011	Salafi (al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya)	Ultra-Right
Hizb al-Raya (Flag Party)	2013	Salafi	Ultra-Right
Hizb al-Riyada (Pioneer Party)	2011	Reformist tendencies; remains orthodox on key issues	Centre-Left
Hizb al-Sha'ab (People Party)	not		Right
Hizb al-Tahrir al-Misri	2011	Sufi (al-'Azamiyya)	
Hizb al-Takaful (Solidarity Party)	2011		Right
Hizb al-Tawhid al-Arabi (Arab Unification	2011	Socialist leanings with	Left

Party)		orthodox tendencies	
Hizb al-Umma (Umma Party)	1983	Socialist	Left
Hizb al-Wasat (al-Wasat Party)	2011	Reformist with orthodox tendencies	Centre-Left
Hizb al-Watan (Homeland Party)	2012 (off-shoot from Hizb al-Nour)	Salafi	Right
Hizb Misr al-Qawmiyya (Strong Egypt Party)	2012	Reformist	Centre-left
Hizb Misr al-Thawra	2011	Revolutionary	Ultra-Left
Hizb Nahdat Masr (Egypt Renaissance Party)	2011	Reformist with orthodox tendencies	Centre-right
Hizb Shabab Misr (Youth for Egypt)	2005	Reformist with strong orthodox tendencies	Centre-right
Hizb Sout al-Hurriyya (Voice of Egypt)	2011	Sufism	
Hizb al-Tayyar al-Misri (Egyptian Current Party; ECP)	2011; merged with Hizb Misr al-Qawmiyya in 2014	Reformist	Centre-Left

‘Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi’s ascendance to power in 2013 had a considerable impact on the Egyptian party landscape. Because of changes to electoral laws, the authoritarian shift under al-Sisi has reduced the influence of parties, both on the local as well as the national level.<sup>7</sup> Beyond this, Islamist parties underwent considerable contraction in terms of their presence in the political system. Most obviously, the FJP and its mother-organisation the MB were banned in the course of the autumn of 2013. This left a vacuum in Islamist presence, which was only partially filled by Salafi and other reformist parties. In fact, only al-Nour managed to secure seats in the 2015 parliamentary elections, although its presence decreased in

comparison to its previous result. Also, a number of Islamist parties folded, partly because of the pressures of regime change and partly because they could mobilise only little support. The table above indicates the disappearance of these parties, with notable changes to the reformist field. Not unexpectedly, smaller Islamist parties were pushed to consolidate, merging with parties that held similar political views and often competed for the same constituency. Amongst them were the ECP which joined Strong Egypt as well as al-Nahda Party which joined al-Wasat. Following this consolidation two reformist parties remain meaningful players in the field of Islamist actors: Strong Egypt and al-Wasat. On the other end of the spectrum, meanwhile, we can detect some changes due to intra-organisational tensions which led to offshoots forming. The case of al-Nour is of note here, whereby Emad ‘Abd al-Ghaffour, one of the founders of the party, moved on to establish al-Watan in late 2012.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the increase of numbers due to splits and offshoots is rather marginal, while it is likely that small and medium sized parties will either disappear or, once again, merge with larger parties. Overall, the post-Spring era presents us with a varied spectrum which will, despite al-Sisi’s seemingly anti-Islamist policies continue to influence Egyptian politics in the years to come.

### **Ideological moderation of Islamist parties?**

The participation of Islamist parties in post-2011 politics demonstrates that it is necessary to distinguish between strategic and ideological moderation.<sup>9</sup> When applying this differentiation, we can observe three trajectories. Firstly, the case of the FJP shows that participation can have a negative effect on intra-organisational reform. Secondly, the political decisions and subsequent actions of reformist Islamist parties, such as for instance al-Wasat and Strong Egypt, evidence that moderation, particularly ideological and value-based moderation, can lead to non-participation. Finally, whilst remaining dedicated to the electoral

process, the trajectory of Salafi parties, amongst them al-Nour and the BDP, demonstrates that there is evidence of strategic moderation, but little indication for substantial, micro-level ideological reform.

The post-Spring development of the FJP is an example of strategic moderation, which, paradoxically, came at the expense of ideological moderation. Being largely dependent on the directives of the MB leadership, the case of the FJP shows that the opportunities afforded by formal political participation in the post-Mubarak era undercut a rising reformist tendency within the organisation and thus played power into the hands of an ‘old guard’ that had continued to dominate the group’s Guidance Council.<sup>10</sup>

What makes the case of the MB confusing is the fact that socio-religiously orthodox and politically conservative members who, for decades, dominated the MB’s leading Guidance Council (*Maktab al-Irshad*), did not show much interest in political participation throughout the Mubarak period, rather focussing on changing Egyptian society in the way of acceding to conservative socio-religious norms. The MB’s politics of opposition to the regime at the time was driven by a reformist faction that had gradually built up its strength since the late 1980s.<sup>11</sup> As such, they developed a presence in professional syndicates and, beyond that, attempted to gain seats in parliament either through alliances with other parties, as in the elections of 1984 and 1987, or by running independent candidates, such as in the elections 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010.<sup>12</sup>

The formation of al-Wasat in 1996 exposed open rifts between reformists and the MB’s conservative leadership. The trigger was an attempt by reformists to formulate a party platform in 1996 with the aim of obtaining legal recognition by state authorities. Not only did the MB leadership see the initiative as a challenge to its authority, but it also rejected ideas in the platform document which suggested equal political rights for women and for minorities. These ideational differences led to an intra-organisational crisis that resulted in the departure

of several members, most notably Abu al-‘Ala al-Madi. He continued to run al-Wasat as an alternative to the MB, albeit gaining legal recognition only in 2011.

In August 2007, reformists and the Guidance Council, this time under the leadership of Mahdi ‘Akif, once again clashed in another party-platform debate. At the centre of this crisis was again the formulation of the goals of a future political party, but also the issue of the political rights of non-Muslims and the equal status of women.<sup>13</sup> The tension between reformists and conservatives culminated in the controversy over the succession of ‘Akif. With the election of Muhammad Badi‘a, the Guidance Council made a clear stance against Muhammad Habib, the Deputy Murshid, who was sympathetic to reformists. These events show that, although attempts at reform gained so much ground that they reached the echelons of the MB’s executive, reformists failed to substantially change the organisation. It is for this reason that a number of experts who reviewed the level of the MB’s ideological moderation, amongst them Wickham and Trager, critically remarked that, despite much intra-organisational debate, political-religious key-frames were not sufficiently re-addressed.<sup>14</sup>

The final round of this intra-organisational battle played out in the post-Spring period. It is then that the religiously, socially and politically conservative leadership prepared to participate in formal political processes. The Guidance Council regarded the creation of a political party as a strategic opportunity to influence the transition process. Members of the reformist faction such as ‘Abd al-Mun’im Abu al-Futuh, Islam Lutfi and Muhammad Habib meanwhile rejected the step, taking the position that any decisions over the creation of a party, or indeed regarding the status of the MB as a social movement or political foundation, needed to be debated collectively in the Shura Council as the MB’s central democratic organ.<sup>15</sup> The Guidance Council fended off this challenge by pressing forward with the establishment of the FJP which thus became a political mouthpiece of the conservative MB leadership. Moreover, by placing an emphasis on organisational cohesion, leading members

of the reformist tendency were forced to leave after a short and intense battle over the organisation's direction, while others, amongst them Issam al-Arayan and Sa'ad Katatny, chose to conform (and then being rewarded with leadership roles in the MB and FJP).<sup>16</sup>

Islam Lutfi, Muhammad al-Qassas, Ahmad 'Abd al-Gawad, Hani Mahmud, Muhammad Affan, Ibrahim Za'afarani and Muhammad Habib left the MB. A similar fate befell Abu al-Futuh who pointed out that his expulsion in April 2011, following his announcement that he intended to run as a candidate in the presidential elections of 2012, was not due to having broken with MB directives at the time but was rather due to his persistent differences with the group's leadership.<sup>17</sup> This deep rift also affected the MB, and by extension, the FJP along generational lines, not least because many young MB activists were ideationally closer to reformist circles. When the conservative leadership attempted to conscribe them into the FJP, it triggered a dispute about the right of MB members to support political parties other than the FJP or, as a young female MB activist emphasised, the right to not support any party.<sup>18</sup> The Guidance Council enforced its authority, which led to the departure of a number of MB youth and student leaders. By the end of 2011, there was little intra-organisational contestation to the Guidance Council which continued to imprint its ideological understandings upon the FJP.

The strategic choice to participate in democratic processes gave the MB access to pursue a vision of an Islamic state through formal institutions. According to the official MB position, its idea of the state was both civic and Islamic.<sup>19</sup> This relates to the position that legal interpretation and legislative powers of a parliament are allowed in areas where the Qur'an is not explicit or in areas which are not considered part of the Sunni legal consent. In these terms, the MB ideology shows a degree of temperance, one which allows a state to be defined as Islamic, while being at the same time civic. Still, the MB and its subsidiary, the FJP, have retained an ideological vision that remains religiously orthodox and vested in

socially conservative concepts. This is particularly obvious on contested issues such as the equal status of women and equal citizenship rights for non-Muslim minorities.<sup>20</sup> The FJP's political success during 2011-13 was seen by the MB leadership as a public validation for its strategic choices. Being the dominant political force, there was no incentive for ideological moderation. Yet, this set party and mother-organisation on a course of confrontation with the military on the one hand and with other political parties and movements on the other hand.

If the participation-moderation model suggests a sequential development whereby political inclusion leads to strategic and eventually to ideological reform, the trajectory of reformist parties disproves it. As seen above in the case of the reformist faction within the MB, ideological moderation took place before the establishment of its parties. The fact that the founding leaders of today's reformist Islamist parties abandoned the MB umbrella is not purely incidental, but indicates that ideological moderation is the result of intra-organisational disputes rather than the outcome of political participation. This holds true for al-Wasat, for instance, whose founding members, notably al-Madi, were forced to leave the MB in 1996.<sup>21</sup> This is also the case for the ECP which was set up by former MB Youth Leaders, al-Qassas and 'Abd al-Gawad in June 2011, or for al-Nahda, which was set up by al-Za'frani and which was joined shortly after by Habib.<sup>22</sup> Strong Egypt was established by Abu al-Futuh two years after his expulsion and a year after his unsuccessful candidacy in the 2012 presidential elections.<sup>23</sup> Despite losing against the MB's candidate, Muhammad Mursi, Abu al-Futuh was able to present himself as a significant alternative. Moreover, the fact that reformist parties were set up at a time when the MB/FJP dominated the Islamist spectrum indicates that the concept of sequencing is flawed. Competing against the MB/ FJP, these new parties had relatively little prospect of immediate success; hence the choice to set up reformist parties was first and foremost driven by ideological contemps rather than strategic prospects. This point comes through in an interview with al-Qassas of the ECP in

November 2011, when he admitted his party was relatively underrepresented in rural areas and hence did not field candidates in all districts.<sup>24</sup> Beyond this, as will be set out below, the most important indication that sequencing is not a reliable facet of the participation-moderation model is the fact that most reformist parties decided to boycott the 2015 parliamentary elections. It demonstrates that ideological moderation can lead to the refusal to participate and consequently the rejection of potential political representation for a legislative period.

Because of their background, the aforementioned reformist parties retained a softened version of the ‘ikhwani’ political frames and even take inspiration from the MB’s foundational history. This said, they also distance themselves from the MB to an extent which cannot be explained merely as a strategic choice but which involves a more fundamental ideational shift towards moderation. Indeed, overall reformist parties show a propensity towards democratic values which sets them apart from the orthodoxy of the MB. Where they differ, however, is the profundity and diffusion of democratic values in their programmes and, beyond this, their social and political leanings.

Al-Wasat, previously also al-Nahda, are perhaps slightly more traditionalist on social issues and politically more centrist-right.<sup>25</sup> In its religious interpretation, the Wasat faction is inspired by a religiously-reformist current which Baker described as ‘New Islamists’.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Wickham notes, reformists acquired political skills by interacting with other contenders that were in opposition to Mubarak’s regime.<sup>27</sup> Although al-Wasat underwent fundamental ideological change, there are nevertheless areas where its tendentially more orthodox views remains tangible. These are, first and foremost, al-Wasat’s view that *shari’a* is the principle source of legislation, but also the orthodox position held by the party that parts of Islamic law are divinely defined (however, it is not clear which areas are fixed). The final controversial point touches on gender equality. Although al-Wasat emphasises women’s

equality, the party retains conservative views on the role of women in family and society. Considering these issues, Wickham therefore argues voices concerns about al-Wasat's level of ideological moderation.

Strong Egypt, and previously also ECP, meanwhile, have made a much clearer step towards fully accepting liberal democratic values. Although El Sherif is critical of the party's ideological sophistication, it needs to be recognised that Strong Egypt no longer regards an Islamic state or the implementation of *shari'a* as goals.<sup>28</sup> Hence, in the stricter sense, it is no longer an Islamist party, but a 'Muslim democratic party' with center-left leanings. To illustrate this, Abu al-Futuh stressed that he stands for the protection of individual rights, recognises full gender equality and freedom of religion as core values.<sup>29</sup> Drawing a comparison to parties that draw on Christian values, such as the Christian Democratic Parties, he argues that there is no reason why religious values should not be at the heart of political convictions. Similar points were made by al-Qassas who, after the merger of the ECP with Strong Egypt, has acted as its Head of Political Communication. He added that there needs to be separation of religion and state, yet on a personal level religion does matter in politics.<sup>30</sup>

As mentioned above, Strong Egypt and al-Wasat boycotted the post-coup parliamentary elections of 2015. However, their reactions to the coup show fundamental differences in their political positions. Al-Wasat condemned the events of July 2013 and subsequently joined the Anti-Coup Coalition. Despite its conflicts with the MB, it regarded Mursi's presidency carrying democratic legitimacy and argued that the 2013 Constitution reflected the ideas of a civic state based on Islamic principles.<sup>31</sup> Strong Egypt, on the other hand, had previously expressed support for the mass-movement against Mursi's government and, although it objected to the military's intervention, it did not give its support to the Anti-Coup Alliance.<sup>32</sup> This shows that they differed on the question of Mursi's legitimacy and the path to transforming Egypt. Still, both agreed that the military coup was a backward step

which opened the door to the renewed authoritarianism under al-Sisi. This led them to call for a boycott of the 2014 Presidential Elections and, subsequently of the 2015 parliamentary elections. Despite leaving the Anti-Coup Alliance in August 2014, al-Wasat's rejection of the regime was expressed in much clearer terms in the run-up to the parliamentary elections, openly criticising arbitrary arrests, amongst them the party leader al-Madi, human rights violations, and, more broadly, questioning the legitimacy of al-Sisi's rule.<sup>33</sup> Strong Egypt's critique was more cautious, voicing particular concerns about constitutional issues, electoral laws and the return of patrimonial politics without attacking the regime directly.<sup>34</sup> In all, both reformist parties take a clear stance against the return of authoritarian politics, a position, which is informed by an appreciation of democratic values. This shows that ideological moderation can lead to the rejection of opportunities provided by formal participation.

Salafi parties, meanwhile, reconfirm that a clear distinction is needed between strategic moderation and ideological moderation.<sup>35</sup> Their participation in pre- and post-coup parliamentary elections is rooted in a strategic calculus that allows them to voice their ultra-conservative socio-religious views and agenda in a public manner. Yet, as Drevon convincingly shows, neither al-Nour nor the BDP have revised their ideological premises in a substantial manner.<sup>36</sup>

There are a number of Salafi Parties, but al-Nour has been the most successful in recent years. Its main influence is in Alexandria and the Delta region, where the loose network of *al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya* (Salafi Call) has had some impact.<sup>37</sup> Saudi-Wahhabi principles inform its ideological outlook, as can be seen in the writings of al-Nour leader Yasser Hussein Burhami.<sup>38</sup> Yet, intra-organisational tensions over the direction of the party, particularly on what a Salafi party should stand for, emerged in the course of 2012. This led to the departure of 'Abd al-Ghaffour in December of the same year; he went on to establish the electorally less successful al-Watan Party.<sup>39</sup> As for al-Nour, it backed protests against

Mursi in 2013; yet the party was reluctant to support al-Sisi after the events of July 2013.<sup>40</sup> Leaving all strategic options open, al-Nour did not support the return of al-Mursi to power, nor did it support the military intervention. Al-Nour deliberately hung back from calling for challenges to the transitional government or subsequently to al-Sisi's regime. The party thus evaded major arrests and, despite a legal challenge to its status, was able to survive.<sup>41</sup> In the 2014 Constitutional Referendum, al-Nour urged voters to support the new legal framework, thus indicating a pragmatic and tactical approach to politics. Its strategic calculation became apparent when al-Nour fielded candidates for the parliamentary elections of 2015.<sup>42</sup> Gaining 11 seats, all of which through independent candidacies in the Delta and Cairo, it became the only Islamist Party with seats in the House of Representatives. Yet, compared to its previous results in 2011/12, the results were rather poor and thus did not fill the void left by the FJP.

The Salafi stance also finds representation in the BDP and the Authenticity Party. While al-Nour has its roots in the Salafi-Wahhabi trend of the Delta region, the BDP is directly linked to the GI which was particularly dominant in Upper Egypt and in poorer areas of Cairo with a dominant Sa'idi population. As a party, the BDP was established in 2011 upon the initiative of the GI leadership.<sup>43</sup> Similar to the BDP is al-Asala; although the party is not directly linked to the GI, it drew members from its circles. Both parties show similarities with al-Nour in their post-Spring political trajectory. The BDP showed some modest success in this electoral contest where it won 10 seats, while al-Asala secured 3 seats.<sup>44</sup> The BDP and al-Asala joined the Anti-Coup Alliance, but, because of tactical manoeuvres similar to those of al-Nour, avoided major repercussions. Still, the post-coup era left the BDP and al-Asala side-lined. Although both parties withdrew from the Anti-Coup Alliance in 2015, they failed to secure any seats in the 2015 elections.

As an organisation, the GI was known for its militancy. It was involved a number of terrorist activities, including the assassination of Anwar al-Sadat and the 1997 Luxor attack

which claimed 87 lives.<sup>45</sup> Subsequently, the organisation underwent a ‘de-radicalisation’ process.<sup>46</sup> Analysing fundamental ideological positions, Meijer shows that the GI applied a dual strategy; on the one hand it justified the use of militancy, but also undertook to build wider social support amongst ultra-conservative sections of society.<sup>47</sup> It is the latter aspect which remained the strategic focus of the GI in its four central books published in 2004 which articulate their renunciation of violence to their supporters. Yet, Drevon critically remarks that despite the recantation of violence, militancy as a political tactic was never formally rejected.<sup>48</sup> In fact, *jihad*, even in its violent interpretation, continued to be regarded as a strategic option should the context in question call for such actions. Although its party, the BDP, formally engages in political participation, the GI retains this position until today. Hence, there remains a distinct question-mark over their ideological moderation and they thus remains a clear example of moderation on the strategic level only.<sup>49</sup>

The political ambivalence of Salafi parties evidences the strategic calculus that binds these to political participation. These organisations are far from re-evaluating their ideological positions. Although there is an ongoing intra-organisational debate in all three Salafi cases, this does not amount to ideological moderation. Given that al-Sisi’s regime appears to tolerate their political participation and, in fact, appears to regard Salafis as an Islamist alternative to the MB that can be held in check because their ultra-orthodox ideas do not find wide support, there is little incentive for change as there is little internal or external pressure which could trigger intra-organisational debates which are key to ideological reform.

## **Conclusion**

Does the political participation of Islamist parties lead to moderation? The cases of Egyptian Islamist parties in the post-Spring era seems to challenge the participation-moderation model. The model suggests that, by including parties in formal political processes, these change not

only their political behaviours, but eventually also their ideological frames. Looking at post-Spring Egyptian cases, we can trace a variety of political trajectories amongst Islamist parties, but none of these actually substantiate the participation-moderation model. As we have seen above, the FJP's development demonstrates that participation in formal politics can undermine ideological reform. The various Salafi movements participate in elections, but there is little evidence of ideological reform. Finally, reformist movements accepted democratic values, but this had the effect that they boycotted the 2015 Parliamentary Elections; in short, their ideological moderation led to non-participation.

Still, the paradigm, if used critically and with caution, remains a useful facsimile, perhaps an ideal-type, by which to assess the trajectories of political parties in transition. Egyptian post-Spring developments show us that numerous Islamist parties adapted to the new political setting and as such showed some level of moderation. As such, strategic moderation is a minimal denominator as it allows Islamist parties, similar to any other legally recognised party, access to pursuing their agenda through formal political institutions. From this point of view, participation has a direct, positive effect, although many of the more influential parties such as the FJP, al-Nour, BDP and al-Ansar merely participated due to strategic calculations and without engaging in substantial ideological re-framing.

While participation has a direct impact on strategic moderation, the Egyptian cases of Islamist parties suggests that ideological moderation is not prompted by political inclusion. When reviewing Islamist parties in the post-coup era, there is no case which could evidence a direct relationship between participation and ideological moderation. The participation of the MB during 2011-2013 undermined the possibility of ideological moderation; the reason for this lies in the fact that there were little incentives for the organisation to change. While there is little concrete evidence that the MB and its, now irrelevant, FJP has any intention to turn to violence as a strategic option in response to its ban in 2013, this aspect in itself does not

demonstrate ideological moderation in terms of a relative process of accepting democratic principles and values. Salafi parties such as al-Nour, BDP, al-Ansar and al-Watan continue to participate in post-coup political processes, but they also show little sign of ideological reform. Their turn to formal politics is mainly driven by a strategic calculus, thereby continuing to consider violent *jihad* as a potential option should a formal institutional path be blocked. Moreover, their views on the status of non-Muslims and the role of women in society and politics remain firmly guided by ultra-orthodox religious precepts. Only reformist parties show a considerable degree of ideological moderation, although with notable differences between them. As such, al-Wasat remains more on the orthodox side of the reformist spectrum given its positions on *shari'a*. Not altogether successfully, al-Wasat attempts to bridge the gap between traditional Islamic positions and democratic values. Strong Egypt, however, clearly demonstrates a high level of ideological moderation, supporting positions which present an interpretation of Islam that is fully compatible with democratic processes and liberal values. Yet, even in the case of Strong Egypt, this ideological moderation is not necessarily the result of political participation, but rather the outcome of reflections triggered by a dispute with the conservative MB leadership. The fact that reformist parties boycotted the 2015 elections in protest against the return to an authoritarian state system epitomises that ideological moderation is not the result of participation; on the contrary, non-participation here is the consequence of ideological moderation.

Reformist parties which did engage in ideological moderation, thus undergoing a micro-level transformation that internalised (at least to a considerable extent) democratic principles and values, did not re-frame their positions as a result of participation in the political system. In fact, in all cases of reformist Islamist parties it is apparent that their ideological shifts are the outcome of intra-organisational debates; in the Egyptian cases, these

resulted in the departure of reformists from their mother-organisations as ideological differences proved irreconcilable. We can identify several triggers for intra-organisational tensions, both negative and positive factors which put the given parties under considerable pressure. These include 1) levels of repression and exclusion which, as in the Tunisian case, encourage parties to foster alliances and thus to negotiate with what constituted previous opponents; 2) (relative) political openings which, as in the Egyptian cases, provide new opportunities to participate and to absorb political skills; and/or 3) tensions caused by generational cleavages. In any case, the process of ideological moderation is not triggered by a strategic consideration as there is usually a high cost involved, adversely affecting a party's mobilising capacity and hence its short-term strategic influence. Taken beyond the remit of Egypt's Islamist parties, there is thus certainly reason to substantially reconsider elements of the participation-moderation model, albeit without dismissing the basic concept completely.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> A number of Middle East specialists, amongst them notably Schwedler, Wickham, Clark and Dalacoura have made noteworthy contributions. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient room in this chapter to address the discussion over definitions and the subsequent empirical debates. To engage with these issues, see e.g. Schwedler, Jillian (2011), 'Can Islamist Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis', *World Politics*, 63:2, pp. 347-376; Schwedler, Jillian (2006), *Faith in Moderation. Islamist Parties in Jordan and Jemen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky (2004), 'The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party', *Comparative Politics*, 36:2, pp. 205-228; Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky (2013), *The Muslim Brotherhood. Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press;

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Dalacoura, Katerina (2011), *Islamist Terrorism and Democracy in the Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 123-147.

<sup>2</sup> Lynch, Mark (2016), 'In Uncharted Waters. Islamist Parties beyond Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 16 December, <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/12/16/in-uncharted-waters-islamist-parties-beyond-egypt-s-muslim-brotherhood-pub-66483>> (last accessed 11 May 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Ashour provides a working-definition, stating that '...moderation is a process of relative change within Islamist movements that is mainly concerned with the attitudes of these movements towards democracy'. Ashour, Omar (2009). *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Schwedler, 'Can Islamist Become Moderates?', pp. 347-376.

<sup>5</sup> Hill, Evan (2016), 'Egypt's Crowded Political Arena', *Aljezeera*, 17 November, <[www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/egypt/2011/11/2011111510295463645.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/egypt/2011/11/2011111510295463645.html)> (last accessed 11 May 2017); Anon., (2014), 'Egyptian Political Parties and Movements' *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 24 February, <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/02/24/parties-and-movements/h1pm#islamist>> (last accessed 11 May 2017).

<sup>6</sup> The category is in reference to parties' views on the distribution of wealth and their stance on the economic system. It is well-known that most Islamist parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood, hold conservative views on the political economy. See Clark, Janine A. , (2004), *Islam, Charity, and Activism: Middle-Class and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 42-81. There is some research on the alliances between Islamists with the Left in the pre-Spring period. See Abelrahman, Maha (2009), "'With the Islamists? Sometimes. With the State? Never!'" Cooperation between the

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Left and Islamists in Egypt’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 36:1, pp. 37-54. So far there is no adequate investigation on ‘left-wing’ Islamist parties, i.e. those that emphasise greater social justice, a regulated capitalist, or even socialist, system in their manifestos. The assessment above is therefore only indicative and based on the experience of the author.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, Nathan (2014), ‘Egypt's Constitutional Cul-De-Sac’, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 31 March, <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/31/egypt-s-constitutional-cul-de-sac-pub-55310>> (last accessed 11 May 2017). Note: The 2014 Electoral Law (No. 46) stipulates that 2/3 of parliamentary seats are filled through independent candidacies, while only 1/3 is chosen through party-lists. It works to the benefit of local elites and introduces a high degree of patrimonial leverage. It also opens a backdoor to candidates previously affiliated with the ousted Mubarak regime. See Anon. (2015), ‘Elections in Egypt: 2015 House of Representatives Elections. Frequently Asked Questions’ *International Foundation for Electoral Systems*, 14 October, <[http://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2015\\_ifes\\_egypt\\_hor\\_elections\\_faq\\_final.pdf](http://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2015_ifes_egypt_hor_elections_faq_final.pdf)> (last accessed 11 May 2017); Brown, Nathan and Michele Dunne (2013), ‘Egypt’s Draft Constitution Rewards the Military and Judiciary’, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 4 December, <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/12/04/egypt-s-draft-constitution-rewards-military-and-judiciary-pub-53806>> (last accessed 11 May 2017). For the text of the 2014 Constitution, see High Elections Committee (2014), ‘Constitution of The Arab Republic of Egypt issued in January 2014’, January, <[www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/laws/Constitution\\_2014-En.pdf](http://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/laws/Constitution_2014-En.pdf)> (last accessed 11 May 2017). The Electoral Law is available at High Elections Committee (2014), ‘Law no.46/2014 on the House of Representatives’,

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<[www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/laws/HouseOfRepresentatives2014-46\\_en.pdf](http://www.elections.eg/images/pdfs/laws/HouseOfRepresentatives2014-46_en.pdf)> (last accessed 11 May 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Lacroix, Stephane (2016), 'Egypt's Pragmatic Salafis: The Politics of Hizb al-Nour', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1 November, <[http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP\\_287\\_Lacroix\\_al\\_Nour\\_Party\\_Final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_287_Lacroix_al_Nour_Party_Final.pdf)> (last accessed 11 May 20187), pp. 7-10.

<sup>9</sup> According to Schwedler, strategic moderation reflects the acceptance of the institutional side of electoral politics and hence merely describes a tactical decision to take part in formal institutional processes. Ideological moderation goes hand-in-hand with the adoption of democratic principles on the one hand, and liberal values such as tolerance and equality of all humans on the other. Schwedler, 'Can Islamist Become Moderates?', pp. 347-376.

<sup>10</sup> Zollner, Barbara (2016), 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Transition. An Analysis of the Organisation's Mobilising Capacity', in Peter Lintl, Christian Thuselt and Christian Wolff (eds.), *Religiöse Bewegungen als politische Akteure im Nahen Osten*. Berlin: Nomos, pp.: 43-70; Trager, Eric (2011), 'The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood. Grim Prospects for a Liberal Egypt', *Foreign Affairs* September/ October.

<sup>11</sup> See Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky (2002), *Mobilizing Islam. Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*. New York: Columbia University Press; Zahid, Mohammed (2010), *The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Succession Crisis. The Politics of Liberalisation and Reform in the Middle East*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris; Zollner, 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Transition', pp. 43-70.

<sup>12</sup> Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood. Evolution of an Islamist Movement*; Zahid, *The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Succession Crisis*, pp. 112-115.

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<sup>13</sup> Interviews with ‘Abd al-Mun’im Abu al-Futuh, 10 July 2010, Cairo, and Kamal El-Helbawi, 9 October 2011, Cairo.

<sup>14</sup> Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood. Evolution of an Islamist Movement*; Trager, ‘The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood’.

<sup>15</sup> Interviews with senior MB member, 15 July 2010, New Cairo, ‘Abd al-Mun’im Abu al-Futuh, 10 July 2010, and Islam Lutfi, 24 October 2011, Cairo.

<sup>16</sup> Zollner, ‘The Muslim Brotherhood in Transition’, pp. 43-70.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with ‘Abd al-Mun’im Abu al-Futuh, 1 November 2011, Cairo.

<sup>18</sup> Interviews with junior MB member, 9 November 2011, Cairo and Muhammad Affan, 25 November 2011, Cairo.

<sup>19</sup> Malek, Dalia (2012), ‘Exclusive Interview With Mohamed Morsi: What to Expect From the Muslim Brotherhood’, *Mic Network*, 24 June, <<https://mic.com/articles/380/exclusive-interview-with-mohamed-morsi-what-to-expect-from-the-muslim-brotherhood#.kdckceR1b>> (last accessed 11 May 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood. Evolution of an Islamist Movement*; Zollner, Barbara (2009), *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology*. Abdingdon and New York: Routledge.

<sup>21</sup> Stacher, Joshua (2002), ‘Post-Islamist Rumbblings in Egypt: The Emergence of the Wasat Party’, *Middle East Journal*, 56:3, pp. 415-422; Wickham, *The Path to Moderation*, pp. 205-228. See also the party’s website: ‘Hizb al-Wasat. Official Website’, <[www.alwasatparty.com/](http://www.alwasatparty.com/)> (last accessed 11 May 2017).

<sup>22</sup> El-Hennawy, Noha (2011), ‘Political Freedom, Competition Drives Rifts between Muslim Brotherhood Factions’, *Egypt Independent*, 24 March,

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<[www.egyptindependent.com/news/political-freedom-competition-drives-rifts-between-muslim-brotherhood-factions-0](http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/political-freedom-competition-drives-rifts-between-muslim-brotherhood-factions-0)> (last accessed 11 May 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Anon. (2015), 'Strong Egypt Party (Hizb Misr al-Qawiyya)', *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy*, 16 October, <<https://timep.org/pem/political-parties/strong-egypt-party/>> (last accessed 11 May 2017). See also the party's Facebook page <[https://www.facebook.com/pg/MisrAlQawia/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/MisrAlQawia/about/?ref=page_internal)> (last accessed 11 May 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Muhammad al-Qassas, 5 November 2011, Cairo.

<sup>25</sup> See al-Wasat Party, 'Hizb al-Wasat. Official Website'. Also interview with Ibrahim Za'frani, 17 September 2011, Cairo.

<sup>26</sup> Baker, Raymond (2003), *Islam Without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

<sup>27</sup> Wickham, *The Path to Moderation*, pp. 205-228.

<sup>28</sup> See Strong Egypt Party, 'Hizb Misr al-Qawiyya. Misr Al Qawia Party. Facebook'. Also interviews with 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, 1 November 2011, Muhammad al-Qassas, 5 November 2011 and Islam Lutfi, 24 October 2011. Furthermore, see El Sherif, Ashraf (2016), 'The Strong Egypt Party: Representing a Progressive/Democratic Islamist Party?', *Contemporary Islam*, 10/3, pp. 311–331.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, 1 November 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Muhammad al-Qassas, 5 November 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Atef, Ghada (2014), 'Wasat Party Withdraws from NASL, Considers Parliamentary Elections', 24 August, <[http://thecairopost.youm7.com/news/123570/inside\\_egypt/wasat-party-withdraws-from-nasl-considers-parliamentary-elections-source](http://thecairopost.youm7.com/news/123570/inside_egypt/wasat-party-withdraws-from-nasl-considers-parliamentary-elections-source)> (last accessed 11 May 2017).

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2017). See al-Wasat's declarations of July and August 2013 on 'Hizb al-Wasat. Official Website'.

<sup>32</sup> Jayson (2015), 'A Sense of Belonging. A Sympathetic Analysis of Egypt', 18 February, <<https://asenseofbelonging.org/2015/02/18/strong-egypt-a-party-in-the-middle/>> (last accessed 11 May 2017). See Strong Egypt's declarations of July and August 2013. Strong Egypt Party, 'Hizb Misr al-Qawiyya. Misr Al Qawia Party. Facebook'.

<sup>33</sup> See al-Wasat's declaration on the election boycott; al-Wasat Party, 'Hizb al-Wasat. Official Website'.

<sup>34</sup> See Strong Egypt's declaration on the election boycott, Strong Egypt Party, 'Hizb Misr al-Qawiyya. Misr Al Qawia Party. Facebook'. See also Anon. (2015), 'Strong Egypt Party to Boycott Upcoming Parliamentary Elections', *Mada Masr*, 4 February, [www.madamasr.com/en/2015/02/04/news/u/strong-egypt-party-to-boycott-upcoming-parliamentary-elections/](http://www.madamasr.com/en/2015/02/04/news/u/strong-egypt-party-to-boycott-upcoming-parliamentary-elections/) (last accessed 11 May 2017).

<sup>35</sup> There are many streams of Salafis. For an overview see Haykel, Bernard (2009), 'On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action', in R. Meijer (ed.) *Global Salafism. Islam's New Religious Movement*. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, pp. 33-50.

<sup>36</sup> Drevon, Jerome (2015), 'The Emergence of Ex-Jihadi Political Parties in Post-Murbarak Egypt', *Middle East Journal*, 69:4, pp. 511-526 and Lacroix, 'Egypt's Pragmatic Salafis', pp. 7-10.

<sup>37</sup> Lacroix, Stephane (2012), *Sheikhs and Politicians. Inside the New Egyptian Salafism*. Doha: Brookings Doha Center, June, <[www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Stephane-Lacroix-Policy-Briefing-English.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Stephane-Lacroix-Policy-Briefing-English.pdf)> (last accessed 11 May 2017) . See also Anon. (2015), 'al-Nour Party' *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East*

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*Policy*, 16 October, <<https://timep.org/pem/political-parties/al-nour/>> (last accessed 11 May 2017).

<sup>38</sup> Lacroix, *Sheikhs and Politicians*.

<sup>39</sup> Drevon, 'The Emergence of Ex-Jihadi Political Parties in Post-Murbarak Egypt', pp. 511-526.

<sup>40</sup> Lacroix, 'Egypt's Pragmatic Salafis', pp. 10-16.

<sup>41</sup> Mostafa, Mahmoud (2015), 'Court Rejects Al-Nour Party's Dissolution' *Daily News Egypt*, 5 July, <[www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/07/05/court-rejects-al-nour-partys-dissolution](http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/07/05/court-rejects-al-nour-partys-dissolution)> (last accessed 11 May 2017).

<sup>42</sup> Lacroix, 'Egypt's Pragmatic Salafis'.

<sup>43</sup> Drevon, 'The Emergence of Ex-Jihadi Political Parties in Post-Murbarak Egypt', pp. 511-526; Lacroix, *Sheikhs and Politicians*.

<sup>44</sup> Lacroix, *Sheikhs and Politicians*; Drevon, 'The Emergence of Ex-Jihadi Political Parties in Post-Murbarak Egypt', pp. 511-526.

<sup>45</sup> Troth, James (2003), 'Islamism in Southern Egypt: A Case Study of a Radical Religious Movement', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35, pp. 547–572; Meijer, Roel (2009), 'Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong as a Principle of Social Action: the Case of the Egyptian Jama'a al-Islamiyya', in Roel Meijer (ed.) *Global Salafism. Islam's New Religious Movement*. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, pp. 189-220.

<sup>46</sup> Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists*; Blaydes, Lisa and Rubin Lawrence, (2008), 'Ideological Reorientation and Counterterrorism: Confronting Militant', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20:4, pp. 461- 479.

<sup>47</sup> Meijer, 'Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong', pp. 189-220.

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<sup>48</sup> Drevon, 'The Emergence of Ex-Jihadi Political Parties in Post-Murbarak Egypt', pp. 511-526.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. pp. 511-526.