

# Armed Groups and Intra State Conflict: A Study on the Egyptian Case

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**Abstract**—This case study aims to identify the intrastate conflicts between the nation state and armed groups. Nowadays, most wars weaken states against armed groups. Thus, it is very important to negotiate with such groups in order to reinforce the law for the protection of victims. These armed groups are the cause of conflicts and they are related with many of humanitarian issues that result out of conflicts. In this age of rivalry; terrorists, insurgents, or transnational criminal parties have surfaced to the top as a reaction to these armed groups in an effort to set up a new world order. Moreover, the intra state conflicts became increasingly treacherous than the interstate conflicts, particularly when nation state systems deal with armed groups which try to influence the state. The unexpected uprising of the Arab Spring during 2011 in parts of the Middle East and North Africa formed various patterns of conflicts. The events of the Arab Spring resulted in current and long term change across the region. Significant modifications in the level, strength and period of armed conflict around the world have been made. Egypt was in the center of these events. It has fought back the armed groups under the name of terrorism and spread common disorder and violence among civilians. On this note, this study focuses on the problem of the transformation in the methods of organized violence within one state rather than between two state or more and analyzes the objectives, strategies, and internal composition of armed groups and the environments that foster them, with a focus on the Egyptian case.

**Keywords**—Armed groups, conflicts, Egyptian armed forces, intrastate conflicts.

## I. TOWARDS NEW WARS

BY the beginning of 1990s a new degree of unresolved conflicts facing the world system which pits states against Armed groups in a phenomenon of new wars. The face of those actively engaged in fighting, irrespective of whether they are regular or irregular armies, battling fiercely in the hope of gaining power, recognition, and political legitimacy. Phenomenon of these new wars involves the erosion of all traditional parameters that distinguish between lawful and unlawful actors, state and private protagonists, soldiers and civilians, intra and interstate wars, and political and lucrative objectives. The fruit of all those phenomena that make up the world today, beginning with globalization, the ongoing development of the warfare of the 1960s which was the conflicts in the period following the Korean wars, the revolution in military affairs in US, and the new technologies-communication- information- and organized system [1].

The phenomenon of the new wars recalls the major

conflicts with the thirty years wars (1618-1648) pre Westphalian Europe. The 30 years wars lesson for today is that without effective peace violent localized conflicts of the kind that can be observed today may spread very quickly to other areas and drag whole regions into a downward spiral.

New wars –intrastate wars- attracted the attention of scholars for several reasons; first, in the post-Cold War Period, intrastate conflicts outnumbered interstate wars. Second, the duration of the new wars was much longer than that of previous wars: on average, the duration of intrastate conflicts outstripped that of international wars. Finally, the new wars exacted a heavy toll on civilians and communities. In summarizing the distinctive features of the new wars, contended that they were different in terms of their goals, the methods of warfare, and how are they are financed. Unlike previous wars that were fought on the basis of political ideologies, new wars are marked by ethnic and religious mobilization [2]. More while, those conflicts are today at the heart of wars that are sometimes difficult to categorize as new types of conflict or alternatively as a crumbling of faced.

It could almost be said that the difficulty of understanding the present intrastate conflicts is due to the mismatch between a world that is in a state of flux and wars that have not left the past behind. The wars of today are fought with conventional weapons, within state borders, for mundane reasons and classic issues, most of which are limited to power struggles or aspirations to autonomy [3].

## II. ARMED GROUPS AND DOMESTIC LAW

Armed conflicts involving the participation of an armed group are a phenomenon of remarkable significance in comparison to interstate conflicts. These armed groups include insurgents, terrorists, guerillas, militias, police agencies, criminal organization, war-lords, privatized military organizations, mercenaries, pirates, drug cartels, apocalyptic religious extremists, orchestrated rioters and mobs, and tribal factions. These armed groups, empowered by globalization, operate not just in many weak and failed states but have also found sustenance in the strongest ones. They epitomize the complex security challenges that governments and the international community faces in building global governance and security [4]. This means, these armed groups have the potential to employ arms in the use of force to achieve political, ideological or economic objectives. They are not within the formal military structures of States, State-alliances or intergovernmental organizations. Armed groups are not under the control of the State(s) in which they operate and can include: rebel movements, ethnic militias, and economic and

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military entrepreneurs. The dangerous of these armed groups is in its using of violence to challenge the authority of established regimes in various places which if the nature of the threats and demands of various armed groups in the world. Those armed groups actively engaged in the fighting, irrespective of whether they are regular or irregular armies, battling fiercely in the hope of gaining power, recognition and political legitimacy. The vast majority of the contemporary armed groups are primarily driven by political objectives. Although some of these groups have drifted towards criminal activities, this is first and foremost because of a need to fund their activities [5].

Because of the refusal of members of armed groups to obey the domestic law, the situation is on the side of the government forces. The armed group's armed operations are conducted within a state; the group is therefore governed by domestic law. In principle, domestic law reserves the use of armed force for government forces. An armed struggle against government forces is therefore by definition a violation of domestic law. The prohibition of the use of armed force set out in contemporary international law only concerns states in their relations with each other. It does not concern situations arising within the borders of a state. Thus, the use of force by states on their own territory is not prohibited by the international law relating to recourse to force [6].

In the Egyptian case, and finally president Abdul Fattah Al Sisi has approved stringent new counter terrorism laws to fight a growing Jihadist insurgency. The laws establish special courts and offer additional protection from legal consequences for military and policy affairs that have used force. They also impose the death penalty for anyone found guilty of setting up or leading a terrorist group.

Under the new laws introduced on August 2015; 1) trials for suspected militants will be fast tracked through special courts. Anyone found guilty of joining a militant group could face 10 years in prison. 2) Financing terrorist groups guilty will also carry a penalty of life in prison 25 years. 3) Inciting violence or creating websites deemed to spread terrorist messages will carry sentences of five to seven years [7].

### III. THE ARMED GROUPS AFTER THE ARAB SPRING

The term 'Arab Spring' has come to represent the events that have rocked this region since the beginning of 2011, and has seen the collapse of four heads of the region's authoritarian regimes starts from Tunisia in the west of the region to Yemen in the east.

Three main patterns have emerged so far [8]; first, some regimes have fallen, creating the Arab world's first presidents removed from office by popular will. Second, other regimes are fighting so fiercely for their survival that they have plunged their countries into bloody and civil war like those in Syria and Yemen. The third pattern are those regimes that may not feel they are fighting for their lives, but do see the writing on the wall. Like king Abdullah of Jordan, and king Mohammed VI of Morocco.

The political metamorphosis of the Arab World lead to internal conflicts that breed a new generation of armed groups

with various demands from Asia to Africa.

By zooming in on the Egyptian case and its war with the armed groups, especially because of this country's demographic, cultural, and political centrality in the region and the representative of regional trends, we can refer the terrorism in Egypt to those armed groups which linked to Islamic extremism. Targets have included government officials, police, tourists and the Christian minority.

Terrorism in Egypt increased in the 1990s when the Islamist movement al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya targeted high level political leaders and killed hundreds in its pursuit of implementing traditional Sharia law in Egypt.

Most of the popular extremism armed groups in Egypt are; 1) al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya- Islamic Group. Considered a terrorist organization, the group was dedicated to the overthrow of the Egyptian government and replacing it with an Islamic state. 2) Egyptian Islamic Jihad, originally referred to as Al-Jihad organization, in an Egyptian Islamic terrorist group active since the late 1970s. the organization's original primary goal was to overthrow the Egyptian government and replace it with an Islamic State. Following the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, former leaders of the group formed a political party called the Islamic party. 3) TakfirWal- Hijra "Excommunication and Exodus" was the popular name given to a radical Islamism group "Jama'at al-muslimin" which emerged in Egypt in the 1960s as an offshoot of Muslim Brotherhood.

### IV. THE OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES OF THE EGYPTIAN ARMED GROUPS

Armed groups are designed to change minds by destroying bodies. Although the ultimate goals of these groups have varied over time, five have had enduring importance [9]: regime change, territorial change, policy change, social control, and status quo maintenance. Regime change is the overthrow of a government and its replacement with one led by the terrorists or at least one more to their liking. Territorial change is taking territory away from a state either to establish a new state or to join another state. Policy change is a broader category of lesser demands. Social control constrains the behavior of individuals, rather than the state. Finally, status quo maintenance is the support of an existing regime or a territorial arrangement against political groups that seek to change it. And to achieve their long-term objectives, they are pursuing a variety of strategies, the primary strategies of costly signaling are; attrition, intimidation, provocation, spoiling, and outbidding. In an attrition strategy, terrorists seek to persuade the enemy that the terrorists are strong enough to impose considerable costs if the enemy continues a particular policy.

Terrorists using intimidation try to convince the Population that the terrorists are strong enough to punish disobedience and that the government is too weak to stop them, so that people behave as the terrorists wish. A provocation strategy is an attempt to induce the enemy to respond to terrorism with indiscriminate violence, which radicalizes the population and moves them to support the terrorists. Spoilers attack in an

effort to persuade the enemy that moderates on the terrorists' sides is weak and untrustworthy, thus undermining attempts to reach a peace settlement. Groups engaged in outbidding use violence to convince the public that the terrorists have greater resolve to fight the enemy than rival groups, and therefore are worthy of support. Moreover, the most important task for any terrorist group is to persuade the enemy that the group is strong and resolute enough to inflict serious costs, so that the enemy yields to the terrorists' demands and the attrition strategy is designed to accomplish this task.

#### V. THE GROWING THREAT IN EGYPT

Although the terrorism in Egypt refers to terrorist attacks in Egypt, many of them linked to Islamic Extremism groups, which launched bloody attacks in Egypt since 1977 when a group known to the public as TakfirWal-Hijra (excommunication and exile), kidnapped former Egyptian government minister Muhammad al-Dhahabi. The group was led by a self-taught Islamic preacher Shukri Mustafa, and called the Jama'at al-Muslimin. These armed groups have its way to bloody activities more after the military overthrow of the president Mohamed Morsi.

Al-Qideseen church bombing: A car bomb explosion outside a church in the north Egyptian city of Alexandria killed at least 21 people and injured 43 following the evening service held at the church causing clashes between Coptic church members at the scene and the surrounding policemen. The attack saw governments around the world warn international travelers of the dangers of visiting the country, highlighting a likelihood of further terrorist attacks and possibility of kidnappings in Sinai [10].

On 23 January 2011, the Egyptian minister of interior Habib El Adli stated that Ahmed Lotfi Ibrahim Mohammed confessed to monitoring Christian and Jewish places of worship and sending pictures of the Qideseen church in Alexandria to the Army of Islam. He had visited Gaza several times and was involved in planning the attack. British intelligence revealed that Muhammad Abd al-Hadi, leader of Jundullah, recruited Abdul Rahman Ahmed Ali who was told to park the car, which would be exploded by remote control.

2014 border attack: On 20 July 2014, at least 21 Egyptian soldiers were killed, and 4 injured in the Al-Wadi Al-Gedid attack when armed gunmen attacked a border checkpoint in the New Valley Governorate.

Islamic states fighter attacked several military checkpoints in Egypt's North Sinai region in a coordinated assault that killed more than 100 people – one of the biggest terrorist strikes in Egypt's modern history. Soldiers, policemen, civilians and terrorists were among the dead.

Islamic State's Egyptian affiliate, Sinai Province, claimed responsibility and said that it had attacked more than 15 security sites and carried out three suicide bombings. This attack is a major escalation in the ongoing conflict in Egypt.

The jihadists, who have killed hundreds of policemen and soldiers, want to topple the Cairo government and have stepped up their campaign since 2013, when Sisi removed

President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood after mass protests against his rule.

A video released by the self-declared Islamic State Wilayat al-Tarabulus militants on 15 February was brutal and slickly produced. Masked militiamen lead 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in orange jumpsuits along a beach in western Libya, before forcing them to kneel and beheading them in the surf. One jihadist, speaking in English accented, points his sword towards the sea and says, "We will conquer Rome, by Allah's permission".

#### VI. BMI EGYPT SWAT ANALYSIS

From the point of the importation of the Egyptian security in domestic and regional level, the BMI [11] is made a SWAT analysis about the defense, security, and policy in Egypt from the end of 2014 to 2018. Egypt defense SWAT:

- **Strengths;** Egypt maintains a large and capable army, air force and navy equipped with modern Materiel.
  - Egypt has significant combat experience and is also considered highly capable at counter-insurgency operations, particularly in the Sinai.
  - **Weaknesses;** Production facilities have concentrated on single items for extended production runs, denying the possibility of diversification.
  - Instability has made Egypt a risky defense partner from the perspective of other countries. Little or no exports and a heavy reliance on imports means the Egyptian defense industry is far from self-reliant.
  - Financial and tax reforms, plus cuts in subsidies for food and fuel could yet undermine the popularity of President Al-Sisi as he seeks to bring Egypt's financial situation under control.
  - **Opportunities;** Submarine procurement from Germany should yield important new capabilities and also industrial expertise.
  - Refurbishment of armored vehicles by Ukraine is also now underway.
  - Co-production contracts should diversify industry, increase production and increase local expertise.
  - Ongoing armed force modernization is creating demand for defense articles.
  - Egypt has the opportunity to revive its defense partnership with the U.S. as it fights a wider war on terror.
  - **Threats;** Lack of Research and Development means the Egyptian industry will stay reliant on overseas companies
  - Danger of popular discontent erupting into large scale protests against the financial reforms being undertaken by President Al-Sisi, particularly if these reforms have a disproportionate effect on poor Egyptians.
- Egypt Security SWAT;
- **Strengths;** Strong alliance with the United States and a workable relationship with Israel, although instability in the Sinai risks upsetting the long-term status quo based on the 1979 Camp David Accords.
  - Strategic location giving access to North Africa, East Africa, the Near East, the Arabian Peninsula, the Mediterranean, and the Australasian trade area makes

- Egypt a desirable regional ally and gives it a pivotal role in regional and international security and politics.
  - **Weakness;** the ongoing military crackdown on all forms of military opposition is undermining the country's shift towards democracy.
  - Continuing demonstrations in opposition to the July 2013 coup, particularly amongst the youth, and the remaining elements of the Muslim Brotherhood poses a challenge to Egypt's Interior Ministry.
  - Egypt's deepening involvement in Libya with a view to securing its 1000km border risks further terror proliferation inside Egypt.
  - Ethiopia's construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam leaves Egypt vulnerable to water shortages, which risks aggravating further Egypt's social tensions in the country.
  - Military readiness for interstate conflict has declined over the past 30 years.
  - The country has been under an EU arms embargo since August 2013.
  - **Opportunities;** Egypt has the opportunity to get the US arms embargo fully lifted after securing the Apache helicopters, and a preliminary deal to buy arms from Moscow.
  - The U.S. battle on the Islamic State provides Egypt with an opportunity to present itself as a partner in the war on terror.
  - **Threats;** Iran could exploit the perceived power vacuum in Egypt to further its interests.
  - Jihadi groups continue to target security forces mass in the Sinai Peninsula.
- Egypt Policy SWAT;
- **Strengths;** Egypt has no serious disputes with neighboring states, although its relationship with Iran is relatively tense.
  - The interim government has received substantial financial assistance for Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait - indicating regional support.
  - **Weaknesses;** There is considerable domestic opposition to the government's relations with the US and Israel, and, increasingly, to recent economic reforms.
  - Substantial tension exists between the military and Islamist groups, including the popular Muslim Brotherhood.
  - The transition away from authoritarian rule and the creation of necessary democratic institutions will be a protracted process, and there is no certainty that the end result will be a fully consolidated representative regime.
  - The risk of sporadic terrorist attacks is significant, particularly from Ansar Bait Al-Maqdis (Defenders of Jerusalem).
  - **Opportunities;** the country is a major player in the Arab-Israeli peace process.
  - Any success for Barack Obama's plans to re-engage with Syria and Iran would benefit Egypt.
  - **Threats;** although the level of militant attacks, particularly on tourists and Western targets, appears to have fallen in recent years, sporadic incidents should not

be ruled out.

- Demands for the military to quicken the transition process away from authoritarian rule are unlikely to be met, which could increase the risk of large-scale unrest.
- The reported presence of Hezbollah operatives in Sinai, apparently planning to attack tourist sites in Egypt, has highlighted the lack of effective policing in the region and added to security risks in the area.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study presented the conflict between the Egyptian state and the armed groups under the name of "war against terrorism" which was from the early 1990s. The results revealed that the objectives of these armed groups are mainly mentioned in 3 aims: policy change, social control, and overthrow the government, and the strategies of these armed groups to obtain its objectives were the bloody attacks.

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