

Egyptian islamic jihad essay sample

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



Introduction

Egyptian Islamic Jihad is one of the influential fundamentalists groups in the Middle East. Similar to other terrorist groups, religious intensity of a particularly violent kind is thus ascribed solely to Islam even when religious feeling is spreading remarkably everywhere.

A retreat into religion became the way most Islamic communities could be explained, from Saudi Arabia—which, with what was supposed to be a peculiarly Islamic logic, refused to ratify the Camp David Accords—to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Egypt. In this way, researchers underline that the Islamic world is differentiated, in the Western mind generally, in the United States in particular, from regions of the world to which terrorism analysis could be applied.

Origins

Egyptian Islamic Jihad or Al-Jihad al-Islami is an active militant group since the late 1970s. Egyptian Islamic Jihad is a fundamentalist group which holds that the interpretation and application of authoritative texts is self-evident to any “right-thinking” man or woman (Johnson, Kelsay, 1991).

Roots of Egyptian Islamic Jihad are closely with movements of Muslim societies against Western cultures and Americanization, and with Muslim Brotherhood. Following Michael G. Knapp (2003) “Disillusionment with the path Muslim societies have taken in the modern period reached its height in the 1970s. Increasingly widespread rejection of Western civilization as a model for Muslims to emulate has been accompanied by a search for

indigenous values that reflect traditional Muslim culture, as well as a drive to restore power and dignity to the community” (Knapp, 2003: 82).

Egyptian Islamic Jihad can be understood as a stiffening of resistance to the modern world—both by emphasizing those elements of the Islam most offensive to self-consciously modern men and women, and by asserting that the modern world itself is destined for imminent destruction. Egyptian Islamic Jihad attempts to avoid direct interpretation altogether, and in that way to prevent the erosion of their tradition. Egyptian Islamic Jihad makes an attempt to prevent the erosion of a cultural tradition by finding within it an authoritative core and interpreting the rest accordingly (Johnson, Kelsay, 1991).

“ The causes of Islamic radicalism have been religio-cultural, political, and socio-economic and have focused on issues of politics and social justice such as authoritarianism, lack of social services, and corruption, which all intertwine as catalysts” (Knapp, 2003: 82). In addition, the various Muslim nationalities whose identities have been blocked in various states clamor for their Islam.

And beneath all this—in madrasas, mosques, clubs, brotherhoods, guilds, parties, universities, movements, villages, and urban centers all through the Islamic world—surge still more varieties of Islam, many of them claiming to guide their members back to “ the true Islam”. It is important to note that “ Some radical components of the Islamic movement in Egypt were influenced by the Iranian revolution’s views on nationalism when they considered that

Arab nationalism was a racist ideology which was opposed to any collective framework grouping Muslim countries together” (Abdelnasser, 1997: 25).

The aim of the group is to establish Islamic state in Egypt with secular Arab governments. The remarkable feature of Egyptian Islamic Jihad is a powerful force challenging the cohesion of states. As a result, Egyptian Islamic Jihad is responsible for a variety of national and international tensions, such as the revival of communal tension in the Middle East. “ Radical Egyptian Islamist thinkers took hold of ... nationalist conception of jihad and its role in establishing a truly Islamic government” (Knapp, 2003: 82). Egyptian Islamic Jihad is prepared to oppose their understanding of tradition to that of their community’s leaders.

Ideology of the Group

Ideology of the group is vividly expressed in a pamphlet “ The Neglected Duty”. “ It argues that jihad as armed action is the heart of Islam, and that the neglect of this type of action by Muslims has caused the current depressed condition of Islam in the world” (Knapp, 2003: 82). This violence serves the interests of political and economic profiteers; it creates its own martyrs, rituals and routine; and it forces all members of the respective communities to subscribe to their own group’s identities and demands.

The particular dangers of ethnic violence are its capacity to escalate, to develop its own rationale and to discredit or destroy those intermediaries who try to contain it. Also, “ The Neglected Duty” provides further justification for armed action by arguing that Egypt, like most of its

neighbors, is not an Islamic state because its constitution and laws are a mix of traditional Islamic judgments and European law codes" (Knapp, 2003: 82). The main changes in ideology of the group took place in 1998 when Zawahiri declared " jihad against Jews and Crusaders". A merger between al-Qaeda and Egyptian Islamic Jihad marked a new era in international terrorism.

Where authoritarianism is primarily defensive, Al-Jihad al-Islami is aggressive and militant. Authoritarianism did not seek to mobilize the community and to exercise total control over every aspect of human life; Al-Jihad al-Islami is totalitarian without qualification.

It sees the mass of the population as incapable of contributing to the state except through obedience, and calls for active, self-sacrificing obedience. Al-Jihad al-Islami has no theory as to how leaders should be selected or how leadership should be transferred from one leader to another. The retention of an authoritarian and secular system of government, along with a complex system of decentralized decision-making, created mounting; disagreements.

Religion is used by Al-Jihad al-Islami to prove obligation of a nation to go to war, but it has nothing to do with safety and happiness which are the main values for every nation. Religious differences can undoubtedly motivate people to acts of extreme violence against those whom they classify as ' other'. Ethnic confrontations' acting as an ' original cause of war' are rarely found, but still they exist. In many cases rivals for power make use of ethnic differences as a political resource, but the differences themselves are not responsible for war'. In this case, an obligation to go to war serves as a causal explanation of war.

Leaders

It is supposed that two main leaders of Egyptian Islamic Jihad are Sheikh Omar Abd al-Rahman (spiritual leader) and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Egyptian Islamic Jihad receives support from Iran and al-Qaeda. Egyptian authorities claim that this group is sponsored by Usama bin Laden and Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya. This support includes weapons, training camps and money for terrorist attacks. Sudan, Pakistan and Afghanistan also support Al-Jihad al-Islami.

The researchers state that Egyptian Islamic Jihad is divided into two groups: one led by Zawahiri, and the group led by Ahmad Husayn Agiza. Abbud al-Zumar is considered as a leader of Jihad, Currently, he is imprisoned in Egypt, Zawahiri, an ideological leader of the terror group, supposes that "fighting the close enemy (the Egyptian regime) was more important than fighting the far enemy (Israel and the West)" (Gebara, 2005: 23). Zawahiri wrote several books including "The Bitter Harvest" (1991) which critiques the Muslim Brothers.

Egyptian authorities suppose that Zawahiri's brother, Mohammed, ahs become a military commander of the group when Zawahiri was imprisoned. "In March 2004, there were reports that the Pakistani Army was fighting al-Qaeda loyalists under the command of Zawahiri in the Waziristan region" (Gebara, 2005: 23). As for Abdullah Muhammad Al-Rahman, reports state that he was a key figure in terror activities in the Middle East coordinating al Qaida's work with other terror groups in this region.

Currently, Egyptian Islamic Jihad operates in the Cairo region and has an extensive network of smaller groups in Afghanistan, Sudan, Yemen, Pakistan, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, and England.

Main Activity

In October 1981, members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad were accused in assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. This was the first big success which unveiled strength and violent intentions of the group. After this event, Egyptian Islamic Jihad conducted armed attacks against civil population and government authorities. These activities gave further proof of its fundamental intransigence.

They did not seem grateful for the quotidian benefits of modernization (cars, an enormous military and security apparatus, a stable regime) and appeared indifferent to the blandishments of “Western” ideas altogether. What was especially troubling about their attitude was their fierce unwillingness to accept any style of politics (or for that matter, of rationality) that was not deliberately their own.

During 1990s, the group conducted a series of successful attacks against Interior Minister Hassan al-Alfi and Prime Minister Atef Sedky (1993). In 1992, they provided a series of attacks against secular government.

As the most important, Egyptian Islamic Jihad conducts most of attacks against US authorities and U. S. facilities. For instance, in 1998 the group attacked the U. S. embassy in Albania. Above all, it was their attachment to an Islam that was Egyptian, fiercely contested, and idiosyncratically

defended that seemed especially defiant. A smaller number of commentators decrying the apparent upsurge in Islamic religiosity connected it to the upsurge in the United States of television religions numbering many millions of adherents, or to the fact that two of the three major presidential candidates in 1980 were enthusiastic born-again Christians.

Egypt's security in American eyes has become conveniently interchangeable with fending off Islam, perpetuating Western hegemony, and demonstrating the virtues of modernization. In these ways, three sets of illusions economically buttress and reproduce one another in the interests of shoring up the Western self-image and promoting Western power over the Orient: the view of Islam, the ideology of modernization, and the affirmations of Israel's general value to the West (Abdelnasser, 1997). Obviously the military role in the politics of any given country does depend crucially on the nature and origins of the armed forces themselves and their relationship to the society in which they serve.

By the beginning of 1990, things were desperate in Egypt. A marked feature was the criminalization of the militant movement. This was reflected by figures that showed that proportionately more and more civil people were being killed. According to recent results (Firestone, 1999), 1300 people including policemen and government officials were killed by this terrorist group. This meant that the movement was consuming those very people on whose behalf it was supposed to be fighting.

In terms of terrorism and its tools—murder, threat, extortion and domination by fear—the years 1990 and 1993 were the worst years. One of the leaders,

Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman was accused in bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993 and imprisoned in the USA. Also, he was suspected in conspiring to “ blow up two major New York traffic tunnels and the United Nations Building, a bridge and the skyscraper containing the FBI field office” (Waller, 2002: 20).

Also, Al-Jihad al-Islami is suspected in killing 58 tourists and six policemen near Luxor. These events took place in November 1997 when six terrorists “ flagged down two busloads of Japanese and European tourists” (Waller, 2002: 20). The most recent attack took place in October 2004, when “ three explosions rocked Egypt’s red sea resorts killing 33 people, mostly Israeli tourists” (Gebara, 2005: 23).

For Egyptian authorities, the main difficulty with Islam, however, was that unlike India and China, it had never really been pacified or defeated. For reasons which seemed always to defy the understanding of scholars, Islam continued its sway over its adherents, who, it came regularly to be argued, were unwilling to accept reality, or at least that part of reality in which the West’s superiority was demonstrable.

In general, most of the terror attacks were “ successful” for Al-Jihad al-Islami attracting attention of the world’s community. Following Zawahiri, “ the battle will not be won and Jerusalem will not be conquered unless Cairo is conquered and the battle in Egypt and Algeria is won” (Gebara, 2005: 23). The main “ blow” took place in 2000 when Ahmed Ibrahim El Naggar and Ahmed Ismail Osman were sentenced to death. In spite of decline of the

group, it still remains one of the most influential and violent extremist groups in Asia.

The main problem is that only recently have there been overt references to Egyptian religious fanaticism, and many of these have been to the zealots, whose principal activity has been the violent setting up of illegal settlements worldwide. Yet most accounts of militant settlers in the West simply leave out the inconvenient fact that it was “ secular” labor governments that first instituted illegal settlements in occupied Arab territory, not just the religious fanatics now stirring things up. This kind of one-sided reporting is an indication of how Egypt has been used as a foil for Islam. At the beginning of the new millennium, Rahman supports terrorist attacks of his group ordering ‘ his followers to “ kill [Jews] wherever they are” (Waller, 2002: 20).

Both the Islamic community of interpretation and the Western or American community as formed mainly by the mass media have tragically staked much of their energies on the narrow point of confrontation between them, and in the process have ignored what did not concern this confrontation. What is lacking is some concerted political decision to enter the world in earnest, a lack which proves that far from being a united force the Muslim states are not yet politically mobilized or coherent (Firestone, 1999).

There are many talents that need to be encouraged first, not least among them the capacity to produce and articulate a conscious and forceful self-image. It is important to note that “ Jihad is now ... incumbent on all Muslims and will remains [sic] so until the Muslims recapture every spot that was Islamic but later fell into the hands of the kuffar [infidels]. Jihad has been a

fard ' ain [individual obligation] since the fall of al-Andalus [Spain]. ... The duty of jihad is one of the most important imposed on us by God ... He has made it incumbent on us, just like prayer, fasting and alms [zakat] (Azzam, cited Ramakrishna, 2005: 343).

Today, there is no longer much excuse for bewailing the hostility of " the West" towards the Arabs and Islam and then sitting back in outraged righteousness. When the reasons for this hostility and those aspects of " the West" that encourage^: are fearlessly analyzed, an important step has been taken toward changing it, but that is by no means the whole way: something must be put in its place if a new mass of anti-Islamic propaganda is not to result (Firestone, 1999).

Certainly there are great dangers today in actually following, actually fulfilling, the prevailing hostile image of Islam, though that has thus far only been the doing of some Muslims and some Arabs and some black Africans. But such fulfillments underline the importance of what still has to be done (Abdelnasser, 1997).

There is little information available about future disposition of Al-Jihad al-Islami, but it is possible to say that previous success will lead to new attacks and bombing. The group ideology appeals to a vast majority of people involved in terrorism. This ideology reflects national and ethnical ideas of Muslims who fight for independent state and national identity.

In Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood, in Saudi Arabia the Muslim militants who took the Medina mosque, in Syria the Islamic Brotherhoods and Vanguard

who once opposed the Baath party regime, in Iran the Islamic Mujahideen, as well as the Feda-yeen and the liberals: these make up a small part of what is an adversarial current running through the nation, although researchers know very little about it (Firestone, 1999; Ramakrishna, 2005).

It is important to note that the escalation of terror often leads to a change in the group's leadership and to the emergence of political and militant factions. In the shadow of unstable political situation, terrorist groups, militias and warlords acquire new positions of power, income and prestige, while the old-established political elite is intimidated or driven into exile (Johnson, Kelsay, 1991).

Today, both Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Western or American community as formed mainly by the mass media have tragically staked much of their energies on the narrow point of confrontation between them, and in the process have ignored what did not concern this confrontation. There are many talents that need to be encouraged first, not least among them the capacity to produce and articulate a conscious and forceful self-image (Kochan *et al* 1996).

Conclusion

In sum, there is first the danger that the conflict and terror activity of Egyptian Islamic Jihad will escalate to the point at which different states and terror groups conclude that the other seeks its total destruction. In interstate wars, this unrelenting escalation of fear, hate and ambition will normally be checked by external forces.

In the framework of an established state system, in which there are third parties, a balance of power and diplomatic calculations, a single state cannot hope completely to destroy another. In spite of decline in activity of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, there is a great threat of bombing and terror attacks organized by the group. Fear, and a strategy of total destruction used by Egyptian Islamic Jihad can therefore run their full course and negotiation becomes extremely difficult.

Taking into account successful terrorist attacks of the group and its ideology, it is possible to predict that in some years there will be increased terrorist activities around the world aimed to demonstrate power of Muslim terror groups and Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

The problem is that there are spaces outside of holy war where local actors can invest in and build commitments to the autonomy of law and the importance of legal expertise as a language of governance. Those concerned with the rule of national identity should expand their gaze to consider other places where there can be major social impacts. Those who involved in war will be alert to transformations that do not seem to fit the rule—or are outside the realm of traditional existence.

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