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**Discord in the Desert:
Egypt's Sinai Peninsula in the aftermath of the Arab Spring**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Defence and Strategic Studies

at Massey University, Manawatu,
New Zealand.

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2015

Abstract

The Sinai Peninsula's security environment has altered significantly since President Mubarak's overthrow in January 2011. Though Sinai has a history of militant Islamism, prior to 2011 violence was uncommon and limited in scope. Today, conflict is widespread and described by commentators as an insurgency. Violence has increased in frequency and is qualitatively different. Violence has also spilt beyond Sinai, affecting not just Egypt, but Israel and the wider region.

This thesis maps how the Arab Spring has affected Sinai's security environment. This is important as continued security deterioration demonstrates that Egypt's actions there have failed. To explain why, this thesis provides a framework for understanding the security environment's principal actors: Egypt, Israel, Gaza, militant Islamists and the Bedouin. Mapping Sinai's security environment explains the nature of post-Mubarak changes and how these actors influenced these changes. The thesis demonstrates that regardless of the government in Cairo, Egypt's military has controlled Sinai's security and has viewed it through a solely security-based lens.

To map the causes of these changes this thesis considers three themes. First, it demonstrates how Mubarak-era marginalisation of Sinai's Bedouin politically, economically and socially has continued following the Arab Spring. Such marginalisation distances the Bedouin from the Egyptian state, and creates an environment susceptible to militant Islamism. Second, the thesis shows that Egyptian-Israeli security cooperation in Sinai has reached its zenith post-Arab Spring, with Israel allowing Egyptian re-militarisation of Sinai to combat militant Islamists. This thesis also argues that any approach that ignores the economic needs of the Bedouin and Gaza's population will fail, with Bedouin's reliance on the Egypt-Gaza tunnel trade distancing them economically from the Egyptian authorities. Last, whilst explaining the varied backgrounds of Sinai's militant Islamists, this thesis demonstrates that the

post-Morsi intensification of violence results from a coalescence of goals between militants and the Bedouin.

Egypt's current security-centric 'separate, silence and neutralise' strategy will not succeed. Whilst requiring military force tailored for counter-insurgency, Egypt's strategy must include Bedouin economic development that integrates rather than isolates Gaza. Commencing at the governorate level, this must be combined with Bedouin political and social integration within the Egyptian state.

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Translation and Transliteration

In producing this thesis place names have been spelt according to common English usage, for example El Arish and Sheikh Zuweid. Arabic names of prominent political figures have likewise been spelt according to their preferred English spelling, for example al-Sisi and Morsi. This standardisation does not apply to citations and quotes, the contents of which are reproduced verbatim. The definite article 'al' appears in lower case and hyphenated with its respective noun, for example al-Qa'ida. In exception to this, the definite article is capitalised where it begins a sentence or is customarily capitalised, for example Al Monitor.

Glossary

ABM	Ansar Bait al-Maqdis
AQSP	Al-Qa'ida in Sinai Peninsula
COU	Civilian Observer Unit
EIJ	Egyptian Islamic Jihad
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party
IDF	Israeli Defence Force
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IG	Islamic Group
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
MFO	Multinational Force and Observers
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SSIS	State Security Investigation Service
TAC	Tunnels Affairs Commission
UN	United Nations
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

Introduction

“What’s happening in Sinai is nothing more than criminal and terrorist acts.”¹

Sameh Shoukry, Egyptian Foreign Minister, July 2015

In 2011 a series of popular revolts swept across the Middle East that became known as the ‘Arab Spring’. Beginning in Tunisia with the self-immolation of street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi, the revolutions led to the overthrow of dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, as well as major uprisings in Bahrain and Syria, and protests across the region. On 11 February 2011, Egypt’s long-standing President Hosni Mubarak resigned from his post after thirty years in power.

Whilst academic attention has been devoted to the revolution and its effects on ‘mainland’ Egypt, there is a significant gap in the research with regard to the Sinai Peninsula, the triangular territory east of the Suez Canal roughly the size of Tasmania. Sinai occupies a strategic position, linking Africa to the Middle East, a geographic fact that has ensured its influential role in the history of civilization in the region. Sinai’s geopolitical location has made the Peninsula the host for numerous inter-state hostilities, most recently as part of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Nicholas Pelham describes the Sinai Peninsula as having served for more than three decades as a ‘near-empty territory cushioning the geopolitical aspirations of Egypt, Israel and the Palestinians’.² Whilst historically a buffer between Egypt and Israel, the security environment in the Peninsula has significantly altered during the post-Mubarak era. Sinai has a history of militant Islamist violence and experienced a string of terror attacks during the mid-2000s.³ Despite this, in the years preceding the Arab Spring politically motivated violence was uncommon and limited in scope. In contrast, conflict

¹ "Egypt denies 'insurgency' in restive Sinai region," Al Bawaba, last modified 06 July, 2015, <http://www.albawaba.com/news/egypt-denies-%E2%80%98insurgency%E2%80%99-restive-sinai-region-716066>.

² Nicholas Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," (London: Chatham House, 2012), p. vi.

³ Ibid., p. 4.

is today widespread. Egyptian and Western commentators describe Sinai's worsened security environment as an insurgency, which conflicts with the Egyptian government's downplaying of violence there as merely criminal and terrorist acts.⁴ Although definitive figures of fatalities and casualties in the Peninsula are unavailable, between July 2013 and July 2015 at least 600 Egyptian police and armed force personnel were killed.⁵ As well as an increase in the magnitude of casualties, the nature of attacks in Sinai have become increasingly sophisticated, featuring coordinated use of improvised explosive devices (IED) combined with small arms attacks. Attacks have likewise become more brutal, for example militant Islamists have employed shock tactics such as beheadings of alleged police informants. The violence has also spilt beyond the Peninsula, affecting not just the Egyptian state, but Israel and the wider region.

As previously mentioned, there is little academic research on the security environment in the Sinai Peninsula in the post-Arab Spring era. It is this gap in the research that this thesis addresses. Much has been written of the Arab Spring's effects on Egypt.⁶ However, such accounts are Cairo-centric and provide little consideration of Sinai. Despite a plethora of journalistic sources detailing militant Islamist violence and the Egyptian state's response, there is limited scholarship on the subject of security in the Peninsula. In 2012 Pelham detailed under-governance, lack of Bedouin integration into existing power structures and growing Islamist sentiments as contributing to the area's fragility and the risk that it becomes a proxy battlefield for surrounding powers.⁷ With some foresight, Ghosh predicted that Egypt's combination of

⁴ See for example "Insurgency takes root in Egypt's Sinai," Abigail Hauslohner, The Washington Post, last modified 28 July, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/insurgency-takes-root-in-egypts-sinai/2013/07/28/2e3e01da-f7a4-11e2-a954-358d90d5d72d_story.html. and "Sinai's enduring insurgency," Omar Ashour, Al Jazeera Media Network, last modified 20 April, 2015, www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/04/sinai-enduring-insurgency-150419080316130.html.

⁵ "Egypt's Sinai rocked by wave of deadly attacks," British Broadcasting Corporation, last modified 01 July, 2015, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33340458.

⁶ See for example Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People Is Greater Than the People in Power: A Memoir* (Cairo: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012). and Galal Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2011).

⁷ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes."

instability, corruption and ineptitude left it as a fertile environment for radicalism and Islamist militancy.⁸

As this thesis demonstrates, the Egyptian Foreign Minister's statement that violence in the Peninsula merely amounts to the actions of criminals and terrorists belies the complexity of Sinai's security environment. Shoukry's statement indicates the Egyptian government's position on Sinai and reflects its solely security-based lens through which it views increasing violence in the Peninsula. This research will help to challenge this view and provide a more comprehensive understanding of Sinai's security environment and the actors that influence it.

The aim of this research is to map how the Arab Spring has affected the security environment of the Sinai Peninsula. In the four years since Mubarak's ouster, this environment has worsened. This deterioration indicates that the Egyptian government's actions there have not been effective. The objectives of this thesis are therefore to understand the nature of the changes that followed Mubarak's ousting as well as the factors that drove them. Fulfilling these objectives explains why Egypt's current strategy in Sinai has been unsuccessful.

This thesis provides a framework for understanding the security environment in the Peninsula. Egypt and Israel are the key state actors within this framework, with the Peninsula's security architecture built upon the Treaty of Peace that resulted from the 1979 Camp David Accords.⁹ This thesis identifies Egypt as a key actor due to its sovereign responsibilities over the Peninsula. Israel does not physically operate in Sinai, however, it is an actor through its enablement of the Egyptian state's actions there and it is affected by the spillover of violence from the Peninsula.

⁸ "Egypt no longer matters," Bobby Ghosh, Time, last modified 18 August, 2013, <http://world.time.com/2013/08/18/egypt-no-longer-matters/>.

⁹ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 24.

Whilst the Treaty of Peace focussed exclusively on states, other actors have developed to significantly impact Sinai's security environment. Foremost amongst these are the Peninsula's native Bedouin. This thesis contends that the Bedouin's social, economic and political marginalisation by the Egyptian state is central to the Peninsula's deteriorated security environment. Such marginalisation has fostered a permissive environment in which militant Islamist groups, both domestic and foreign, have developed. These groups are identified as a key actor as they are predominantly responsible for the attacks in Sinai that characterise the worsened security environment.

The final actor that affects the Peninsula is the Palestinian quasi-state of Gaza. Since the Arab Spring, Egypt has continued the Mubarak-era isolation of the Hamas government in Gaza. This thesis demonstrates that such isolation has negatively impacted Sinai's security environment by further distancing the Bedouin from the Egyptian state. Hence, Gaza is an actor in Sinai not only through its physical actions in the Peninsula, but also as a result of the effects of its relationship with the Peninsula's other actors.

As well as identifying the key actors in the Peninsula, this thesis details how these actors interact with one another to create the current security environment. This thesis contends that the Egyptian government's response to Sinai's deteriorated security environment in the post-Arab Spring era fails to account for all of the actors and their interactions. This study therefore provides a start point for attempting to improve the Peninsula's security environment by providing a comprehensive understanding of the actors and their interactions, which extend beyond the Peninsula itself. As such it will be of interest to policy makers as well as military forces and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that have interests in the region.

This research is wholly qualitative in nature and employs a mixed method approach that follows a thematic methodology. The structure of the thesis is determined by the analysis of three key themes: Bedouin marginalisation by the Egyptian state, the role of Gaza and Israel, and the growth of militant Islamism in the Peninsula. Chapter one focuses on Sinai's Bedouin

population and demonstrates their long-running marginalisation by the Egyptian state. This section shows that Egyptian state policies have worked to distance the minority from the central government. This has generated hostility and distrust amongst the Bedouin, which has contributed to the Peninsula's worsened security environment post-Arab Spring. The chapter's key message is that the security environment will continue to be negatively affected so long as the state excludes the Bedouin politically, socially and economically. The paucity of academic sources means that material is drawn from a multitude of disciplines including anthropology, security studies and political science. This research uses ethnographic texts to examine traditional Bedouin society and study how individuals have adapted to the dominance of the nation-state. Such sources are also employed to consider how the Bedouin, particularly in South Sinai, have reacted to the post-Arab Spring environment. Significant reliance is placed on the reports of NGOs, corroborated by secondary journalistic sources, to understand the treatment of the Bedouin by the Egyptian authorities.

By studying the Bedouin's maltreatment by the Egyptian state, along with their exclusion from political and economic opportunities, chapter one of this research demonstrates how Egyptian security, social and economic policies with regards to Sinai have marginalised the Bedouin. Chapter one also shows how the Egyptian government's policies in Sinai have been limited by its inability and/or unwillingness to differentiate between the Bedouin and the wider Egyptian population. This thesis recognises this distinction and the heterogeneous tribal makeup of Sinai's Bedouin population. It considers how the changes in the security environment differ between North and South Sinai, however, it leaves out of scope differences between the Peninsula's numerous tribes.

The focus of chapter two of this thesis is to consider the role played by Egypt's western neighbours in Sinai's security environment. It demonstrates the positive effect that Israel has had in the Peninsula, with Egyptian-Israeli security cooperation in Sinai reaching its zenith in the post-Arab Spring era. Whilst supporting Egyptian strategy in the Peninsula, chapter two shows how

Israel is seeking to protect itself from the spillover of violence from Sinai. Chapter two demonstrates that Sinai and Gaza share strong economic and social links, and that resultantly the Egyptian government's isolation of Gaza has had a negative effect on the security environment by economically distancing the Bedouin from the Egyptian state. International treaties, such as the Treaty of Peace, and NGO documents are used to describe the security framework that exists within the Peninsula. These sources explain how Sinai's state-based security architecture has been altered by the emergence of non-state actors and the increase in violence post-Arab Spring. Whilst Egypt seeks to maintain its sovereignty in Sinai and Israel desires stability on its eastern border, chapter two demonstrates that the US too desires a stable Sinai. This is due to Egypt and Israel being central to its regional strategy. Chapter two demonstrates that the three states' shared interests are manifested through their support of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) peacekeeping organisation.

The academic study of Sinai's security environment almost exclusively concentrates on the security implications for Israel, and largely excludes its effect on Egypt itself and the state's regional relationships. In order to present a comprehensive analysis of Sinai's security environment, therefore, I have drawn from the field of international relations to explain the evolving relationship between Egypt and Israel, and its impact on Sinai's security environment. There is significant journalistic material relating to Sinai, Israel and Gaza and this is employed due to the aforementioned gap in the academic material. Media sources provide an alternative to the Egyptian state's official narrative and hence add greater balance to the research.

Chapter three of this research maps the development of militant Islamism in Sinai and demonstrates how the Egyptian state's marginalisation of the Bedouin has encouraged its growth. However, it also shows that not all of Sinai's natives adhere to the militant Islamists' ideology. I have used academic sources such as Omar Ashour and Heidi Breen to provide the historical context of Egyptian militant Islamism. These sources demonstrate that the current violence in Sinai represents the third wave of militant

Islamism in recent Egyptian history. The history of militant Islam is important, as current extremism within the Peninsula is rooted in the Egyptian state's response to previous waves of militant Islamist violence. Scholars such as Olivia Holt-Ivry and Emily Dyer explain the development of the current wave of militant Islamist violence in Sinai, and are complemented by a combination of journalistic and NGO sources. These latter sources are chosen as they provide a voice for key actors in Sinai, such as the Bedouin and Gaza. These sources are generally interview based and add depth to the scholarly sources.

The main goal of chapter three is to demonstrate how the Egyptian government's marginalisation of the Bedouin has increased the ability of militant Islamists to operate in Sinai. The thesis uses Little and Rogova's model of threat, which views it as the result of the combination of opportunity, capability and intent, to explain how a multitude of factors following the Arab Spring led to the deterioration of Sinai's security environment.¹⁰ Chapter three compliments the preceding chapters by completing the picture of how the Egyptian government's policies have failed to improve Sinai's security environment.

This study exclusively focuses on English language sources and acknowledges their limitations in terms of translation and context. Those limitations are, however, mitigated through the use of resources that have been translated from Arabic and Hebrew. The significant difference between Arabic and Hebrew sources centres on their perspectives on Gaza, which the former generally portrays more positively compared to the latter. The use of Arabic and Hebrew sources is nonetheless useful to balance the potential bias of the Western sources.

As chapter three highlights, journalism and thus public discourse in Sinai and Egypt as a whole are stifled by the Egyptian authorities. It is important to

¹⁰ E.G. Little and G.L. Rogova, "An Ontological Analysis of Threat and Vulnerability," in *9th International Conference on Information Fusion* (2006).

study the Egyptian authorities' actions as they are the key actor in the Peninsula trying to counter the increase in militant Islamist violence. Sinai is a military zone with access controlled by the Egyptian military. Consequently, the Egyptian authorities exert control over much of the information that comes out of the Peninsula. Hence, access to native language sources does not necessarily guarantee accuracy or clarity. The bias introduced by the Egyptian authorities' media control risks failing to understand how Egypt as a key actor affects Sinai's security environment. This is mitigated through the use of sources from a variety of disciplines and national origins.

Together, this thesis' three chapters provide a depth of understanding of Sinai's security environment in the post-Arab Spring era. It highlights the centrality of the Bedouin to Sinai's security and demonstrates how their marginalisation by the Egyptian government contributes to the worsened security environment. Egypt's isolation of Gaza has increased this marginalisation, with the social and economic ties that link Gaza and North Sinai ensuring that Egyptian moves against Gaza and its Hamas government further distance the Bedouin from the Egyptian state. Pervasive marginalisation of the Bedouin has created an environment in which militant Islamist groups have thrived. The Egyptian government's strategy to combat these groups, viewing Sinai solely through the lens of security, has been unsuccessful. This thesis provides an alternative and comprehensive analysis with which to understand the Peninsula's security environment. Such understanding is necessary for the future development of an effective strategy to improve Sinai's security environment.

Chapter One – Disenfranchisement in the Desert: Sinai Bedouin and the Egyptian State

People of the desert

The Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula are both ethnically and historically distinct from the remainder of the Egyptian population. Unlike regional neighbours Jordan and Saudi Arabia, Egyptian governments have historically failed to embrace desert-dwelling tribes as citizens, nor accorded them the same rights as their fellow countrymen west of the Suez.¹ As Teague explains, 'the Bedouin migrated from the east; the Nile inhabitants came from the west. The Bedouin historically roamed vast territories, but Nile culture is agrarian, respectful of cultivation and stillness, and suspicious of nomadic wandering.'² These cultural differences discouraged integration of Sinai's Bedouin into the Egyptian state, with the inhospitable Peninsula only being annexed by Egypt's British rulers in the twentieth century as a buffer against the Ottoman Empire. Comprising just a fraction of the country's population, the disparate lifestyle of the Bedouin led the Egyptian majority to view them as outsiders at best.³ At worst the Egyptian majority has identified them as a security threat to the state, resisting civil responsibilities and rights whilst harbouring interests and affiliations that extend beyond national borders.⁴

As a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict, control of the Sinai Peninsula shifted numerous times throughout the second half of the twentieth century, with the Bedouin a wholly affected yet largely powerless actor. Notwithstanding the short-lived exchanges of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, for fifteen years following the 1967 Six Day War, Sinai's Bedouin were governed by Israel.

¹ "The Sinai," Matthew Teague, National Geographic Society, last modified March, 2009, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/03/sinai/teague-text/1>.

² Ibid., p. 9.

³ "Band of Outsiders," Jack Shenker, Abu Dhabi Media, last modified 07 November, 2008, <http://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/band-of-outsiders#full>.

⁴ "No Arab Spring for Egypt's Bedouin," Akbar Ahmed and Harrison Akins, Al Jazeera, last modified 15 February, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/201221413149992744.html>.

The security environment during this period was one of calm, with little violence between the Bedouin and their Israeli occupiers. In 1974 and 1975, the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger conducted 'shuttle diplomacy' across the Middle East in an attempt to deal with the fallout of the Yom Kippur War. Finalised in 1975, the Sinai Interim Agreement commenced the withdrawal of Israeli forces in the Peninsula to the east, which set the conditions for a more detailed peace process.⁵ As a result of the agreement, Sinai's Bedouin once more prepared themselves for a change of government, as they shifted back into the Egyptian camp. Such preparations were not politically organised, but rather economic in nature. For example, predicting the Camp David Accords, the Bedouin converted increasing quantities of Israeli currency into Egyptian pounds.⁶ Under the US brokered agreement, Egyptian control of the Peninsula slowly extended east, with the complete Israeli withdrawal and resumption of Egyptian control being completed by 25 April 1982.

The question of how the Bedouin would be received by the greater Egyptian population was a key issue for the Bedouin in the years leading up to 1982; would Egypt view them as fellow countrymen returning from exile or as treacherous collaborators?⁷ Many Egyptians and particularly the government gravitated towards the latter view, which justified policies (or lack thereof) that marginalised the Bedouin. An example of such policies was the nationalisation of the Peninsula, which created conflict over land rights. The key cause of suspicion by the al-Sadat government (1970-1981) was its perception of the Bedouin as a group loyal to Israel living in the geographical territory of Egypt. This perception was fuelled by the fact that under Israeli occupation, the Bedouin enjoyed a period of relative prosperity. For example, Israel built numerous medical clinics in Sinai, provided formal vocational courses in Dahab and Sharm El Sheikh, employed half the Bedouin

⁵ "Shuttle Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974–1975," U.S. Department of State, last modified 31 August, 2013, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/shuttle-diplomacy>.

⁶ Smadar Lavie and William C. Young, "Bedouin in Limbo: Egyptian and Israeli Development Policies in Southern Sinai," *Antipode* 16, no. 2 (1984): p. 40.

⁷ *Ibid.*

population in the oil fields, military and civilian construction, and constructed some thirteen schools in South Sinai alone.⁸ The Bedouin particularly benefitted post-1972 as a result of the development of the Eilat-Sharm El Sheikh road and the touristic development it enabled. Taking advantage of capital amassed through wage labour under the Israelis, the Bedouin sought to profit from the growth of tourism in the Peninsula.⁹

At the time of Egypt's resumption of control of Sinai, its relationship with Israel was ambivalent. Whilst Howard Adelman describes each diplomatic breakthrough as greeted with Egyptian euphoria, this was balanced with mistrust and antagonism borne of recent hostilities.¹⁰ The mainland Egyptian response was to label the Bedouin as Israeli collaborators, accusing them of taking jobs with Israeli companies and starting new businesses under Israeli control.¹¹ Whilst this assertion was in many ways correct at the time, it belied the fact that the Bedouin did not display loyalty to any government, Egyptian or otherwise.¹²

Further adding to the Bedouin's perceived collaborator status was their tribal structure that pays scant credence to national borders. Historically, Sinai's natives enjoy far stronger ethnic ties to Israeli Bedouin than with the remainder of the Egyptian population west of the Suez Canal.¹³ For example, it was not until after the Arab Spring that a border fence between Egypt and Israel was erected, prior to which the Bedouin readily roamed across the nominal border, with tribal lands spanning Egypt, Gaza and the Israeli Negev.¹⁴ Resultantly, relationships with Israeli citizens are natural to the

⁸ "The Politics of Image: The Bedouins of South Sinai," Mai Serhan, Arab Studies Institute, last modified 26 June 2012, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6101/the-politics-of-image_the-bedouins-of-south-sinai.

⁹ Lavie and Young, "Bedouin in Limbo: Egyptian and Israeli Development Policies in Southern Sinai," pp. 39.

¹⁰ Howard Adelman, "Egyptian Anti-Semitism," *Judaism* 28, no. 1 (1979): p. 71.

¹¹ "Securing the Sinai: More Troops Won't Keep the Peace or Save the Egyptian-Israeli Relationship," Amr Yossef, Council on Foreign Relations, last modified 28 September, 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68304/amr-yossef/securing-the-sinai>.

¹² Teague, "The Sinai".

¹³ "Sinai Bedouin throwing off image as 'Zionist collaborators'," Zvi Bar'el, Haaretz Daily Newspaper, last modified 02 May, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/sinai-bedouin-throwing-off-image-as-zionist-collaborators-1.427645>.

¹⁴ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 1.

Bedouin. Such ties rile against Egyptian feelings towards Israel. Though anti-Semitism is widespread in Egypt, Adelman argues that the key cause of contempt towards Israel amongst the Egyptian majority is more from the state being a nearby military threat than its Jewish character.¹⁵ The beyond-border alliances of traditional Bedouin society are the key contesting issue in Egypt's relationship with the Bedouin, as their very way of life becomes a challenge to the national identity of the state in Egypt.

The Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula are not a homogeneous group, but rather comprised of some fifteen to twenty tribes, depending on one's definition (see Figure 1 on the following page). As this research demonstrates, the 'Bedouin' are in fact a mosaic of peoples that reflect the complex settlement history of the Peninsula, with tribal origins being traced as widely as from Saudi Arabia to Romania. The tribes are differentiated by origin, traditions, economic activities, access to strategic resources and in some cases language.¹⁶ This diversity, a history of inter-tribal competition and a lack of pan-tribal leadership has prevented Sinai's Bedouin from negotiating with the Egyptian state as a coherent group.

In spite of their tribal differences, Sinai's Bedouin share common cultural attributes that distinguish them from mainland Egyptian society. Traditional Bedouin society is nomadic and based around the raising of livestock, such as goats, sheep and camels, complemented by the seasonal maintenance of fruit and date orchards. Organised along tribal lines with limited social stratification, social roles in Bedouin tribes are determined by sex, age and seniority rather than civil status. Tribal loyalty is a fundamental characteristic of Bedouin society, acting to preserve the cohesion historically required for survival. As such, the Bedouin are collective in nature, with mainland Egyptians viewing them in terms of this collectivism rather than on an individualistic basis.¹⁷ In addition, the Bedouin speak a different dialect of

¹⁵ Adelman, "Egyptian Anti-Semitism," p. 70.

¹⁶ International Crisis Group, "Egypt's Sinai Question," (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2007), p. 10.

¹⁷ Serhan, "The Politics of Image: The Bedouins of South Sinai".

Arabic and have different physical features, including being generally darker skinned, which further distinguishes them from the Egyptian majority.



Figure 1 Historical distribution of Sinai's Bedouin tribes
 Source: Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes"

Politically, Bedouin leadership is based upon consultation amongst individual male elites, with authority often being both hereditary and elective. Chiefly status may be passed down through generations, but requires validation from other tribal elders for an individual to maintain their position of

influence.¹⁸ Furthermore, Bedouin society has its own customary law, based on retributive justice.¹⁹ Whilst sharing some commonalities with Islamic *Shari'a*, traditional Bedouin law differs in its readiness to hold tribes collectively responsible for the conduct of individuals, as well as allowing for blood feuds that follow the doctrine of 'an eye for an eye'.²⁰ In summarising the Egyptian government's issue with the Bedouin, Jack Shenker convincingly argues that they are 'at once too localised – with allegiance to clans and tribes before all else – and too transnational, sharing family members with fellow tribespeople across the Egyptian border with Israel and the rest of the Arab world.'²¹ As a result of this paradoxical blend of insularity and internationalism, Bedouin society competes with the Egyptian nation state construct.

Indeed, Bedouin social structure is wholly incompatible with the very nature of the nation state system. A nation state enjoys sovereignty within fixed, geographical boundaries and binds its population together through a central political decision making body that also functions as an instrument of national unity. This fundamental contradiction between a nation state and a tribal system has existed since the creation of the modern Egyptian state, and provides a counter-argument to the popular view that considers the Egyptian government as a repressive regime that targets a subjugated indigenous people. Whilst before and after the Arab Spring Egyptian treatment of Sinai's Bedouin has been brutal and arguably unjust, its motives should be viewed in the context of the inherent demands of the nation state and the challenges that both the Egyptian government and the Bedouin face to fulfil them. As posited by Mai Serhan, the Egyptian state's requirement to control and integrate the Bedouin into the nation state system has entailed the disruption

¹⁸ Yasin Khalaf Sarayrah, "Servant leadership in the Bedouin-Arab culture," *Global Virtue Ethics Review* 5, no. 3 (2004): pp. 58-59.

¹⁹ Austin Kennett, *Bedouin justice: laws & customs among the Egyptian Bedouin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), p. 30.

²⁰ "Bedouin arbitration processes: A societal safeguard?," Sarah El-Rashidi, *Ahram Online*, last modified 11 November, 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/1/0/57797/Egypt/0/Bedouin-arbitration-processes-A-societal-safeguard.aspx>.

²¹ Shenker, "Band of Outsiders".

of the group's very social order.²² Such disruption has affected the Bedouin's nomadic lifestyle and lack of social stratification, practice of customary law, tribal loyalty and the notion of collective identity.

The conflict between the Egyptian nation state and traditional Bedouin tribal system has instigated stereotypes through which mainland Egyptians could identify the minority group. Such generalised views have been used by Egyptian authorities both to identify the Bedouin and to justify government policy towards them. Lavie describes the creation of such stereotypes as a means to 'reduce context to its essence and thereby enable reorganization' of the Bedouin within the Egyptian state.²³ Espoused by officials including politicians, and members of the police and armed forces, one such stereotype views the Bedouin as exotic desert-dwelling nomads. Whilst traditionally nomadic, such a stereotype is today not wholly accurate. Although nomadic lifestyles persist in South Sinai in particular, sedentarisation and urbanisation have strongly affected the Bedouin across the Peninsula. For example, approximately one third of the population of North Sinai's capital El Arish comprises urbanised Bedouin.²⁴ Nevertheless, at times the Bedouin have embraced this stereotype for their own economic advantage. For example, a small proportion of the Bedouin from South Sinai tribes have benefitted from 'Bedouin experience' style tourism ventures that play upon the perception of exoticism.

Further stereotypes have identified the Bedouin as Israeli collaborators, as discussed previously. Whilst authorities have long employed these stereotypes, the Egyptian majority has traditionally viewed Sinai as a backwater populated by backward nomads.²⁵ This dominant stereotype transitioned to that of the Bedouin as outlaws. Mainland Egyptians have long

²² Serhan, "The Politics of Image: The Bedouins of South Sinai".

²³ Smadar Lavie, *The poetics of military occupation: Mzeina allegories of Bedouin identity under Israeli and Egyptian rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), p. 27.

²⁴ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 1.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Mass Arrests and Torture in Sinai," (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2005), p. 8.

associated the Bedouin with illegal drug cultivation and smuggling.²⁶

Terrorism in Sinai in the mid-2000s reinforced this stereotype, which persists today. For example, responding to Bedouin complaints of continued political exclusion post-Arab Spring, an Egyptian intelligence officer stated 'we're not in the business of legitimizing smugglers, terrorists, drug barons and outlaws'.²⁷ Lina Attalah states that the Bedouin resent the term 'outlaw'.²⁸

Car bombs and drag nets: the Egyptian State's response to terror

Mubarak-era policies in the aftermath of the Taba bombings of 2004 expanded the stereotype of the Bedouin as outlaws to incorporate terrorism. On 7 October 2004, a massive vehicle-borne IED targeted the Taba Hilton, with two further bombings at campsites to the south at Ras Shaitan. These coordinated bombings targeted foreigners, as the town of Taba in the Gulf of Aqaba is a popular tourist destination. In the chaos Egypt opened its border to Israeli emergency services and as a result of both Egyptian and Israeli jurisdictions being involved, no definitive casualty total exists. The figure reported by the Egyptian government was that some thirty-four people were killed, including thirteen Egyptians, ten Israelis, two Italians and a Russian. In addition, more than one hundred people were injured.²⁹

Under the auspices of the Egyptian government bringing the perpetrators of the bombings to justice, on approximately 13 October 2004 the Egyptian authorities commenced a campaign of 'drag net' arrests, which resulted in the detention of up to three thousand predominantly Bedouin and Palestinian residents of North Sinai.³⁰ On 25 October 2004 the Egyptian authorities announced the names of nine suspects, of whom only two remained at large.³¹ The massive campaign of arrests was disproportionate and was

²⁶ Joseph J. Hobbs, "Troubling fields: the opium poppy in Egypt," *Geographical Review* 88, no. 1 (1998): p. 79.

²⁷ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 19.

²⁸ "Sinai: The paradox of security," Lina Attalah, *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, last modified 08 April, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/opinion/sinai-paradox-security>.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Mass Arrests and Torture in Sinai," p. 7.

³⁰ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 4.

³¹ Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Mass Arrests and Torture in Sinai," p. 8.

labelled as both arbitrary and unlawful by human rights groups.³² Many of those who were arrested were not informed of the reason for their detention. Some detainees were held in prisons throughout Egypt for months without charge, whilst multiple human rights organisations documented cases of detainees being held as hostages by security services to compel family members to surrender to the authorities.³³ There are also substantiated allegations of widespread torture of detainees whilst incarcerated.³⁴

This pattern of repression of the Bedouin was repeated following subsequent attacks in Sharm El Sheikh in July 2005 and Dahab in April 2006.³⁵

Throughout these episodes a primary agent of the Egyptian regime's repressive policies in Sinai was the State Security Investigation Service (SSIS).³⁶ Originating as the intelligence arm of the police, the SSIS became an independent body under the Interior Ministry during the Nasserite period, and was mandated to combat political threats to state security, particularly Islamist ones. The organisation reported directly to the Minister of the Interior and worked closely with state security courts that were distinct from the regular judiciary. By 2011 the SSIS was estimated to number some 400,000 personnel, with the country's internal security forces outnumbering active-duty military personnel by a ratio of three to one.³⁷ The SSIS has been the main actor in enforcing Egypt's decades-long state of emergency. The prolonged state of emergency began during the Six Day War of 1967 under the auspices of the 'emergency law', in order to consolidate state power and quell dissent. The emergency law was rescinded in May 1980, only to be re-imposed in October the following year following the assassination of President al-Sadat by Khalid Islambouli, a member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.³⁸

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

³⁵ Amnesty International, "Egypt – Systematic abuses in the name of security," (London: Amnesty International, 2007), p. 10.

³⁶ Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Mass Arrests and Torture in Sinai," p. 45.

³⁷ "Rethinking Internal Security in Egypt," Michelle Dunne and Mara Revkin, last modified 16 March, 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/03/16/rethinking-internal-security-in-egypt>.

³⁸ Amnesty International, "Egypt – Systematic abuses in the name of security," p. 47.

Renewed every three years and bolstered by other counter-terrorism statutes, the legislative framework of the state of emergency applied equally to the Bedouin as to other Egyptians and permitted the flouting of human rights protections stipulated in the Egyptian constitution. The state of emergency provided successive Egyptian governments with the justification for arbitrary arrest and detention for indefinite periods. The government used these harsh punishments against Sinai's Bedouin, who were at greater risk of abuse by the state as a voiceless minority. The Bedouin lack political avenues for challenging such detentions and this lack of ability resulted in strikes and protests in the towns of North Sinai. For example, on 11 March 2005 some four hundred Bedouin congregated in El Arish's main square protesting against the mass arrests.³⁹ These demonstrations had little influence on the government, evidenced by an absence of mass releases or prevention of subsequent large-scale arrests. Despite its draconian nature, even the emergency law stipulated that the authorities must 'immediately inform a person of the reason for his arrest, allow him to contact family and legal counsel, and provide for the right to appeal his detention after thirty days.'⁴⁰ These rights were not accorded to the Bedouin during the multiple campaigns of mass arrests in the mid-2000s.⁴¹

Likewise, Egypt is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention Against Torture.⁴² Egypt's Constitution, Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure also prohibit torture, albeit under a narrower definition than found within these aforementioned international agreements. In reality however, torture and the ill-treatment of detainees is widespread and systemic. Nowhere in Egypt is this truer than in Sinai, where perceived security threats strengthen the state's perceived justification for such measures. Following the Taba bombings for example, various human rights groups collected extensive and credible evidence of

³⁹ "Protesters arrested in Egypt," News 24, last modified 11 March, 2005, <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Protesters-arrested-in-Egypt-20050311>.

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Mass Arrests and Torture in Sinai," p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

torture having occurred during detention by security forces including victims being beaten, hung by the wrists, electrocuted, as well as numerous other forms of ill treatment.⁴³

This long running pattern of repression and mistreatment by the authorities resulted in intense Bedouin hostility towards the state. Accordingly, the Bedouin welcomed the Arab Spring as an opportunity to be free from the state's repressive security apparatus in the Peninsula.⁴⁴ In March 2011, Interior Minister Mansour al-Issawi announced the disbandment of the SSIS. Sinai's Bedouin received the news with cautious optimism, given their longstanding ill treatment. This was followed by the diminution of emergency powers and finally the expiration of the emergency law on 31 May 2012.

Egypt's security and military forces were shaped under Mubarak as organisational rivals to prevent any single agency becoming too strong and threatening the regime.⁴⁵ The SSIS competed with the armed forces for power and resources. However, the Supreme Council of the Armed Force's (SCAF) announced disbandment of the SSIS was aimed to placate the Egyptian public, rather than to shift the balance of power between the two organisations. The post-Arab Spring disbandment was more correctly a re-branding of the organisation under another name: Egyptian Homeland Security.⁴⁶ Despite the name change, the powers and methods employed by the state's security apparatus have changed little since 2011. This security apparatus remains politically powerful, considered by alternatively the country's military and Muslim Brotherhood leaders as both too powerful and too important for meaningful change away from methods that have included political manipulation, torture and abuse. In the disarray following President Mohammed Morsi's ousting by the armed forces, the Interior Minister

⁴³ Amnesty International, "Egypt – Systematic abuses in the name of security; Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Mass Arrests and Torture in Sinai."

⁴⁴ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 5.

⁴⁵ Juha P. Mäkelä, "The Arab Spring's Impact on Egypt's Securitocracy," *International Journal of Intelligence & Counterintelligence* 27, no. 2 (2014): pp. 232-33.

⁴⁶ "Rebranding Egypt's Intelligence and Security Services," Alexander Joffe, Gatestone Institute, last modified 29 March, 2011, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/1997/rebranding-egypt-intelligence-security-services>.

Mohammed Ibrahim announced the reinstatement of the SSIS under its old name, along with many of its experienced officers who had been sidelined in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings.⁴⁷

The SSIS operates throughout Sinai and its officers seldom distinguish themselves from the police. Therefore, it is difficult to wholly delineate the role of the SSIS from the mainstream police, who likewise fall under the Minister of the Interior's remit and have harassed Sinai's Bedouin. North Sinai alone hosts thirteen police stations, along with numerous checkpoints that have long curtailed Bedouin movement and access to economic opportunities to the south.⁴⁸ The police largely disappeared from public view in Sinai around the period of the February 2011 uprisings that culminated in the overthrow of Mubarak.⁴⁹ This was a result of the Interior Ministry's recall of forces from the Peninsula to shore up the regime to the west of the Suez Canal, along with a concerted campaign of attacks by a combination of the Bedouin and militant Islamists, sometimes working in concert. This campaign resulted in the deaths of at least one hundred people, the majority of them police, as well as the loss of control of weapons and munitions by security forces following raids upon government facilities by undisclosed militants.⁵⁰

Sinai post-Arab Spring: Egypt's Wild West

In the six months following President Mubarak's overthrow, the government's hold over the Peninsula became increasingly tenuous, particularly in North Sinai.⁵¹ Combined Bedouin and militant Islamist attacks on police and their stations in El Arish, Rafah, Sheikh Zuweid and El Quseima became

⁴⁷ "Egypt restores feared secret police units," Patrick Kingsley, Guardian News and Media, last modified 29 July, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/29/egypt-restores-secret-police-units>.

⁴⁸ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 3.

⁴⁹ Yossef, "Securing the Sinai: More Troops Won't Keep the Peace or Save the Egyptian-Israeli Relationship".

⁵⁰ Ehud Yaari, "Sinai: A New Front," in *Policy Notes* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2012), p. 8.

⁵¹ "In Egypt's Bedouin Badlands: No Police Allowed," Abigail Hauslohner, Time, last modified 10 August, 2011, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2087790,00.html>.

commonplace. The heightened threat of attacks against police commenced during the Arab Spring's protests and persists today. This increased threat of violence engendered a defensive posture, restricting the police's freedom of movement. The security services' decreased ability to operate for fear of attack provided the Bedouin with a sense of social freedom they had not experienced in at least two decades.⁵² Such attacks only served to reinforce the mainland Egyptian stereotype of the Bedouin as outlaws, with attacks against forces comprised solely of mainland Egyptian personnel creating little public sympathy toward the Bedouin.⁵³

In a bid to re-assert the state's control over the Peninsula, on 12 August 2011 the Egyptian military commenced Operation Eagle, which aimed to subdue armed groups that had prospered in the security vacuum.⁵⁴ According to Stephen Cook some 2,500 troops took part, the first major troop movement in the largely demilitarised Peninsula since the signing of the 1979 Camp David Accords.⁵⁵ Whilst military force was arguably necessary from Egypt's nationalistic perspective, this thesis demonstrates that it was not employed in concert with attempts to assuage legitimate local grievances or in a manner so as to limit further incitement of the Bedouin. Rather, Operation Eagle and its subsequent spin-offs echoed Mubarak's repressive policies, including arbitrary detention, discrimination against the Bedouin, early morning raids of houses and scant regard for local customs and traditions.⁵⁶ Whilst elsewhere in Egypt the military was considered a champion of the people, both during the overthrow of Mubarak and then the

⁵² "Under Mubarak, Morsi or Sisi, Sinai Remains a Victim," Mohannad Sabry, Atlantic Council, last modified 07 August, 2013, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/egyptsource/under-mubarak-morsi-or-sisi-sinai-remains-a-victim>.

⁵³ Gregory Aftandilian, "Assessing Egyptian Public Support for Security Crackdowns in the Sinai," (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2015), p. 2.

⁵⁴ "Has Al-Qaeda Opened A New Chapter In The Sinai Peninsula?," Andrew McGregor, The Jamestown Foundation, last modified 17 August, 2011, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=Sinai&tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=38332&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=4ed439b982eeb0fc20ba411ab657d352#.U0XRrfmSz6c.

⁵⁵ "The Eagle Has Landed...In Sinai?," Stephen A. Cook, Council on Foreign Relations, last modified 17 August, 2011, <http://blogs.cfr.org/cook/2011/08/17/the-eagle-has-landed%E2%80%A6in-sinai/>.

⁵⁶ Sabry, "Under Mubarak, Morsi or Sisi, Sinai Remains a Victim".

subsequent ousting of Morsi, in Sinai it became a symbol of state repression. The military simply replaced the police as the hand of the regime's policy, angering Sinai's Bedouin through heavy handedness and wanton destruction of property.⁵⁷

Political Exclusion

Mistreatment by the SSIS, police and military was not, however, the Bedouin's only grievance against the post-Arab Spring authorities. As discussed, the Bedouin have long been excluded from the political fabric of the country to which they purportedly belong. Egypt is governed as a republic, with the country divided into twenty-seven governorates. The Sinai Peninsula includes five of these: Port Said, Ismailia, Suez, North Sinai and South Sinai. Of these, only Port Said, North and South Sinai are centred in the Peninsula, with the remainder gravitating west of the Suez Canal to their regional capitals. Governorates are overseen by a presidentially appointed governor and as with many other regime appointments, they are invariably military officers, or otherwise from within the state security sector.

Notwithstanding the hopes of the Arab Spring's protesters, Egypt has not transformed into a democracy and the people of Sinai continue to have little say over who is appointed to govern them at the governorate level. Sinai's Bedouin lack pan-tribal leadership. This fact, combined with Mubarak-era policies that diffused tribal power, results in the Bedouin currently lacking the political capacity to field a candidate were this permitted. However, such representation remains hypothetical: following Mubarak's overthrow, the pattern of governor appointments followed the paradigm of centralised power. Under the SCAF the majority of governors were military, police and intelligence officers. President Morsi decreased the number of governors from military backgrounds twice during his tenure (in September 2012 and June 2013). His appointments strengthened Muslim Brotherhood control at

⁵⁷ "Egypt's Sinai: Caught in the middle," Al Jazeera, last modified 11 April, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/03/egypt-sinai-caught-middle-201431664729435518.html>.

the governorate level, whilst maintaining a smaller proportion of military governors to preserve his tenuous partnership with the military.⁵⁸

Relations between Sinai's Bedouin and the state did not manifestly improve during the Morsi period (June 2012 to July 2013) through increased Bedouin political representation or remediation of Bedouin grievances. According to Heidi Breen, during this period the authorities did not interfere in tribal courts, or Bedouin economic and security committees.⁵⁹ Morsi also promised to establish a committee of Sinai Bedouin to provide advice on local issues, such as land ownership. Despite Morsi's non-interference and pledge of support for Sinai's natives, tribal leaders complained that he failed to review Bedouin arrests by security services, along with lack of land ownership and economic opportunities.⁶⁰ Despite Morsi's stated willingness to redress Bedouin grievances, security incidents in the Peninsula led to the same heavy-handed security crackdowns employed during the Mubarak-era, leading Mohannad Sabry to state that under Mubarak, Morsi or al-Sisi, 'Sinai remains a victim'.⁶¹

In a consolidation of military power following the 2013 coup, on 6 August 2013 the al-Sisi government announced new appointments that saw nineteen of the country's governorates controlled by military officers.⁶² Lack of representation at this level of government is an issue for the Bedouin as it represents their key political interface with the state. Given that post-Arab Spring the military replaced the police as the hand of the regime's repressive policies, the appointment of personnel from military backgrounds hardly boded well for Bedouin hopes of fair representation.

⁵⁸ "Morsi's Provocative Appointments," Eric Trager, The Washington Institute, last modified 18 June, 2013, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/morsis-provocative-appointments>.

⁵⁹ Heidi Breen, "Egypt: Freedom and Justice to the Bedouins in Sinai?" (Master's thesis, University of Oslo, 2013), p. 96.

⁶⁰ "Morsi's Failures in Sinai: A Cautionary Tale," Sarah El-Rashidi, Atlantic Council, last modified 04 September, 2014, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/egyptsource/morsi-s-failures-in-sinai-a-cautionary-tale>.

⁶¹ Sabry, "Under Mubarak, Morsi or Sisi, Sinai Remains a Victim".

⁶² "Appointment of 19 Generals as Provincial Governors Raises Fears in Egypt," David D. Kirkpatrick, The New York Times Company, last modified 14 August, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/14/world/middleeast/egypt.html?_r=0.

Post-Arab Spring governments continued the Mubarak-era practice of appointing military officers as governors in North and South Sinai, due to their assumed ability to maintain security on the state's periphery.⁶³ However, appointees in both governorates have historically had little affiliation with the regions. There have been examples of well-meaning governors. For example, in 2012 South Sinai Governor General Khaled Fouda spoke of resolving Bedouin land ownership issues and enhancing economic opportunities, albeit whilst describing the Bedouin as 'a headache for the government'.⁶⁴ The governors' military backgrounds have led them to view the Peninsula's issues through the lens of security, for example leading to the mass arrests following the South Sinai bombings between 2004 and 2006. Moreover, as members of Egypt's ethnic majority, they have displayed a bias towards policies that support mainland Egypt, often at the expense of the Bedouin. For example, the Al Salam canal project seeks to support massive land reclamation in the Peninsula to relieve overpopulation in the Nile Delta region, rather than to benefit the Bedouin. North Sinai Governor General Abdel Wahab Mabruk blamed project delays on local instability, whilst the state-run Sinai Development Authority criticised Bedouin land claims for undermining the project.⁶⁵

The focus of Sinai's governors on issues affecting mainland Egyptians at the expense of legitimate Bedouin grievances is understandable given their ethnic backgrounds. However, these governors are best positioned to understand Bedouin complaints and improve state treatment of Sinai's natives. Sinai's governors, however, have sometimes been openly divisive in their dealings with the Peninsula's locals. For example, in a 2010 al-Shorouk newspaper interview, North Sinai Governor Mohamed Murad Muwafi

⁶³ "New wave of regional governors expected "soon", " Ahmed Aboulenein, last modified 22 August, 2012, <http://cdn.dailynewsegypt.com/2012/08/22/new-wave-of-regional-governors-expected-soon/>.

⁶⁴ "South Sinai governor: Bedouin arms proliferation is a problem," Al-Masry Al-Youm, last modified 15 April, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/south-sinai-governor-bedouin-arms-proliferation-problem>.

⁶⁵ "The revival of the Al Salam Canal, supposed to develop Sinai," Zeinab Abulgheit, last modified 21 May, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/revival-al-salam-canal-supposed-develop-sinai-0>.

described the Bedouin as 'criminals' who earned their living through smuggling.⁶⁶ Further comments were interpreted by locals as accusing them of aiming to establish a border state and treasonously serving Israel's political interests.⁶⁷ Such comments were anathema to the Bedouin, who resented the linkage to Israel given the Egyptian mainstream's disdain for its eastern neighbour.

Post-Arab Spring, leadership at the governorate level in Sinai has reflected levels of stability in the two regions. South Sinai's governance has reflected the area's relative calm, with General Fouda holding the position since August 2011. Whilst not representative of his large Bedouin constituency, Fouda has provided some stability through his economic focus. For example, he partly funded the development of an industrial zone in South Sinai, along with continued touristic development.⁶⁸ In contrast, restive North Sinai has seen more changes in governorate leadership. In September 2012 General Abdel Fattah Salem Harhour was appointed to the post, replacing General Mabruk. This was the result of the latter's handling of security leading up to 5 August 2012, when militants reportedly from Gaza crossed into the Peninsula and attacked a border guard post. This attack killed sixteen personnel and was followed by the hijacking of an Egyptian armoured personnel carrier that breached the Israeli border near Kerem Shalom. Harhour's appointment following a security failure reinforces maintaining security as the key determinant of success for officials in North Sinai, as opposed to considering economic or political concerns. Policies in North Sinai are thus shaped towards this single dimension, incorrectly treating the symptom of instability rather than its cause.

⁶⁶ "Cairo's Undercover Strongman," Magdy Samaan, Foreign Policy, last modified 03 February, 2012,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/02/03/prokhorov_putin_russia_elections.

⁶⁷ "North Sinai governor's statements outrage Bedouins," Ahmed Abu Draa, Salah El Boluk, and Ahmed Ragab, Al Masry Al Youm, last modified 25 July, 2010, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/north-sinai-governors-statements-outrage-bedouins>.

⁶⁸ "IDA to develop industrial zone infrastructure in S. Sinai," The Cairo Post, last modified 08 April, 2014, <http://www.thecairopost.com/news/105551/new/ida-to-develop-industrial-zone-infrastructure-in-s-sinai>.

As discussed, the Bedouin are poorly represented at the governorate level. This chapter argues that the Bedouin likewise shared the mainland Egyptian desire for greater political representation at the national level, which was a key demand of the February 2011 uprisings. This desire along with the heady optimism of the Arab Spring was manifested by significantly increased nationwide voter turnout in the parliamentary elections concluded in January 2012.⁶⁹ Anecdotally, Bedouin voter turnout in South Sinai was unusually high. Consequently, on discovering two ballot boxes more than usual containing some four thousand votes, confused officials in El Tur decided to burn the boxes.⁷⁰ Caught in the act, local Bedouin reacted angrily and their protests were reflected in the mainstream media as petulant demonstrations against the defeat of Bedouin candidates.⁷¹ South Sinai Bedouin used legal avenues to challenge the ballot burning. This involved presenting evidence of the electoral fraud to the judge supervising the electoral process in Ismalia, who overturned the results and ordered a fresh poll. The final result was a Bedouin landslide with eight of the twelve South Sinai representatives elected being ethnic Bedouin, including Fadia Salem, the first female Bedouin MP.⁷² This increased desire for political representation by the Bedouin was reflected in the 2014 referendum on the country's new constitution, with South Sinai's voter turnout the highest of any governorate and more than double the national average.⁷³

Similar increases in political participation have not been, however, reflected in North Sinai. Voter turnout for both the 2012 parliamentary elections and

⁶⁹ May Elsayyad and Shima'a Hanafy, "Voting Islamist or voting secular? An empirical analysis of voting outcomes in Egypt's 'Arab Spring'," *Public Choice* 160, no. 1/2 (2014): p. 112.

⁷⁰ Hilary Gilbert and Mohammed al Jebaali, "'Not philanthropists but revolutionaries.' Promoting Bedouin participation in the 'new Egypt': a case study from South Sinai," (New Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 2012), p. 30.

⁷¹ "Bedouin leaders threaten armed rebellion against Egyptian government," Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, Cable News Network, last modified 17 January, 2012, http://edition.cnn.com/2012/01/16/world/meast/egypt-bedouin-threat/index.html?_s=PM:MIDDLEEAST.

⁷² Gilbert and al Jebaali, "'Not philanthropists but revolutionaries.' Promoting Bedouin participation in the 'new Egypt': a case study from South Sinai," p. 29.

⁷³ "Official Results: 98.1 Percent Vote in Favor of Egypt's New Constitution with 38.6 Percent Voter Turnout," Atlantic Council, last modified 18 January, 2014, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/egyptsource/official-results-98-1-percent-vote-in-favor-of-egypt-s-new-constitution-with-38-6-percent-voter-turnout>.

the series of constitutional referendums since the overthrow of President Mubarak has been below the national average.⁷⁴ According to the Egypt National Party's Tawfik Nasrallah, the Bedouin usually vote in tribal blocks and hence boycotted elections where their own tribesmen have not been candidates.⁷⁵ This explanation proves overly simplistic, however, given their equally poor participation in constitutional referendums, as well as contrastingly prodigious Bedouin turn-out in the South. Instead, this chapter argues that decreased participation stems from the North's more conservative Islamic character, as *Salafi* ideology portrays the election of political representatives as *haram* (forbidden).⁷⁶ It also reflects the ambivalence of North Sinai Bedouin stemming from long-running political and economic marginalisation that has been more pronounced in the North. Following the Arab Spring, both North and South Sinai Bedouin noted with consternation their continued lack of representation in President Morsi's cabinet and the Constituent Assembly responsible for drafting Egypt's new constitution,⁷⁷ yet such disquiet has not resulted in greater political participation or inclusive policies by the state. Demands for representation have not been matched by willingness to participate, a symptom of longstanding political disenfranchisement.

Lack of representation in the governance of the Peninsula is manifested at the local level. Bedouin tribal leadership is traditionally acquired through an individual's influence and standing within the tribe. Philip Hitti famously described the Bedouin as 'a born democrat' who meets his leader on an equal footing.⁷⁸ Tribes typically comprise multiple clans, each led by an elder. Tribal sheikhs govern the tribes in consultation with these elders, with their

⁷⁴ "Preliminary results: 97.7% of votes in favour of Egyptian draft constitution," *Ahram Online*, last modified 16 January, 2014, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/91686/Egypt/Politics-/Live-updates-Initial-results-indicate-Egypt-refer.aspx>.

⁷⁵ "Tribal loyalties and low turnout in North Sinai vote," Abdel-Rahman Hussein, *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, last modified 04 January, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/tribal-loyalties-and-low-turnout-north-sinai-vote>.

⁷⁶ Jonathan Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), p. 4.

⁷⁷ Nicholas Pelham, "Salvaging Sinai," (Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, 2012), p. 7.

⁷⁸ Philip Khuri Hitti, *The Arabs: A Short History*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1956), p. 19.

tenure in office lasting as long as the goodwill and faith of their tribe.⁷⁹ Egypt and Israel before it undermined this traditional construct by appointing their own tribal leaders, for fear that tribal allegiances threatened loyalty to the state.⁸⁰ Sometimes state-appointed sheikhs were already recognised tribal leaders, though at times this was not the case. Under Israeli occupation, a relatively small number of sheikhs were acknowledged by the occupiers and those unwilling to accept such an arrangement either returned to mainland Egypt or were exiled.⁸¹

Following the Camp David Accords that instigated gradual resumption of Egyptian control over Sinai from 1979, al-Sadat expanded the number of tribal leaders recognised as Bedouin spokesmen. This, in turn, increased inter-tribal competition for scarce resources and influence, and decreased their willingness to cooperate with each other. Notably, in March 1980 al-Sadat increased the ranks from thirty sheikhs to some one hundred, in what Smadar Lavie and William Young describe as a divide and conquer tactic aimed at diffusing the power held by any individual leader.⁸² Whilst increasing the number of representatives seemingly reinforced tribal power structures and their ability to negotiate with the state, it decreased the potency of Bedouin opposition to the Peninsula's economic exploitation by the Egyptian elite. The policy also increased Bedouin marginalisation by exploiting their own societal structure, and further alienated them from the state.⁸³

For decades the Egyptian state has implemented policies to weaken Bedouin tribal power structures. The growth of militancy in Sinai is one of the policies' unintended outcomes that has become apparent following Mubarak's overthrow. Egyptian governments post-Arab Spring have maintained

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

⁸⁰ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 3.

⁸¹ Lavie and Young, "Bedouin in Limbo: Egyptian and Israeli Development Policies in Southern Sinai," p. 36.

⁸² Ibid., p. 42.

⁸³ "Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Security," Zachary Laub, Council on Foreign Relations, last accessed 16 January, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/egypt/egypts-sinai-peninsula-security/p32055>.

Mubarak's recognition of a greater number of sheikhs, with the appointment of tribal leaders not merely providing titular acknowledgement. Recognition also provides financial backing, with the state paying appointed tribal leaders a salary. This has created the accurate perception amongst tribal members that such leaders are state employees rather than servants of their tribes, contributing to a decrease in the authority of tribal leaders.⁸⁴ The resultant breakdown in the traditional order has created a gap that has been readily filled by militant Islamists.

Second-class Citizens

Compounding their lack of political representation at the national, regional and local level, the Bedouin have long complained in Egyptian media of being treated as second-class citizens through their exclusion from full participation in the state. Indeed, some Bedouin do not even hold Egyptian citizenship, such as the Azazma tribe.⁸⁵ Customary Azazma territory straddles North Sinai and the Israeli Negev and is dissected by the recently constructed border fence between the two states. Some two thousand members of the tribe are estimated to live on the Egyptian side of the international border. Under the direction of Mubarak-era Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher tribal members were issued special cards identifying them as members of the Azazma tribe.⁸⁶ By this act the state confirmed that the tribe members were not full Egyptian citizens, thus denying them the right to vote as well as access to other services. Israel similarly denies Azazma members citizenship, despite clans on either side of the border generally considering themselves members of the respective states in which they reside. The construction of the border fence enhances Egypt's ability to identify permanent residents within its national boundaries and to address the

⁸⁴ "Sinai tribal leaders lose local support," Al Monitor, last modified 17 April, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/04/egypt-sinai-tribal-leaders-lose-local-support.html>.

⁸⁵ Ahmed and Akins, "No Arab Spring for Egypt's Bedouin".

⁸⁶ "North Sinai voters wary of Islamist dominance," Daily News Egypt, last modified 04 January, 2012, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2012/01/04/north-sinai-voters-wary-of-islamist-dominance/>.

Azazma's citizenship issue, however, its failure to do so reflects its disinterest in the Bedouin.

Egyptian citizenship is derived through a combination of birth within the state's recognised borders as well as the nationality of one's parents,⁸⁷ two conditions that the Bedouin living in remote areas of the Peninsula often find virtually impossible to substantiate.⁸⁸ The Egyptian state is not even fully aware of how many Bedouin living within its borders lack citizenship, given national censuses do not account for the Bedouin as a separate ethnic group and only count registered citizens with identification papers. Despite NGOs' efforts indicating it would not be particularly difficult, successive Egyptian governments have lacked the drive to remedy this shortfall. A significant proportion of the Peninsula's population, estimated between 70,000 and 150,000, lack government identification cards, essentially leaving them invisible to the state.⁸⁹ Lacking such documentation prevents access to the available government services in the region including healthcare, education and subsidised food staples. This also denies the Bedouin access to services provided by NGOs (which require proof of citizenship), such as healthcare.⁹⁰ Lack of registration also makes travel throughout the Peninsula difficult at best, given its status as a military zone and its network of police and military checkpoints.⁹¹ Despite the clear benefits of holding identification papers, low registration levels result from an at times hostile and corrupt bureaucracy that is often far away and prohibitively expensive to access.⁹² Additionally, due to gender norms within Bedouin society, it is common for Bedouin girls married at a young age to not seek registration.

⁸⁷ U.S. Department of State, "Egypt 2013 Human Rights Report," (Washington, DC: U.S. State Department, 2013), p. 26.

⁸⁸ Gilbert and al Jebaali, "'Not philanthropists but revolutionaries.' Promoting Bedouin participation in the 'new Egypt': a case study from South Sinai," p. 18.

⁸⁹ "Egypt's Sinai Bedouins cry out," Sarah El-Rashidi, Ahrām Online, last modified 29 September, 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/0/54170/Egypt/Egypt-Sinai-Bedouins-cry-out.aspx>.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Gilbert and al Jebaali, "'Not philanthropists but revolutionaries.' Promoting Bedouin participation in the 'new Egypt': a case study from South Sinai."

⁹² "EGYPT: No ID, no government services," IRIN, last modified 18 July, 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95890/egypt-no-id-no-government-services>.

As well as denial of services through lack of registration, the Bedouin have long complained in the media of exclusion from civil service jobs and admittance to army and police academies, as well as from holding key roles in the North and South Sinai Governorates.⁹³ Employment, or lack thereof, is perhaps the most pressing issue for Sinai Bedouin. Teague states that more than nine out of ten people in North Sinai's capital between the ages of twenty and thirty have no full-time job.⁹⁴ Official statistics often mask levels of Bedouin poverty, unemployment and under-employment. For example, the Egyptian census follows the assimilationist tack of not recording the Bedouin as a separate dataset, unlike Israel which collects data on tribal affiliation.⁹⁵ Without such data, Egyptian authorities are unable to measure Bedouin economic indicators, such as unemployment.

During the Morsi period, some positive reforms occurred in terms of Bedouin participation in state employment. For instance, the army announced it would permit admission of Bedouin applicants to its Cairo military training college.⁹⁶ Declared reforms have not, however, resulted in discernible change at the grassroots level and Bedouin leaders continue to complain of tribal exclusion from most military units including those in the Peninsula.⁹⁷ Furthermore, whilst Egyptian law makes male conscription mandatory, in practice this law has never been applied to Sinai's Bedouin.⁹⁸ Whilst conscription is unpopular across the region, the Bedouin resent their exclusion by the state and the denial of an opportunity for paid employment.

In another seemingly positive move relating to much needed employment, in April 2012 North Sinai Governor General Mabruk decreed residency in the Peninsula a prerequisite for applying for civil service jobs in the governorate. However, this policy has seemingly been short lived given the 2012

⁹³ Yossef, "Securing the Sinai: More Troops Won't Keep the Peace or Save the Egyptian-Israeli Relationship".

⁹⁴ Teague, "The Sinai".

⁹⁵ "2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme," United Nations Statistics Division, last modified 17 September, 2015, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/censusquest.htm>.

⁹⁶ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 19.

⁹⁷ "Salvaging Sinai," p. 7.

⁹⁸ Yaari, "Sinai: A New Front," p. 12.

appointment of a non-resident governor in North Sinai.⁹⁹ Whilst some structural impediments to Bedouin employment in the public sector were removed during both Morsi's and al-Sisi's tenures, a discriminatory culture remains that minimises Bedouin participation in both civil and military fields. The Egyptian government has strategically employed the state bureaucracy to perpetuate Bedouin inequality. Thus, whilst there are now fewer apparent impediments, numerous rationales remain for discriminating against Sinai's natives, such as lack of education and skills hampering employment.¹⁰⁰ Compounding this issue, security force actions following the Arab Spring and particularly in response to the upsurge of violence following President Morsi's ousting, have further pushed the Bedouin from participation in the state and entrenched their image as outsiders amongst mainland Egyptians.

Land and Labour in the Peninsula

Denied access to vital jobs in the public sector, the Bedouin have also suffered from the state's land ownership policies. As traditionally nomadic people, Bedouin land rights long went unrecognised in Egypt.¹⁰¹ This situation worsened following the return of Sinai to Egypt: Law 143 of 1981 witnessed the nationalisation of the Peninsula, which was declared a state-owned asset and hence available for the regime to use, lease or sell as it pleased.¹⁰² Cairo did indeed avail itself of this opportunity, particularly through leasing and selling land along the 'Red Sea Riviera' stretching from Taba to Sharm El Sheikh. This built on the aforementioned Israeli development of tourism prior to the ceding of the Peninsula.

Mubarak's economic plan for South Sinai in the 1980s and 1990s was ambitious, and was based on transforming what had been a quiet Bedouin

⁹⁹ Pelham, "Salvaging Sinai," p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Gilbert and al Jebaali, "'Not philanthropists but revolutionaries.' Promoting Bedouin participation in the 'new Egypt': a case study from South Sinai," p. 34.

¹⁰¹ Ruth Kark and Seth J. Frantzman, "Empire, state and the Bedouin of the Middle East, past and present: a comparative study of land and settlement policies," *Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 4 (2012): p. 491.

¹⁰² Nadeem Karkabi, "Lifestyle Migration in South Sinai, Egypt: Nationalisation, Privileged Citizenship and Indigenous Rights," *International Review of Social Research* 3, no. 1 (2013): p. 55.

fishing village into the resort town of Sharm el Sheikh, a magnet for international and domestic tourists.¹⁰³ As a result of Mubarak's plan, tourism developed as a key component of the Egyptian economy, based on South Sinai's natural beauty, bounded by the pristine waters of the Red Sea. By 2003, tourism accounted for eleven percent of gross domestic profit, with Sinai receiving a third of all visitors.¹⁰⁴ Sinai's Bedouin lacked input into Mubarak's development plan for Sinai; for example, the National Project for the Development of Sinai that outlined developmental strategy did not even mention the Bedouin.¹⁰⁵ Despite lack of consideration, the Bedouin expected to profit from the touristic development of their tribal territory. However, government land sales have largely pushed local inhabitants out of tourism development zones, instead consigning them to the desert.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, due to their access to capital and preferential treatment by the state, foreign companies and mainland Egyptians have profited.¹⁰⁷ Thus, land ownership has remained a perennial issue for Sinai's Bedouin, and a frequent friction point between them and the central government.

During President Morsi's rule there seemed to be some hope for the Bedouin. On a visit to Sinai in October 2012, Morsi stated that 'the age of oppression and discrimination has reached an end. Sinai is part of Egypt and is equal to other parts of Egypt.'¹⁰⁸ This statement followed the enactment of Law 14 for the Comprehensive Development of the Sinai Peninsula in September 2012, which granted unprecedented land ownership rights that would provide recourse to longstanding Bedouin complaints. It is unclear whether the government genuinely aimed to give the Bedouin land rights as

¹⁰³ International Crisis Group, "Egypt's Sinai Question," p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ Hilary Gilbert, "This is Not Our Life, It's Just a Copy of Other People's': Bedu and the Price of 'Development' in South Sinai," *Nomadic Peoples* 15, no. 2 (2011): p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ David Homa, "Touristic Development in Sinai, Egypt: Bedouin, Visitors, and Government Interaction," in *Tourism in the Middle East: Continuity, Change and Transformation* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2007), p. 241.

¹⁰⁶ International Crisis Group, "Egypt's Sinai Question," p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

¹⁰⁸ "Morsi promises review of all Sinai Bedouin court cases under Mubarak," *Ahram Online*, last modified 05 October, 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/140/54884/Egypt/The-Balance-Sheet/Morsi-promises-review-of-all-Sinai-Bedouin-court-c.aspx>.

professed by members of Morsi's Freedom and Justice Party.¹⁰⁹ The result of the policy, however, was more a bolstering of state control over the Peninsula. Arguably the law's aim was to punish Mubarak-era elites from mainland Egypt who had benefitted from South Sinai's development, rather than to benefit Sinai's natives. With the exception of the border town of Rafah, the law still prohibited land ownership along Sinai's eastern border, an area almost exclusively settled by the Bedouin. In addition, the statute stated that all residents with dual nationality and those with at least one non-Egyptian parent must sell their property to an eligible buyer within six months or have it devolve to state ownership.¹¹⁰ As mentioned, many Bedouin experience difficulties in proving citizenship. Some tribal members acquired additional citizenships when they fled the Peninsula during Israeli occupation, whilst others married foreign nationals from Gaza, Israel and Jordan. Resultantly, the law provided little practical benefit for most Bedouin.

The Egyptian government has made several public announcements regarding the sale of land in Sinai, first in August 2012 and then again in February 2014. Publicised with significant fanfare, in each sale the government dedicated a proportion of the land specifically for residents of Sinai (25 and 20 percent of the sales respectively).¹¹¹ To date, the Bedouin have not noted positive effects from these reforms, with some Bedouin excluded for the aforementioned lack of citizenship. Moreover, Bedouin grievances are centred on not only state denial of land ownership rights, but also the state's misappropriation of land historically under tribal control and solely inhabited by them for generations. Such land nationalisation is a common feature in the genesis of nation states. As with other indigenous populations, denial of land ownership is a key concern for the Bedouin.

¹⁰⁹ Breen, "Egypt: Freedom and Justice to the Bedouins in Sinai?," p. 76.

¹¹⁰ "The tragic fate of Sinai's dual-nationals," Nabil Shawkat, Ahram Online, last modified 20 November, 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/4/58680/Opinion/The-tragic-fate-of-Sinai-dual-nationals.aspx>.

¹¹¹ "Swords to ploughshares: making the Sinai bloom," Megan Detrie, Good Governance Africa, last modified 01 November, 2012, <http://gga.org/stories/editions/aif-6-whose-land-is-it-anyway/swords-to-ploughshares-making-the-sinai-bloom/view>. and "Egypt government allots land in Sinai for locals," Ahram Online, last modified 19 February, 2014, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/94599/Business/Economy/Government-allots-land-in-Sinai-for-locals-.aspx>.

Whilst land reforms might allow some Bedouin the right to buy land back from the state, the denial of what they already consider legitimately theirs remains a point of conflict.

Post-Arab Spring announcements of land sales both under the Morsi and al-Sisi governments did little to assuage Bedouin grievances, instead benefitting Sinai's migrant worker population. The Peninsula as a whole, and South Sinai in particular, have seen mass labour migration from mainland Egypt, predominantly young males from the Nile Delta. Government policies encouraged this by offering attractive salaries and public sector employment.¹¹² Such policies have been partly driven by a political desire for resource exploitation and to attract foreign investment. These policies also represented a means for Egypt to expand control over the newly returned territory, following the Treaty of Peace with Israel. State policy encouraging mainland Egyptians to migrate to Sinai was maintained by the Freedom and Justice Party following their rise to power. The Bedouin have not been consulted regarding such policies. Breen posited that as such they would 'seem logical to the central government, but for the free-moving Bedouins... would represent an uncomfortable development, as scarce resources, land and jobs would then have to be shared with settlers and developers.'¹¹³

Internal migration to Sinai from mainland Egypt has not resulted in conflict between the two groups. It has, however, continued to create a disparity between the economic opportunities open to the Peninsula's natives and its newer inhabitants, some of whom have now been residents for three decades. It is instructive that South Sinai has the second highest income level of Egypt's governorates and likewise fares above the national average in terms of literacy.¹¹⁴ Such statistics, however, mask the imbalance between the Peninsula's natives and the migrant population from mainland Egypt. In addition to not profiting from use of land customarily controlled by the Bedouin, South Sinai's natives have suffered de-facto exclusion from

¹¹² International Crisis Group, "Egypt's Sinai Question," p. 11.

¹¹³ Breen, "Egypt: Freedom and Justice to the Bedouins in Sinai?," p. 69.

¹¹⁴ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 1.

employment opportunities created in the region, often being judged as lacking the requisite skills for employment. Factories that have been established in South Sinai have been almost exclusively staffed by migrant workers, whilst local Bedouin have remained unemployed and the few that have secured work have done so exclusively in menial and low-paying roles.¹¹⁵

Notably, tourism has brought significant employment to South Sinai and in 2002 directly provided an estimated ten thousand to thirty thousand jobs.¹¹⁶ However, such roles are out of reach for the majority of the Bedouin who are specifically excluded from tourism in Sharm El Sheikh, the industry's hub. Following the 2005 Sharm El Sheikh bombings, the Egyptian government's distrust of local Bedouin was manifested by the erection of a twenty kilometre long security wall to control access to the resort town.¹¹⁷ Construction was halted by Bedouin protests, however, its exclusionary intent remains. Security checkpoints around the city limit Bedouin movement in accordance with Ministry of the Interior issued passes.¹¹⁸

The few income opportunities still available to the Bedouin such as selling souvenirs, providing camel rides, acting as unofficial guides and hosting Bedouin cultural experiences in the nearby desert have all been curtailed, either through widespread police harassment or through requirements for registration.¹¹⁹ For example, only licensed operators are permitted to run events such as Bedouin cultural experiences, ironically often providing 'Bedouin soirées' for European tourists sans Bedouin.¹²⁰ Consequently, mainland Egyptians are profiting from the appropriation of Bedouin culture. Therefore, denial of work opportunities and mainland Egyptians' exploitation

¹¹⁵ Gilbert and al Jebaali, "'Not philanthropists but revolutionaries.' Promoting Bedouin participation in the 'new Egypt': a case study from South Sinai," p. 15.

¹¹⁶ International Crisis Group, "Egypt's Sinai Question," p. 13.

¹¹⁷ "Un mur d'exclusion," Chahinaz Gheith and Héba Nasreddine, Al-Ahram Hebdo, last accessed 31 May, 2014, <http://hebdo.ahram.org.eg/arab/ahram/2005/12/14/null0.htm>.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ International Crisis Group, "Egypt's Sinai Question," p. 13.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

of Bedouin culture are continuing sources of dissatisfaction for South Sinai's natives.

Opportunities for the Bedouin to secure legitimate employment opportunities are even fewer in North Sinai, which despite earlier government attempts along the Mediterranean coast lacks a tourism industry like that found in South Sinai. According to Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, unemployment levels in North Sinai were less than half of the national average at just 3.8 percent of the total workforce in 2007.¹²¹ This figure is, however, wholly incongruous with reality on the ground. Numerous sources state that the governorate has some of the country's worst unemployment levels.¹²² Teague describes entering North Sinai's capital El Arish as 'like attending a spooked dinner party, with plates of half-finished food and empty chairs where the guests should be... in the city center young men stood on sidewalks, gazing into the streets, as though perpetually awaiting something.'¹²³

As Gilbert notes, official statistics fail to accurately account for the Peninsula's Bedouin population and this contributes to a systemic blind spot.¹²⁴ Rather than an intentional scheme to marginalise the Bedouin, this chapter contends that this blind spot is the result of the state's unitary view of the Egyptian population. Resultantly, the state – under Mubarak, Morsi or al-Sisi – has been unwilling to view Sinai's natives as a minority requiring special consideration (such as by recognition of Bedouin traditions and legal protection of cultural practices).¹²⁵ This is compounded by the inherent physical difficulties of collecting data in remote desert regions. Indeed, gathering reliable data has become harder following the overthrow of

¹²¹ United Nations Development Programme, "Egypt Human Development Report 2010," (Cairo: United Nations Development Programme, 2010), p. 268.

¹²² Teague, "The Sinai", Attalah, "Sinai: The paradox of security". and Max Strasser, "A war zone in waiting," *New Statesman*, 20 August, 2012, p. 17.

¹²³ Teague, "The Sinai".

¹²⁴ Gilbert, "'This is Not Our Life, It's Just a Copy of Other People's': Bedu and the Price of 'Development' in South Sinai," p. 26.

¹²⁵ Breen, "Egypt: Freedom and Justice to the Bedouins in Sinai?," p. 83.

President Mubarak and the upsurge of violence from mid-2013 onwards following President Morsi's ousting.

As in the South, the Egyptian government actively encourages migration from the Nile Delta to North Sinai. As enticements, the state promises attractive salaries, decreased government taxation and regulation, and positions in the public sector. The local Bedouin population, however, have not received such benefits. The Bedouin have been largely excluded from the region's modest industrial enterprises, centred on cement production and mineral extraction, in favour of mainland Egyptian workers.¹²⁶

There are exceptions – the MFO employs over two hundred Bedouin at its main camp in El Gorah. Additionally, the Danish government intends to increase trade training internships for locals as part of the MFO.¹²⁷ Such employment is predominantly in lower paid roles such as cleaning and maintenance. Some Bedouin have complained about being excluded from better paid and skilled work within the organisation. Whilst a lack of skills through limited access to education is partly responsible, the Bedouin are not aided by employment being secured through an Egyptian contractor, headed by a former general.¹²⁸ Such issues notwithstanding, MFO employment supports a significant number of North Sinai Bedouin families. The MFO has largely avoided attacks by militant Islamists operating in Sinai post-Arab-Spring. This thesis contends that the MFO's role as an employer has likely had a protective effect for the force, with the Bedouin discouraging militant attacks that would jeopardise their livelihoods.

Whilst detailed statistics for Sinai are lacking, nationwide unemployment has increased post-Arab Spring and given the increased discord in the Peninsula it is reasonable to assume that unemployment has at best remained stable and far more likely, increased significantly. Available statistics support this

¹²⁶ International Crisis Group, "Egypt's Sinai Question," p. 11.

¹²⁷ Multinational Force and Observers, "Multinational Force and Observers Director General's Report to the 2013 Trilateral Meeting," (Rome: Multinational Force and Observers, 2013), p. 22.

¹²⁸ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 2.

position – for example, the number of international tourist arrivals to Egypt for the year ending July 2013 decreased 24.5 percent compared to the previous year.¹²⁹ This reflects a decrease in confidence as a result of the country's degenerating security situation. This drop in confidence is manifested by less domestic and foreign investment, and contributes to decreased prospects for employment and thus greater economic marginalisation of the region. Decreased employment opportunities post-Arab Spring have therefore encouraged many Bedouin to turn instead to Sinai's illicit economy.

Sinai's smugglers: the entrenchment of the illicit economy

Decades of economic and social marginalisation have driven some Bedouin to resort to an illicit economy. In 2011, this economy was valued at over US\$300 million annually, representing the main income source for many Bedouin.¹³⁰ This economy includes drug cultivation, trafficking of humans, weapons and drugs, and often employs the cross-border tunnels that link Egypt and Gaza.¹³¹ The latter will be discussed in detail in chapter two, however, all three represent a nexus of interests that have a de-stabilising effect upon the Peninsula, an effect that has increased post-Arab Spring.

Drug smuggling, especially of hashish, has a long history in Sinai.¹³² Although drug use is difficult to accurately measure in a population, it is estimated that 9.6 percent of Egyptians use substances, with cannabis being the country's most widely used drug.¹³³ Though samples are too small to provide reliable statistics, Hamdi's 2013 study of Egyptian substance use

¹²⁹ "Tourism rates decrease 24.5% year on year in July: CAPMAS," Daily News Egypt, last modified 11 September, 2013, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/09/11/tourism-rates-decrease-24-5-year-on-year-in-july-capmas/>.

¹³⁰ Gabi Siboni and Ram Ben-Barak, "The Sinai Peninsula Threat Development and Response Concept," (Washington, DC: The Saban Center for Middle East Policy, 2014), p. 4.

¹³¹ Yossef, "Securing the Sinai: More Troops Won't Keep the Peace or Save the Egyptian-Israeli Relationship".

¹³² Emanuel Marx, "Hashish Smuggling by Bedouin in South Sinai," in *Organized Crime: Culture, Markets and Policies*, ed. Dina Siegel and Hans Nelen, *Studies in Organized Crime* (New York, NY: Springer, 2008).

¹³³ Emad Hamdi et al., "Lifetime Prevalence of Alcohol and Substance Use in Egypt: A Community Survey," *Substance Abuse* 34, no. 2 (2013): p. 100.

indicates higher drug use amongst the Bedouin, likely as a result of local hashish cultivation, the stressors of cultural change and erosion of traditional values.¹³⁴ Hashish use is most common in urban areas and amongst the working class. Whilst possession, sale and cultivation of hashish is prohibited under Egyptian law, it is generally considered a 'harmless popular indulgence' hence its smuggling has been considered a largely legitimate economic activity by the Bedouin.¹³⁵ Hashish cultivation is evident in North Sinai and occurs near to roads and settlements, as well as nearby to security force checkpoints. The brazen nature of such cultivation suggests tacit acceptance by security forces, as well as by fellow tribal members.

The Bedouin lifestyle lends itself to smuggling, which as a border people has long been an occupation for many of the Peninsula's inhabitants.¹³⁶ Smuggling networks are supported by the Bedouin's traditional freedom of movement throughout tribal territory and the existence of extended tribal networks that facilitate the movement of contraband. In addition, as a result of urbanisation the Bedouin are comfortable operating in urban and rural environments, and as labour migrants are provided with good opportunities for smuggling as part of otherwise legitimate movements.¹³⁷ Emanuel Marx posits that hashish smuggling has in fact added to security and peace in South Sinai, as the activity traverses the territory of various tribes and fosters a vested interest in peace so that the earnings can be evenly dispersed throughout the distribution chain.¹³⁸ This is a largely romanticised view of the drug smuggling trade, which in reality often contributes to conflict between the Bedouin and the state. For example, Bedouin hostage takers demanded the release of relatives arrested on drug-related charges by the authorities in the majority of kidnappings post-2012.¹³⁹ This association with drugs further validates the mainland Egyptian perception of the Bedouin as outlaws.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 102.

¹³⁵ Marx, "Hashish Smuggling by Bedouin in South Sinai," p. 30.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 31.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

¹³⁹ "Growing opium is all the Sinai Bedouins have left," Tom Dale, Vice Media, last modified 10 January, 2014, http://www.vice.com/en_ca/read/growing-opium-is-almost-all-the-bedouins-in-the-sinai-have-left.

Whilst hashish cultivation escapes serious government attention, this is not the case for opium, which is considered a more serious criminal issue. Depending on interpretation, opium use is either *makruh* (discouraged) or haram under Shari'ah, which has supplemented or often replaced traditional Bedouin law, particularly amongst North Sinai tribes. Opium cultivation is a relatively recent innovation in the Peninsula, having commenced at the end of the 1980s. In keeping with the Bedouin's portrayal as outlaws and criminals, the Egyptian media have blamed Sinai's Bedouin for the epidemic of heroin addiction in Cairo and the Nile Delta. However, Hobbs correctly states that this is highly improbable given the low yields produced by Sinai's relatively few poppy fields, along with a lack of evidence supporting the presence of the complex processing requirements for turning raw opium into heroin.¹⁴⁰

The withdrawal of security forces from the Peninsula during Mubarak's ouster aided opium cultivation and smuggling. Buoyed by the decreased risk of crops being destroyed by security forces and their growers being incarcerated, Sinai's opium industry increased in size. Mohammed Khedr estimates that opium and marijuana production has doubled since 2010 to provide 45 percent of South Sinai Bedouin men with employment at some point during the year.¹⁴¹ Fewer tourists visited South Sinai due to increased militant attacks following Morsi's overthrow, despite violence being largely isolated to North Sinai. The Bedouin working on the tourism industry's fringes suffered financially. With few legitimate economic options, many Bedouin who were previously employed in tourism-related roles have been driven to opium cultivation.¹⁴² Multiple sources indicate that the Bedouin are not getting rich from opium crops, with cultivation being a pursuit of necessity rather than choice that is not only higher risk, but also shameful for its producers. For example, one grower estimated he would earn about

¹⁴⁰ Hobbs, "Troubling fields: the opium poppy in Egypt," p. 80.

¹⁴¹ Dale, "Growing opium is all the Sinai Bedouins have left".

¹⁴² "Poppies replace tourists in Egypt's Sinai desert," Gert van Langendonck, The Christian Science Monitor, last modified 27 April, 2014, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2014/0427/Poppies-replace-tourists-in-Egypt-s-Sinai-desert>.

US\$2,575 over six months through opium production, compared with US\$1,430 monthly during the peak tourist season, without legal risk or tribal censure.¹⁴³

As predicted by Marx, the Bedouin have adapted the traditional smuggling networks that facilitated the transit of hashish through the Peninsula to service stronger narcotics, as well as weapons and people.¹⁴⁴ Another illicit economic activity in Sinai is human trafficking. This is not a new phenomenon in Sinai and traditionally focussed on the movement of sex workers to Israel.¹⁴⁵ These workers mostly originated from the former Soviet Union and were transferred via Sinai by criminal gangs to service Israel's sex industry, often working in brothels and strip clubs as bonded labour. However, the scale of human trafficking has vastly increased since 2009 when the Bedouin began to traffic predominantly Eritrean victims, largely for economic reasons rather than for work in the sex industry.¹⁴⁶ Trafficking victims have either been kidnapped directly or started their journey as willing participants in human smuggling, before becoming victims of abuse en route. In her study on trafficking in Sinai, van Reisen estimates that between 2009 and 2013, some twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand people were victims of trafficking in the Peninsula, though this is likely a conservative figure.¹⁴⁷

Numerous qualitative studies, including van Reisen's, document the abuse of human trafficking victims in Sinai.¹⁴⁸ This includes traffickers incarcerating victims for periods of up to eighteen months whilst ransoms are paid. Ransoms of US\$30,000 are common with reported methods of abuse including 'beating with metal rods, electrocution, burning with molten plastic, and the insertion of piping into the captives' vaginas and anuses. Sexual

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Marx, "Hashish Smuggling by Bedouin in South Sinai," pp. 36-37.

¹⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report," (Washington DC: U.S. Department of State, 2006), p. 111.

¹⁴⁶ Mirjam van Reisen, Meron Estefanos, and Conny Rijken, "The Human Trafficking Cycle: Sinai and Beyond," (Oisterwijk: Tilburg University, 2013), p. 61.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

¹⁴⁸ See for example Human Rights Watch, "'I Wanted to Lie Down and Die': Trafficking and Torture of Eritreans in Sudan and Egypt," (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2014). and van Reisen, Estefanos, and Rijken, "The Human Trafficking Cycle: Sinai and Beyond."

abuse is routine, and victims include children as young as 14.¹⁴⁹ Traffickers broadcast this abuse via telephone to encourage ransom payments by family and friends, both back in the victims' home countries and in diaspora communities in the West. Human rights groups have also reported organ harvesting from trafficking victims who are unable to raise the ransom demanded by their captors.¹⁵⁰ Van Reisen estimates that between five thousand and ten thousand trafficking victims have died in the Peninsula.¹⁵¹

Trafficking rates rapidly increased following the overthrow of President Mubarak, which this chapter posits resulted from the decreased security presence in Sinai immediately post-Arab Spring.¹⁵² This security vacuum enabled the industry and likewise encouraged the growth of drug cultivation and other forms of smuggling. The Peninsula's dynamic security environment has governed the industry's size. For example, the military's campaign in Sinai following Morsi's ouster decreased the flow of victims into the area significantly. Like other criminal activities in Sinai, it is likely that these numbers will again increase unless the Egyptian authorities address their root causes. Whilst poverty and underdevelopment cannot be solely blamed for criminality, the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center holds that extreme poverty, a paucity of economic opportunities and political uncertainty contribute to an environment that promotes human trafficking.¹⁵³

The illicit economy's growth in the post-Arab Spring era has created a destabilising influence in Sinai. Smugglers have become so powerful that they are now able to coerce participation and to create a rival power

¹⁴⁹ "Egypt's Sinai: Trafficking, torture and fear," Louisa Loveluck, Al Jazeera, last accessed 09 January, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/12/egypt-sinai-trafficking-torture-fear-201312682516380563.html>.

¹⁵⁰ "Refugees face organ theft in the Sinai," Fred Pleitgen and Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, Cable News Network, last modified 03 November, 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/11/03/world/meast/pleitgen-sinai-organ-smugglers/>.

¹⁵¹ van Reisen, Estefanos, and Rijken, "The Human Trafficking Cycle: Sinai and Beyond," p. 63.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁵³ The Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center, "FACT SHEET: Distinctions between Human Smuggling and Human Trafficking," ed. The Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center (US Department of State, 2006), p. 1.

structure to the Egyptian state.¹⁵⁴ Marx also foresaw increasing linkages between smuggling and militant groups in the Peninsula.¹⁵⁵ Zohar states that smuggling networks help finance militant groups operating in Sinai, though it is unclear to what degree.¹⁵⁶ There is clearer evidence that smuggling networks provide weaponry to militant Islamists.¹⁵⁷ It is uncertain whether the profit motive of the Bedouin involved in illegal activities will coalesce with militants' ideological motives to encourage long-term collaboration. For the time being at least, the linkage between the two represents a marriage of convenience: violence creates an environment in which the illicit economy can prosper, whilst criminal activity provides materiel and probably funds that support militancy.

Thus the development of an illicit economy acts as a centrifugal force, pushing the Bedouin further away from the Egyptian state, from which it has already been marginalised and stereotyped as a band of outlaws to be viewed through the lens of security. The increasing militancy and violence in Sinai following Mubarak's overthrow cannot simply be blamed on a lack of economic development in the Peninsula. However, as this chapter has demonstrated the Bedouin have suffered genuine marginalisation by the state in political, social, and crucially, economic terms. This trend has continued post-Arab Spring and has further distanced them from the state to which they belong, creating a fertile ground for militancy and the spread of Islamist ideology. This marginalisation has likewise strengthened the links between Sinai and its eastern neighbours; it is these links that are the focus of chapter two.

¹⁵⁴ Marx, "Hashish Smuggling by Bedouin in South Sinai," p. 37.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁵⁶ Eran Zohar, "The arming of non-state actors in the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69, no. 4 (2015): p. 448.

¹⁵⁷ Olivia Holt-Ivry, "Arms Control in Civil Society: Controlling Conventional Arms Smuggling in Sinai," in *Arms Control and National Security*, ed. Emily B. Landau and Anat Kurz (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2014), p. 106.

Chapter Two – Eastern Neighbours: Strange Bedfellows and Unexpected Foes

As a border area and the land bridge between Africa and the Middle East, the Sinai Peninsula is destined to act as a nexus of interests between Egypt and its eastern neighbours: Palestinian Gaza in the north and the larger Israel, with which it shares its border for some two hundred kilometres, running south to the Gulf of Aqaba. Sinai's proximity to Israel and Gaza has had both positive and negative impacts upon the Peninsula's security environment in the Arab Spring's aftermath. Yet as will be outlined in this chapter, these impacts have been manifested through an evolution and continuation of the existing state-based security framework, rather than a revolution as might be expected.

This chapter studies how the security framework that shapes Sinai was built around the primacy of nation states, with the Peninsula forming a buffer between Egypt and Israel mediated by international peacekeeping forces. This paradigm has changed to such an extent that post-Arab Spring, states are no longer the sole determiners of security in the Peninsula, with this mantle shifting to include non-state Islamist actors, as well as Hamas and the quasi-state of Gaza. This chapter maps the characteristics and interactions between the key state and non-state actors that affect Sinai's current security environment, along with their motivations. Whereas the preceding chapter considered the relationship between Sinai's Bedouin and the Egyptian state, this chapter describes how Egypt's relationship with its eastern neighbours has affected security in Sinai. It first explains the historical basis of the area's current security framework and describes how Egypt's ambivalent relationship with Israel has improved post-Arab Spring in terms of security cooperation between the two states. This chapter analyses the role of Hamas in this security environment and discusses how proximity to an isolated Gaza has further distanced the Bedouin from the Egyptian state. This chapter lays the foundation for chapter three, which explains how Islamism has taken root in the Peninsula, exploiting the marginalisation of the Peninsula's natives and destabilising Sinai's security environment.

The Treaty of Peace

In 1979, 'convinced of the urgent necessity of the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East', the governments of Egypt and Israel concluded the Treaty of Peace, the result of the previous year's Camp David Accords.¹ The US backed treaty was signed by President al-Sadat and his Israeli counterpart President Menachem Begin, and ended the conflict between the two countries that had endured since 1948.

The Treaty came at considerable cost to Egypt, which was ostracised by other Arab countries as the first Arab state to make peace with Israel.² Al-Sadat saw naturalisation of relations with Israel as a unifying cause for the Arab states that could be led by Egypt. However, al-Sadat's hopes for naturalisation across the region were overly optimistic. Today Egypt and Jordan are the only Arab states with political ties to Israel. In response to the Treaty, Egypt was ejected from the Arab League and subjected to economic embargo.³ As shown by Paul Sullivan, however, the Arab League's rhetoric was unmatched by the embargo's actual economic cost. For example, income generated by Egyptian worker remittances from Arab oil producing states easily compensated for post-Treaty trade losses.⁴ Sullivan posits that the increased ability for Egyptians to generate remittances in Gulf Cooperation Council states and the upsurge in trade with Jordan signalled that the Arab world was not wholly against the move towards peace, despite being unwilling to publicly declare such a position.⁵ A counter-argument to this proposition is that Egypt's ostracism was unrelated to its improved relationship with Israel following its disengagement from Sinai. Rather, it holds that Egypt's ostracism was part of a contest between Egypt and Saudi

¹ The Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Government of the State of Israel, "The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty," (Washington, DC: The Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Government of the State of Israel, 1979), p. 2.

² Victor Lavy, "The Economic Embargo of Egypt by Arab States: Myth and Reality," *Middle East Journal* 38, no. 3 (1984): p. 420.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Paul Sullivan, "Contrary views of economic diplomacy in the Arab world: Egypt," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (1999): p. 74.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Arabia for regional leadership. Despite failing to bolster Egypt's regional leadership, al-Sadat's vision of a wider peace was nevertheless realised to a point, with the conclusion of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994. Whilst the Treaty thus set a precedent for limited normalisation of relations in the region, crucially it ushered in an era of cooperation over Sinai between Egypt and Israel that has continued to the present day.

Observe, verify and report: The Multinational Force and Observers

As well as ending hostilities and establishing normal friendly relations between Egypt and Israel, the Treaty of Peace provided a comprehensive plan for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai Peninsula.⁶ The Peninsula was split into three zones, titled A, B and C, as well as a narrow Zone D on the Israeli side of the international border (see Figure Two on the following page). Annex I to the Treaty stipulated the forces by type and number that were permitted within each zone. For example, within Zone C that runs the length of the international border to a depth of approximately thirty kilometres into Egyptian territory, the Egyptian state was only permitted civil police armed with light weapons, with increasing, though minimal, military force levels permitted progressively further to the west.⁷ The Treaty thus remade the Sinai Peninsula as a largely demilitarised zone, returning sovereignty to Egypt whilst providing Israel with a buffer against any future projection of Egyptian forces eastwards. The Treaty addressed prevailing inter-state security issues, exclusively acknowledging Egypt and Israel as the key actors in the Peninsula's security, whilst making no provision for the emergence of non-state groups.

The Treaty of Peace primarily provided a means to promote amity between its signatories, rather than to ensure security in the Peninsula or consider non-state actors. To facilitate this, the Treaty mandated the creation of an independent United Nations (UN) force to supervise the enactment and

⁶ The Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Government of the State of Israel, "The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty."

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

maintenance of the Treaty conditions. Due to the Cold War threat of Soviet veto against the creation of this monitoring body at the UN Security Council, the envisaged force instead took shape as the MFO, which has followed its mandate to ‘observe, verify and report’ the respective parties’ adherence to the Treaty since 1982.

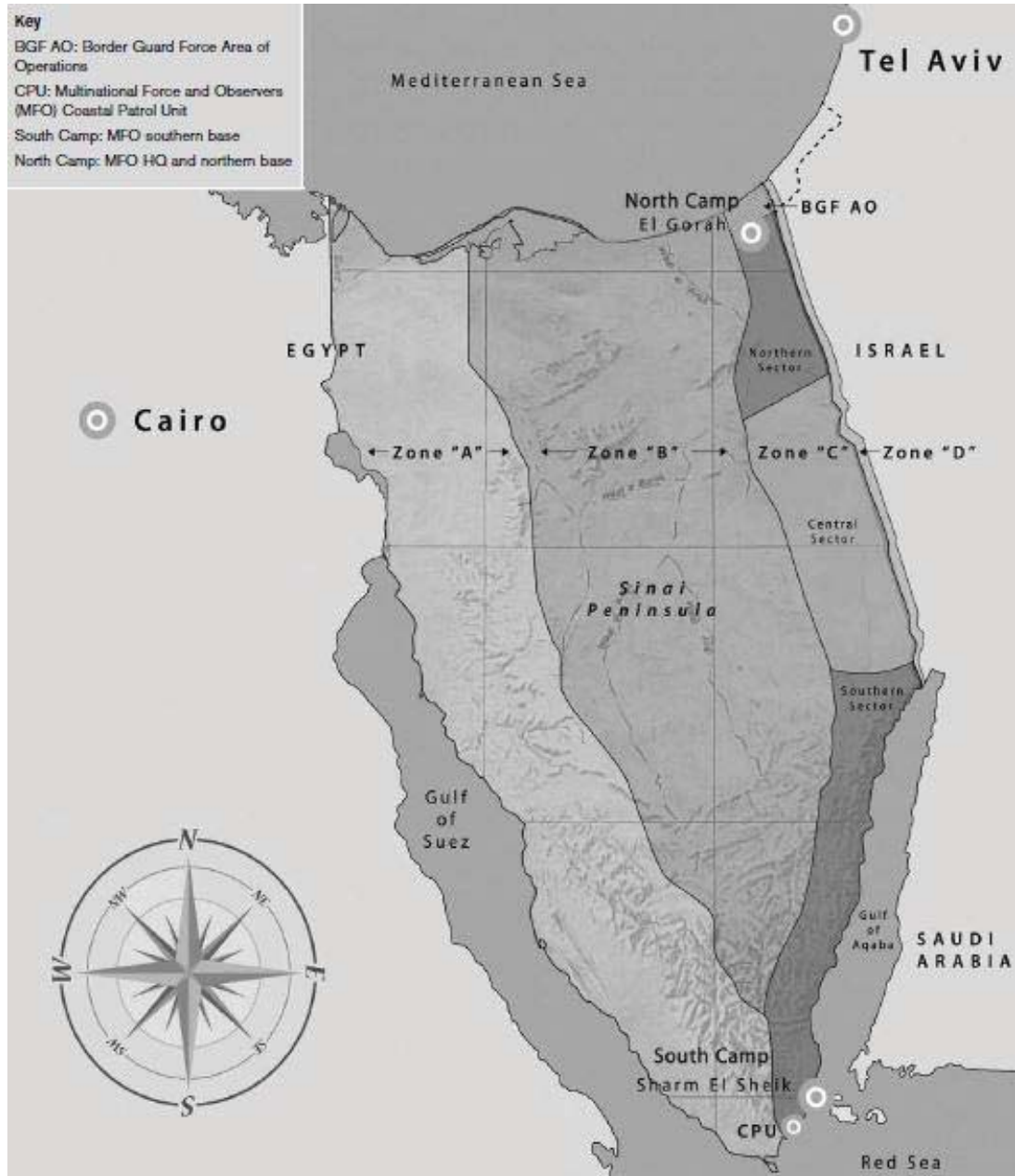


Figure 2 Sinai's Demilitarised Zones under the Treaty of Peace

Source: Pelham, "Sinai: the Buffer Erodes"

Given its role, the MFO has been destined to sit at the crossroads of a complex region. Explicitly it has acted as a mediator between Egypt and

Israel regarding Sinai's security.⁸ Yet by virtue of geography it is likewise affected by its proximity with Gaza to the east and moreover, by the Bedouin tribes around it. As chapter one highlighted, at the time of the Treaty's ratification the Bedouin were wary of how they would be treated by the Egyptian mainstream after years of Israeli occupation. Whilst operating in predominantly Bedouin areas, the MFO is neither responsible for mediating their interaction with the Egyptian or Israeli states, nor ensuring Sinai's security. Despite the majority of its forces being stationed just twenty kilometres from the border with Gaza, the MFO has neither formal nor informal links with the Palestinian territory.

The MFO is unusual in the world of peacekeeping in its independence from the UN. It is predominantly funded in equal parts by Egypt, Israel and the US. Approximately 6 percent of its operating budget comes from other state donors, including Norway, the Netherlands and Denmark.⁹ The roughly 1,700 personnel strong force operates throughout the Peninsula, with its key bases located at North Camp at El Gorah, twenty kilometres southwest of Rafah, as well as in Sharm El Sheikh to the south.¹⁰ It is in the northern area that security has deteriorated the most following Mubarak's overthrow. This deterioration comprises a campaign of attacks against symbols of the Egyptian state and the armed forces themselves. Scattered throughout Zone C are a further thirty 'Remote Sites' that are predominantly responsible for the observation component of the MFO's mission. This is complemented by the verification tasks of the Civilian Observer Unit (COU), which as dictated by the Treaty exclusively consists of US civilians. The COU is mandated to operate throughout Zones A through D and inspects Egyptian and Israeli installations to confirm compliance.

Since its inception, the MFO has effectively carried out its mandated role to provide a mechanism for Egypt and Israel to communicate and build trust. In

⁸ Zack Gold, "Sinai Security: Opportunities for Unlikely Cooperation Among Egypt, Israel, and Hamas," (Washington, DC: The Saban Center for Middle East Policy, 2013), p. 5.

⁹ Multinational Force and Observers, "Multinational Force and Observers Director General's Report to the 2013 Trilateral Meeting," p. 36.

¹⁰ Ibid.

addition, it provides a communication medium to defuse pressure between the two. Such was the benign nature of Sinai's security environment that the MFO's camps built in the 1980s lacked security fences. MFO personnel readily frequented the cafes and restaurants of neighbouring towns in North Sinai. This freedom and interactions with the locals both supported the local economy and enhanced links between the international force and their Bedouin hosts. Except for two incidents in the mid-2000s, pre-Arab Spring the MFO avoided attacks on its forces and maintained cordial relationships with both the Egyptian and Israeli armed forces.

Deteriorating security

This avoidance of violence diminished, however, post-Arab Spring. With Egypt's security apparatus disappearing from the Peninsula (and Israel being unwilling to breach Egypt's sovereignty), the increasing lawlessness in North Sinai provided a challenging operating environment for the MFO. In September 2012 a force of seventy militants breached the perimeter of the MFO's North Camp. They destroyed a security tower, injured Columbian peacekeepers with explosive devices and raised an unidentified Islamist black flag over one of the camp's guard towers. Following this incident, an Egyptian combat team based on armoured personnel carriers was permanently stationed outside North Camp to guarantee its security. At the beginning of 2013 the increased frequency of attacks, albeit against Egyptian forces, led the Egyptian military to mandate all MFO convoys in northeast Sinai to be escorted by their forces.¹¹ The closer association of the MFO with the Egyptian military distanced the MFO from local Bedouin, whilst increasing its risk of sustaining collateral damage in militant attacks.

The provenance of the group that attacked the MFO's North Camp in 2012 remains unknown. Post-Arab Spring, militancy in the Peninsula is largely limited to North Sinai. As detailed in chapter one, decades of Bedouin marginalisation by the Egyptian state produced fertile ground for the spread

¹¹ Ibid., p. 7.

of extremism. The weakening of Mubarak's state security apparatus in the wake of the Arab Spring permitted the growth of militancy beyond the infrequent attacks of the mid-2000s described in chapter one. This chapter demonstrates that the links of Sinai's Bedouin to neighbouring Gaza fostered the ready flow of ideas, training and materiel, with militant Islamism spreading into the Peninsula. However, it disagrees with the Egyptian government's narrative that connects all militant activity to actors external to the Peninsula, whether from Gaza or the Muslim Brotherhood.¹² Indeed, chapter three will explain how home-grown extremism has developed as a result of Bedouin marginalisation in Sinai.

Militant Islamist groups have developed in Sinai and form the key non-state actor in the Peninsula. This chapter contends that these groups challenge the existing state-centric security architecture and the peace between Egypt and Israel. Chapter three describes how these groups have developed in detail, with the most significant group being Ansar Bait al-Maqdis (ABM). Militant Islamist groups in Sinai are exclusively Sunni, and are actively supported by a minority of the Bedouin population. The majority of militant groups proclaim anti-Zionist agendas. Since 2012, they have conducted a cross-border attack into Israel, rocket attacks against the Israeli port of Eilat, and numerous strikes against the pipelines that run through Sinai and supply both Israel and Jordan with natural gas.

The vast majority of militant Islamist attacks have been against Egypt, particularly targeting Egyptian police and armed forces. Proximity to the Egyptian armed forces proved dangerous to the local Bedouin population, who have repeatedly suffered collateral damage during militant attacks. For example, on 29 January 2015 ABM killed fourteen civilians and wounded many more during four coordinated attacks against security forces across

¹² "Sisi Blames Muslim Brotherhood for Bombings in Sinai," David D. Kirkpatrick, The New York Times, last modified 31 January, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/01/world/middleeast/sisi-blames-muslim-brotherhood-for-bombings-in-sinai.html?_r=0.

North Sinai.¹³ Immediately following the Arab Spring, militants limited their attacks to distinctly target security forces and avoided killing civilians. Following Morsi's ouster and particularly from 2014 onwards, militants have been increasingly willing to target civilians. The period witnessed an increased frequency of executions of civilian 'collaborators' by militant Islamists and an apparent willingness by militants to accept civilian casualties as a by-product of their campaign against the Egyptian regime. As discussed in chapter one, Sinai's Bedouin are already separated from the state through decades of marginalisation. Militant groups' increased willingness to target civilians they view as collaborating with the authorities provides a further force pushing the Bedouin and the Egyptian state apart.

The Bedouin risked being collateral damage from militant attacks against Egyptian security forces. The MFO's proximity to these security forces similarly increased its risk of being caught in the cross-fire. As attacks against Egyptian security forces increased in the post-Arab Spring era, the practice of the Egyptian armed forces escorting the MFO became increasingly untenable, as these forces were either unable or unwilling to protect the organisation's convoys.¹⁴ Given that the militants predominantly target the Egyptian police and army, the absence of military escorts, paradoxically, enhanced the MFO's freedom of movement and decreased its risk of sustaining collateral damage from exchanges between Egyptian security forces and militants.

Not being accompanied by military escorts, however, has not removed the threat to the MFO. The organisation's operations have been disrupted by the growing frequency of militant attacks in North Sinai and Egyptian military operations to counter them. This has led to periods of either self-imposed or Egyptian mandated lockdown on movement for the MFO, interrupting the re-

¹³ "Security imperatives in Sinai," Ahmed Eleiba, Al-Ahram Weekly, last modified 05 February, 2015, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/10333/17/Security-imperatives-in-Sinai.aspx>.

¹⁴ New Zealand Defence Force, "Deployment Post Activity Report (PAR): Op Farad Senior National Officer (SNO) V749428 Lt Col R.P. Moody," (El Gorah: New Zealand Defence Force, 2013), p. 4.

supply of Remote Sites in North Sinai and deferral or modification of COU missions.¹⁵ As an example, following the downing of an Egyptian helicopter by militants in January 2014 the MFO permanently cancelled COU reconnaissance flights over areas of high militant activity, forcing verification missions to occur on the ground.¹⁶

As highlighted by David Schenker, insecurity in the Peninsula will make it increasingly difficult for the MFO to fulfil its mission.¹⁷ The MFO's mandate has remained unchanged since the original Treaty of Peace was signed. It exclusively focuses on mediation between the Egyptian and Israeli states. Security cooperation regarding Sinai between the two states has improved post-Arab Spring, however, both governments support the MFO's continued presence. The provisions relating to the permissible military forces of each state within the various zones have been revisited, however, the MFO's mandate has remained unchanged. It does not extend to actively influencing the security environment in which it operates; that is wholly the responsibility of the Egyptian state. As a peacekeeping body, the MFO is not permitted to collect intelligence. Nor does it engage with the local population beyond being an employer, hosting an *iftar* celebration during Ramadan and an annual 'Bedouin craft market'.¹⁸ The MFO's effectiveness is wholly reliant on a permissive and stable operating environment. In the period following the Arab Spring, the MFO has been caught in the crossfire between the Egyptian state and increasingly potent militants. This has seen the MFO increasingly hunkered down within its bases with a limited comprehension of, or ability to influence, Sinai's complex security environment in which it finds itself a hostage.¹⁹ The MFO is neither equipped nor structured to operate in a more

¹⁵ Multinational Force and Observers, "Multinational Force and Observers Director General's Report to the 2013 Trilateral Meeting," p. 1.

¹⁶ "Multinational Force and Observers Director General's Report to the 2014 Trilateral Meeting," (Rome: Multinational Force and Observers, 2014), p. 5.

¹⁷ David Schenker, "The MFO Under Fire in Sinai," (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute, 2012), p. 3.

¹⁸ Multinational Force and Observers, "Multinational Force and Observers Director General's Report to the 2013 Trilateral Meeting," p. 19.

¹⁹ "Israel-Egypt forge new ties over Sinai," Geoffrey Aronson, *Al Monitor*, last accessed 18 October, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/israel-egypt-ties-direct-exclude-us.html>.

volatile environment that includes IEDs and advanced anti-aircraft missile capabilities, as it operates in lightly armoured civilian vehicles with small arms suitable for self-defence only. However, increasing the MFO's access to weapons and ability to protect itself would treat the symptoms, rather than cause, of Sinai's deteriorated security environment.

The MFO's maintenance of the status quo regarding its structure and capabilities results from the force's narrow mandate. This thesis supports maintaining the MFO's existing mandate, as giving the force greater responsibility for Sinai's security environment would be a fundamental shift in its role that would disempower the Egyptian state. Since the increase in violence in the post-Arab Spring era, the Egyptian government has repeatedly stated that it is in control over the Peninsula's security. It has even claimed that the armed forces had virtually eliminated terrorism from Sinai.²⁰ It is important for Egypt to retain responsibility for security in Sinai and ceding control to foreign forces would decrease its sovereignty.

Egypt and Israel view the MFO in its existing form as important to the security of the Peninsula and the wider region, as evidenced by their continued moral and financial support. Notwithstanding the increased difficulty with which it conducts its role in the volatile post-Arab Spring environment, the MFO continues to act as a mediator between the Treaty parties. It provides a safety valve for inter-state tensions, such as the Israeli Defence Force's (IDF) unintentional killing of six Egyptian soldiers following an August 2011 militant attack.²¹ Unaddressed, such tensions could escalate and negatively affect Sinai's Bedouin. With the MFO in place, common security challenges have instead produced strategic convergence between Egypt and Israel. For example, this has been manifested by mutually agreed

²⁰ "Major General Ahmed Wasfy: military operations in the Sinai have ended and we have entered the clean up stage," Ahmed Abdel-Azim, Elwatannews.com, last modified 02 October, 2014, <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/333863>.

²¹ International Crisis Group, "Light at the End of their Tunnels? Hamas & the Arab Uprisings," in *Middle East Report* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2012), p. 3.

Egyptian troop deployments in Sinai and cooperation in dealing with the threat of militant Islamists.²²

The upsurge in violence in the Peninsula has resulted in hundreds of security force, militant and civilian deaths. Figures vary wildly due to media suppression by the Egyptian authorities and inaccurate reports by both Egyptian and militant sources. However, by means of illustration the Middle East Institute estimates that between July 2013 and January 2014 some 281 people were killed in terrorist attacks in Sinai. Of these, 20 percent were civilians.²³ To date, the MFO has avoided any fatalities despite the upsurge of violence in the Peninsula and the Egyptian state's heavy-handed response. The majority of the MFO's forces are based in North Sinai, in close proximity to the most restive areas of the governorate. The government response to increased militant operations has included extensive reprisals employing attack helicopters in concert with ground forces to target suspected militant safe houses and means of logistical support. These attacks have occurred just kilometres away from North Camp, with stray rounds from such engagements landing within the MFO's perimeter.²⁴ Despite this proximity and its responsibility for the MFO's protection, the Egyptian security forces share little intelligence with the MFO beyond real-time warnings to avoid areas of ongoing military operations.²⁵ It is unclear to what degree Israel and Egypt share intelligence, however, if this working-level link does exist it does not pass through the MFO.

Uncle Sam: the role of the United States

Aside from the Treaty partners themselves, the US plays an important though discrete role in the Peninsula's security. The US views Egypt as vital

²² Multinational Force and Observers, "Multinational Force and Observers Director General's Report to the 2014 Trilateral Meeting," p. 1.

²³ "A History of Terrorism in Egypt's Sinai," Holly Cramer et al., Middle East Institute, last accessed 23 February, 2015, <http://www.mei.edu/sinai-terrorism>.

²⁴ "Daily Press Briefing: August 5, 2014," U.S. Department of State, last modified 05 August, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/08/230249.htm>.

²⁵ New Zealand Defence Force, "Deployment Post Activity Report (PAR): Op Farad Senior National Officer (SNO) V749428 Lt Col R.P. Moody," pp. 4-5.

to its regional security interests, with the head of US Central Command describing Egypt as an 'anchor' state in the region in 2014.²⁶ Similarly, Secretary of State John Kerry described Egypt as the 'hub' of the Middle East region.²⁷ Egypt is the second largest recipient of US foreign aid after Israel. The vast majority of US aid funds the purchase of military hardware, including Apache helicopters destined for controlling Sinai. Less publicised, the US provides almost a third of the MFO's funding along with over 40 percent of its personnel.²⁸ The MFO thus represents a major strand to US regional security strategy. Post-Arab Spring the US has maintained its support for the MFO, embedding it in its overall strategy for interaction with Egypt. This linkage was reflected in August 2013 when the Director General of the MFO, David Satterfield, took a leave of absence from the organisation to act as the US chargé d'affaires, heading the US Embassy in Cairo.²⁹

Whilst US support for the MFO remains unchanged following the Arab Spring, it is questionable how long minor troop-contributing nations, including New Zealand, would remain in the face of fatalities resulting from the deterioration of security in the Peninsula. Such a loss of support is hardly without precedent: the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) based in the Golan Heights that monitors the truce between Israel and Syria lost three out of its six contributing nations as a result of the growing threat of violence.³⁰ A similar loss of confidence regarding Sinai could see a significant reduction in the number of states willing to contribute troops, along with an increasingly defensive posture for the MFO that would limit its ability to operate effectively. The MFO's continued efficacy is

²⁶ "Commander's Posture Statement," Lloyd J. Austin III, United States Central Command, last modified 05 March, 2014, <http://www.centcom.mil/en/about-centcom-en/commanders-posture-statement-en>.

²⁷ Jeremy M. Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), p. 2.

²⁸ Multinational Force and Observers, "Multinational Force and Observers Director General's Report to the 2014 Trilateral Meeting," p. 41.

²⁹ "Departure of Ambassador Patterson and Appointment of Ambassador David M. Satterfield as U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in Cairo," U.S. Department of State, last accessed 21 August, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/08/213632.htm>.

³⁰ "Chaos in the Sinai: Will International Peacekeepers Be the Next Casualty?," David Schenker, The Weekly Standard, last modified 24 May, 2013, http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/chaos-sinai-will-international-peacekeepers-be-next-casualty_728974.html.

important to the Peninsula, as it provides stability and defuses tensions by providing a key avenue for interaction between Egypt and Israel.

In spite of the increasingly volatile environment in which it operates, the MFO has maintained this role as a useful intermediary between the Treaty partners. The MFO has acted as a conduit for dialogue and continues to provide impartial reporting of alleged Treaty violations, which occur several times each week due to ongoing Israeli and Egyptian operations. This dialogue and impartial reporting builds confidence between the parties. Along with monitoring the parties' compliance with the Treaty, part of the MFO's role involves the coordination of 'Agreed Activities', in which either party may request amendment to the type and quantity of military assets permitted in each zone over a discrete period.³¹ Such amendments are included in a monthly omnibus, as well as agreed to on an as required basis between the two states. Post-Arab Spring this mechanism has been used extensively, allowing significant troop increases in the Peninsula whilst remaining within the bounds of the Treaty. An example of this was the deployment of two additional battalions along with their armoured vehicles as part of Operation Eagle in 2011.³² Commentators such as Ed Blanche have been quick to point to increased Egyptian troop numbers in the Peninsula, above limits set by the Treaty of Peace, as a sign of a deteriorating relationship between Egypt and Israel. The rationale for Blanche's conclusion is incorrect, and he fails to account for the inherent latitude within the Treaty for Egypt and Israel to renegotiate troop numbers through the MFO's Agreed Activity mechanism.

Worsening Ties?

Whilst Blanche's rationale may have been flawed, his ultimate conclusion is correct to some extent. Post-Arab Spring, the relationship between Egypt and Israel has been strained at the governmental level, no more so than following the August 2011 accidental killing of six Egyptian soldiers by Israeli

³¹ Multinational Force and Observers, "Multinational Force and Observers Director General's Report to the 2013 Trilateral Meeting," p. 18.

³² Cook, "The Eagle Has Landed...In Sinai?".

forces, which led to riots in Cairo. This episode was followed by protesters looting the Israeli Embassy in Cairo two weeks later.³³ Liad Porat and Efraim Inbar view the growing influence of Islamist political parties as a key cause of tension between Egypt and Israel.³⁴ Anti-Israeli feeling is common in Egypt, and is compounded by a populist view that the Treaty of Peace is an affront to Egyptian sovereignty and limits the state's ability to deploy troops within its own territory.³⁵ Groups such as the Tamarod movement have used this lack of sovereignty as a scapegoat on which to blame Egypt's inability to effectively secure Sinai. This critique assumes that Egypt's military forces are the sole determinant of security in the Peninsula and hence their restricted access is a key contributor to the increasingly volatile environment. This assertion fails to account for the key role that should be played by police who are unhampered by the Treaty, along with the importance of social, economic and political integration of the Bedouin that was discussed in chapter one. The Muslim Brotherhood too reflected popular sentiment against Israel and campaigned on an anti-Israeli platform prior to coming to power. For example on 1 January 2012, Rashad Bayoumi, deputy leader of the Muslim Brotherhood stated that the movement would not recognise Israel and if elected would hold a referendum on the future of the Treaty of Peace.³⁶

Yet such rhetoric went unmatched by facts on the ground in Sinai under Morsi. Once the Muslim Brotherhood came to power, Egypt's relationship with Israel remained largely unchanged with no effort made to revise the Treaty or alter the status quo in the Peninsula. As noted by Zack Gold, Morsi

³³ International Crisis Group, "Light at the End of their Tunnels? Hamas & the Arab Uprisings," p. 3.

³⁴ Efraim Inbar, "Israel's National Security Amidst Unrest in the Arab World," *Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2012): p. 63; Liad Porat, "The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt-Israel Peace," in *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* (Ramat Gan: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 2014).

³⁵ "Egypt's Rebel Campaign launches petition to cancel US aid, Israel peace treaty," Reuters, last modified 18 August, 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/79334/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt's-Rebel-Campaign-launches-petition-to-cancel-.aspx>.

³⁶ Ed Blanche, "Israel's day of reckoning: Israel braces for a 'complete break' with peace partner Egypt after three decades as the wave of turbulence sweeping the Arab nation thrusts the Muslim Brotherhood into prominence," *The Middle East*, February 2012, p. 23.

wanted nothing to do with his Israeli counterparts; instead he left the management of the relationship entirely to the security forces.³⁷ Morsi effectively sat atop a partnership, allowing him to avoid accusations of having abandoned the Brotherhood's anti-Zionist rhetoric. Furthermore, Morsi was evidently aware that tacit acceptance of the status quo would aid international acceptance of his government. This led him to repeatedly state that the Muslim Brotherhood led government would honour its international agreements,³⁸ just as the SCAF had done on 12 February 2011 immediately following President Mubarak's overthrow.³⁹ Thus in spite of dire predictions by commentators including Yossi Klein Halevi,⁴⁰ the Islamist period under President Morsi did not result in a radical transformation in the Egyptian-Israeli relationship.⁴¹

Egyptian-Israeli security cooperation in Sinai continued in the same vein as it had during the Mubarak-era. In fact this cooperation reached its zenith following the Arab Spring. Whether under the rule of the SCAF immediately following Mubarak's overthrow, Morsi or al-Sisi, the relationship between Egypt and Israel in Sinai has been managed by the Egyptian armed forces and intelligence services.⁴² It is likely that the members of the Egyptian armed forces share their society's generally negative view towards Israel, however, the senior leaders view the relationship pragmatically. Egypt and Israel have a mutual interest in maintaining a secure and stable Sinai. As stated by Byman and Elgindy, whilst not requiring warm relations with its western neighbour, Israel does desire calm on its borders as well as an Egyptian government that is capable of dealing effectively and responsibly with violence and criminality in the Peninsula.⁴³ The lack of such a stable

³⁷ "Why Israel Will Miss Morsi," Zack Gold, Council on Foreign Relations, last modified 20 August, 2013, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139835/zack-gold/why-israel-will-miss-morsi?page=show>.

³⁸ Breen, "Egypt: Freedom and Justice to the Bedouins in Sinai?," p. 74.

³⁹ Mäkelä, "The Arab Spring's Impact on Egypt's Securitocracy," p. 227.

⁴⁰ "Israel's Neighborhood Watch," Yossi Klein Halevi, Council on Foreign Relations, last modified 01 February, 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67344/yossi-klein-halevi/israels-neighborhood-watch>.

⁴¹ Breen, "Egypt: Freedom and Justice to the Bedouins in Sinai?," p. 89.

⁴² Gold, "Why Israel Will Miss Morsi".

⁴³ Daniel Byman and Khaled Elgindy, "The Deepening Chaos in Sinai," *National Interest* Sep/Oct, no. 127 (2013): pp. 43-44.

security environment would negatively affect Israel. It can increase the risk of cross-border attacks and requires a higher security presence along Israel's southern border to counter such attacks.

Israel's effect on Sinai post-Arab Spring

Post-Arab Spring, the number of attacks emanating from Sinai targeting Israel increased considerably.⁴⁴ In 2012, Israeli intelligence officials stated that there were some eleven incidents, including rocket attacks and five attempted infiltrations during the year. These attacks were perpetrated by various militant Islamist groups, who are the focus of chapter three. These groups also routinely targeted the gas pipeline running from Egypt to Israel and Jordan, exchanged fire with Israeli troops and planted explosives along the border.⁴⁵ Faced with such instability and the fluid political situation in Cairo, Israel aimed to avoid antagonising its neighbour by remaining publicly silent on the Sinai issue whilst following a three-pronged strategy to enhance its security.

First, Israel accelerated the construction of a 240 kilometre long border fence that separates the two states.⁴⁶ Replete with automated sensors, the 5.5 metres high fence extends 1.5 metres below the surface. This barrier is a significant feat of engineering and is estimated to have cost Israel US\$350 million.⁴⁷ The fence was completed in 2012 and has hampered above-ground smuggling and limited the flow of human trafficking victims. The border fence provides an obstacle against militant incursions, along with affording early warning of such attacks to IDF units.

Second, through the Agreed Activity mechanism, Israel has essentially permitted the re-militarisation of Zone C by Egyptian forces in the hope that such measures decrease the frequency and magnitude of militant attacks

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Yaari, "Sinai: A New Front," p. 15.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

and reinstate Egyptian control over the area.⁴⁸ Whilst ostensibly temporary, some additional forces have now been in location for several years. These changes in military dispositions create a security architecture that is considerably different to that stipulated in the Treaty. Along with these increases in Agreed Activities, Israel has silently ignored a huge increase in Egyptian violations of the Treaty. From January to November 2013, the MFO reported 215 alleged Treaty violations to its headquarters in Rome, the majority of which were perpetrated by the Egyptians, as part of their ongoing operations in the Peninsula.⁴⁹

Third, Israel has enhanced its military readiness on its southern border to be better prepared to meet threats emerging from Sinai. In 2013 the IDF deployed an Iron Dome air defence battery near the southern city of Eilat, which has defeated rocket attacks originating from Sinai.⁵⁰ Likewise, a new Eilat Regional Brigade was established in 2012 under the IDF's Southern Command, with its genesis partially predicated on the growing terror threat to its west.⁵¹ After decades of calm on its southern border, since the Arab Spring the IDF has realised that it cannot rely on Egypt and the Treaty alone for security and is thus shifting greater focus to the south. It has been slowly enhancing its forces rather than making bold troop increases that would cause diplomatic ripples.

Gaza

Of all its concerns along its southern border, Gaza weighs heaviest on Israel's mind and the Palestinian territory has continued to play a significant role in Sinai's security environment post-Arab Spring. Since 2007 the 360 square kilometre enclave of Gaza has been ruled by Hamas, a political

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ New Zealand Defence Force, "Deployment Post Activity Report (PAR): Op Farad Senior National Officer (SNO) V749428 Lt Col R.P. Moody," pp. 5-6.

⁵⁰ "Iron Dome missile-defense battery deployed in Eilat," Gili Cohen, Haaretz, last modified 19 July, 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.536819>.

⁵¹ "With eye on Sinai, IDF establishes brigade to defend Eilat," Joshua Davidovich, The Times of Israel, last modified 27 December, 2012, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/with-eye-on-sinai-idf-establishes-brigade-to-watch-over-eilat/>.

offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.⁵² Consequently, Gaza has been effectively under Israeli siege since 2007, predicated on the Israeli need to protect its citizens from rocket fire and to limit the flow of arms to Hamas. The blockade has had numerous negative effects on the people of Gaza. Food shortages have left 80 percent of households reliant on international aid. Goods leaving Gaza have been limited to an average of just one truckload per day compared to thirty-eight per day pre-blockade and Israel has limited Palestinians from leaving Gaza.⁵³ Less than two hundred Gazans were permitted to enter Israel per day on average in the first half of 2013, compared to twenty-six thousand per day in 2000.⁵⁴ According to NGOs including Oxfam, Amnesty International and Care International UK the blockade has 'effectively dismantled the economy and impoverished the population of Gaza', indiscriminately targeting civilians.⁵⁵ Echoing these sentiments, the International Committee for the Red Cross stated that the blockade constitutes collective punishment imposed upon the Palestinian people in Gaza, in violation of Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law.⁵⁶

Whilst Israel receives the greatest international attention, Egypt has played its part in enforcing the blockade of Gaza, completing the seal around the territory by keeping the Rafah crossing largely closed. Ostensibly, Egypt's reason for closing its border crossing with Gaza was to prevent the impression of state endorsement of Hamas.⁵⁷ Such material and moral

⁵² Despite historical links and portrayals of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as the parent organisation of Hamas, the two are wholly separate entities. Hamas is a distinctly nationalistic movement and numerous ideological differences between the two movements have developed, particularly since 2004.

⁵³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of Movement Restrictions on People and Goods," (East Jerusalem: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, 2013), p. 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Amnesty International UK et al., "The Gaza Strip: A humanitarian implosion," (London: Amnesty International et al., 2010), p. 5.

⁵⁶ "Gaza closure: not another year!," International Committee of the Red Cross, last modified 14 June, 2010, <https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/update/palestine-update-140610.htm>.

⁵⁷ "Egypt FM: Hamas gave Israel the excuse to launch Gaza attacks," Associated Press, Haaretz, last modified 01 January, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/egypt-fm-hamas-gave-israel-the-excuse-to-launch-gaza-attacks-1.267251>.

support would undermine the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority and consecrate the split between Gaza and the West Bank, a move not favoured amongst Arab states.⁵⁸ This is consistent with the Mubarak regime's stated position that the Fatah led administration in the West Bank was the sole legitimate Palestinian government, shunning Hamas.⁵⁹

More pragmatically, the Mubarak-era view of the border was as a potential threat to national security for two reasons. First, an open border would enable the free movement of militants and their logistics between Gaza and Egypt. An Egyptian Interior Ministry statement declared that those responsible for the attacks on Sinai's tourist destinations between 2004 and 2006 had links to Gaza.⁶⁰ These claims were refuted by Hamas. Considering the stated links, the blockade commencing in 2007 was a seemingly logical reaction to Egypt's government. Given the power politics that characterise the region, however, it cannot be discounted that the accusations provided pretence for Egypt to further isolate Gaza.

Second, despite its ambivalence towards its eastern neighbour, Egypt has an interest in actively supporting Israel's security to maintain the flow of US aid. This aid remained at a fairly constant \$1.3 billion annually between 2009 and 2013.⁶¹ The majority of this aid is used to equip the Egyptian armed forces with US military hardware, which is employed to maintain security in Sinai. A smaller, though significant, proportion funds the MFO as part of the US commitment to the Peninsula's security.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Mubarak calls Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip a 'coup'," Haaretz, last modified 23 June, 2007, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/mubarak-calls-hamas-takeover-of-the-gaza-strip-a-coup-1.223854>.

⁶⁰ "Palestinians aided Dahab attack," Mohamed El-Sayed, Al-Ahram Organisation, last modified 25 May, 2006, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/796/eg5.htm>.

⁶¹ "U.S. Aid to Egypt: The Current Situation and Future Prospects," Ahmad al-Sayed El-Naggar, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, last modified 17 June, 2009, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2009/06/17/u.s.-aid-to-egypt-current-situation-and-future-prospects>. and Reuters, "Egypt's Rebel Campaign launches petition to cancel US aid, Israel peace treaty".

The Tunnel Trade

As discussed in chapter one, Bedouin smuggling has a longstanding history in the Sinai Peninsula. The traditionally nomadic nature of Sinai's natives lends itself to this illicit trade, which the Bedouin continue to find attractive due to their economic marginalisation by the state. It was not until the signing of the Treaty of Peace and the Israeli withdrawal from the Peninsula that this trade started moving via underground tunnels.⁶² The first recorded Israeli discovery of a tunnel between Sinai and Gaza was in 1983.⁶³ The tunnel trade remained of relatively minor importance overall and focussed on black market products such as weapons, drugs and gold in small quantities during the 1980s.⁶⁴ However, it grew progressively through the 1990s following the first and second intifada in reaction to growing Israeli restrictions on movement of people and goods to and from Gaza.⁶⁵

The 2007 blockade prompted an exponential increase in the scale of both tunnel construction and trade, along with its significance as part of the Gazan economy.⁶⁶ Hamas oversaw the development of tunnels on an industrial scale, creating an entire industry to construct and operate the tunnels. Funds for subterranean construction were raised by mosques and charitable networks, whilst in other cases private cooperatives comprised of a cross-section of Gazan society were formed to fund development.⁶⁷ Somewhat obviously, the tunnel industry is more than merely a Palestinian issue, with every tunnel comprising two entrances – one in Gaza and one in the Egyptian border city of Rafah. The tunnel industry developed as a shared venture between Gazans and their counterparts on the Egyptian side of the border, who were a mix of Palestinians, Bedouin and mainland Egyptians who share in the profits of the cross border trade.⁶⁸

⁶² Nicholas Pelham, "Gaza's Tunnel Phenomenon: The Unintended Dynamics of Israel's Siege," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, no. 4 (2012): p. 7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

The tunnels vary in size and quality, with many reinforced with concrete and steel to prevent collapse, as well as incorporating elevators and carts running on rails to aid the conveyance of goods. At its pre-Arab Spring peak there were estimated to be up to a thousand tunnels used to smuggle four thousand different products into Gaza from Egypt.⁶⁹ Certainly, some of these items were contraband, however, the majority were consumer goods. The importance of the tunnel industry has risen and fallen in parallel to the restrictions in place above ground. Following the May 2010 flotilla incident when Israel softened the blockade under mounting international pressure, reliance on the tunnels decreased, with an estimated 70 to 80 percent of tunnels temporarily decommissioned.⁷⁰ The tunnels have proven dangerous and expensive to run, however, they will likely remain so long as they offer a financially viable alternative to meet the needs of Gaza's 1.8 million consumers.

Whilst the tunnels had long been an important source of materiel for Hamas, they grew in importance following Hamas' takeover of Gaza in June 2007 following armed clashes with Fatah. Having already appropriated the formerly Fatah operated tunnels, Hamas commenced the regulation of the tunnel industry, establishing the Tunnels Affairs Commission (TAC) to regulate the commercial tunnels that were largely under private ownership. This included mandatory tunnel licencing and banning the import of certain products, including weapons, alcohol, tramadol, people and disassembled vehicles.⁷¹ Crucially, Hamas implemented a comprehensive customs regime on the tunnel industry, including a 14.5 percent value-added tax on all products, as well as further levies against heavily subsidised Egyptian fuel, cigarettes and generators.⁷²

⁶⁹ Byman and Elgindy, "The Deepening Chaos in Sinai," p. 50.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Pelham, "Gaza's Tunnel Phenomenon: The Unintended Dynamics of Israel's Siege," p. 11.

⁷² International Crisis Group, "Light at the End of their Tunnels? Hamas & the Arab Uprisings," p. 34.

In 2012 the International Crisis Group estimated that between US\$500 million and US\$700 million in goods passed through the tunnels annually.⁷³ Whilst the Fatah dominated Palestinian Authority benefitted financially from taxing the above ground border crossings, the tunnel trade provided similar excise benefits to Hamas. As such it provided Hamas' government with an estimated 40 percent of its revenue.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the financial importance of the tunnel industry to Hamas grew significantly in the post-Arab Spring period. This was particularly the case following the movement's loss of financial backing due to its schism with Iran over its stance on the Syrian conflict.⁷⁵ By 2013, the tunnels played at least an equally important role in supplying Gaza as the official border crossings above ground. A Hamas report stated that in the first quarter of 2013 the tunnels accounted for the import of 65 percent of flour, 98 percent of sugar, 52 percent of rice, 100 percent of fresh fish, 100 percent of steel and cement and 94 percent of gravel into the territory.⁷⁶

The tunnels and their associated smuggling network that reaches west through the Peninsula have provided numerous benefits to the Bedouin, particularly in North Sinai. First, the tunnels allowed the Bedouin access to their kinsmen across the border, from whom they had been increasingly separated for decades, and particularly so since the Gaza blockade. Most crucially, it has offered employment opportunities that as detailed in the previous chapter are otherwise scant at best for the Bedouin. The tunnel industry is estimated to bring US\$300 million to Sinai's economy annually.⁷⁷ This includes providing work in constructing and operating the tunnels, as well as in the provision of security on the Egyptian side. Moreover, the

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ "Hamas Faces Financial Crisis After Egypt Tunnel Closure," Hazem Balousha, Al Monitor, last modified 15 July, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/hamas-financial-crisis-gaza-egypt-morsi.html>.

⁷⁵ "Unrest in Egypt: Closed Tunnels Could Ruin Hamas," Theresa Breuer, Spiegel Online, last modified 30 July, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/egypt-and-gaza-closed-smuggling-sinai-tunnels-could-ruin-hamas-a-913927.html>.

⁷⁶ Balousha, "Hamas Faces Financial Crisis After Egypt Tunnel Closure".

⁷⁷ "Sinai: The New Frontier of Conflict?," Ehud Yaari and Normand St. Pierre, The Washington Institute, last modified 20 November, 2011, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/sinai-the-new-frontier-of-conflict>.

logistics of sourcing and transporting the massive quantity of goods that traverse the tunnels provides further employment.

Nicholas Pelham, one of the foremost writers on the Peninsula's security, describes the tunnels as a key driver of upward mobility and social change on the Gazan side.⁷⁸ Such a claim is equally true on the Egyptian side of the border. Previously marginalised, many Bedouin involved in the tunnel trade have become a class of *nouveaux riches*. This is evidenced by the luxury cars and oriental-style villas visible in the towns of North Sinai, mirrored across the border on the Gazan landscape.⁷⁹

The Egyptian state is well aware of the industry's economic importance to the area. In 2011 the Egyptian Department of Homeland Security's media spokesman General Essam al-Bedawi acknowledged that the tunnel trade 'brings in billions of pounds, so a lot of people have interest in it, and they have interests in stopping any police presence' in the Peninsula.⁸⁰ Indeed, the tunnel industry has cultivated shared interests between Bedouin traders, transporters and tunnel owners on the Egyptian side of the border, and both Gaza's consumers and tunnel operators. Pelham describes the tunnel industry as a centrifugal force that pushes North Sinai's inhabitants away from the Egyptian state.⁸¹ Of themselves, the tunnels are not responsible for the rift between the Bedouin and the state. Rather, the importance of the illicit industry is symptomatic of Egypt's failure to integrate the Bedouin into the state. As shown in the previous chapter, with unemployment the principal issue for many in North Sinai, the illicit tunnel industry has therefore pitted official Egyptian policy against the Bedouin necessity to earn a livelihood.

⁷⁸ Pelham, "Gaza's Tunnel Phenomenon: The Unintended Dynamics of Israel's Siege," p. 20.

⁷⁹ "The Egypt-Gaza tunnel network: Humanitarian necessity or security risk?," Sarah El-Rashidi, Ahrām Online, last modified 05 September, 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/51839/Egypt/Politics-/The-EgyptGaza-tunnel-network-Humanitarian-necessit.aspx>.

⁸⁰ "What Scares the Sinai Bedouin: the Rise of the Radical Islamists," Abigail Hauslohner, Time, last modified 10 August, 2011, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2087797,00.html>.

⁸¹ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 4.

This conflict of interests has been escalated by the proliferation of weapons in the region. Whilst much attention is dedicated to the smuggling of arms to Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza, it is not just Gaza that has served as the destination for weapons liberated from Libyan arsenals following the fall of Muammar Gaddafi. Olivia Holt-Ivry states that Bedouin smugglers who use the tunnels have utilised the profits to arm themselves, predominantly with small arms but also with anti-armour and anti-aircraft systems.⁸² These arsenals serve offensive and defensive purposes. They protect newfound riches and lucrative smuggling routes from rival tribes, and deter and counter the Egyptian authorities' anti-smuggling operations.⁸³

This chapter contends that for years the Egyptian state's response to the tunnels had been ambivalent. It had alternated between sporadic crackdowns in an attempt to outwardly appear to be taking the situation seriously and, more often, a blind-eye policy that facilitated personal gain by some within Egypt's security apparatus. For example, in 2007 Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni described Egypt's attempts at tackling the tunnel trade as 'terrible', claiming to have video evidence of Egyptian police complicity in the smuggling of weapons and militants into Gaza.⁸⁴ The Egyptian state's ambivalent stance towards the tunnels results from its competing desires. It wants to express solidarity with the Palestinians and retain its position as a mediator between Hamas and Fatah, and between Israel and the Palestinians.⁸⁵ However, it simultaneously desires to maintain its treaty obligations with Israel and control its territory.

Brotherhood: the Egyptian state's relationship with Hamas under Morsi

In the initial aftermath of President Mubarak's fall from power in 2011, the disappearance of the Egyptian security forces from the Peninsula contributed

⁸² Holt-Ivry, "Arms Control in Civil Society: Controlling Conventional Arms Smuggling in Sinai," p. 106.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 105.

⁸⁵ Tally Helfont, "Egypt's Wall with Gaza & the Emergence of a New Middle East Alignment," *Orbis* 54, no. 3 (2010): p. 432.

to an increasingly permissive operating environment for smugglers, including those involved in the tunnel trade.⁸⁶ This permissive environment was enhanced by official moves. For example, Egypt halted work on a subterranean steel barrier to impede the construction of tunnels, which had been under development since 2009 with international assistance.⁸⁷ Hamas greeted this situation with enthusiasm, which was compounded by the Muslim Brotherhood's rise to power under the banner of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), who gained the largest number of seats of any party in the 2011 parliamentary elections. This was followed by the victory of the FJP's candidate, Muhammad Morsi, in the June 2012 presidential elections.

The rise to power of Islamist groups in Cairo, and particularly the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, was a moment of heady excitement for Hamas. At the time, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh stated 'we will look to Egypt to play a big, leading role, a historic role, regarding the Palestinian cause, in helping the Palestinian nation get freedom, return home, and totally end the Gaza siege'.⁸⁸ Hamas expected an improved relationship with an ideologically aligned Muslim Brotherhood, an expectation shared by Israel with trepidation.⁸⁹

During the Muslim Brotherhood's time in power, the relationship between Egypt and Gaza did improve. Hamas, which had been shunned under Mubarak, increased its bilateral relations with Egypt under Morsi. Egyptian Prime Minister Hesham Kandil made a symbolic visit to Gaza in response to Operation Cast Lead, with Morsi labelling the Israeli operation as

⁸⁶ Holt-Ivry, "Arms Control in Civil Society: Controlling Conventional Arms Smuggling in Sinai," p. 105.

⁸⁷ "Egypt stops building steel wall along Gaza," Egypt Independent, Al-Masry Al-Youm, last modified 12 April, 2011, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypt-stops-building-steel-wall-along-gaza>.

⁸⁸ "Hamas: Morsi victory in Egypt will help Palestinian cause," Reuters, Haaretz Daily Newspaper, last modified 24 June, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/hamas-morsi-victory-in-egypt-will-help-palestinian-cause-1.443621>.

⁸⁹ "Israel now entering 'deeply problematic' period in ties with Egypt, says ex-envoy," The Times of Israel, last modified 24 June, 2012, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-now-entering-deeply-problematic-period-in-ties-with-egypt-says-ex-envoy/>.

'unacceptable aggression'.⁹⁰ In addition to statements in support of Gaza and a more hostile tone and anti-Israeli comments, there were also indications that political ties would improve in practical terms, delivering tangible benefits to the peoples of Sinai and Gaza.

Under the Muslim Brotherhood, movement across the Rafah border crossing undoubtedly increased, albeit not to the pre-blockade levels. By way of comparison, during the last six months of 2010 an average of 19,800 persons per month travelled through Rafah in both directions, whilst in the first five months of 2012 the monthly average had increased to roughly 31,600.⁹¹ Furthermore, Egyptian and Hamas officials began discussing the permanent opening of the Rafah border. These discussions included the possible development of a free trade zone around the border town.⁹² Hamas officials in particular envisioned that the development of a free trade zone would allow Rafah to act as a commercial crossing, and would avoid paying any kind of duties to the Egyptian government.⁹³ With trade occurring above ground and in the open, such a zone would fulfil Gaza's requirements for imports, whilst removing the very need for the tunnels.

Hamas accepted such a proposal, stating that it would willingly assist in closing the tunnels in return for the opening of the Rafah crossing for people and goods.⁹⁴ The Israeli standpoint on such economic development in Sinai has been ambivalent. The current Israeli administration views any development negatively, including the free trade zone, which is likely to materially strengthen and legitimise Hamas. Conversely, economic development in both Sinai and Gaza might provide a positive influence that tends to weaken extremism, which is clearly in Israel's interests. The FJP acknowledged that the Bedouin's economic deprivation was a source of

⁹⁰ Benedetta Berti, "No Blank Cheques: Morsi and Hamas," *Fathom* Spring, no. 2 (2013): p. 48.

⁹¹ "Movement of people via Rafah Crossing," Gisha, last accessed 12 October, 2014, <http://gisha.org/graph/2399>.

⁹² "Analysis: A tunnel-free future for Gaza?," IRIN, last modified 23 August, 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/96155/analysis-a-tunnel-free-future-for-gaza>.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ International Crisis Group, "Light at the End of their Tunnels? Hamas & the Arab Uprisings," p. 40.

instability in the Peninsula, and thus stated that it was prepared to develop such a zone in return for the closure of the tunnels.⁹⁵ This policy aimed to decrease criminality whilst creating legitimate employment opportunities for Sinai's Bedouin.

Despite the FJP's stated support, the Egyptian government under Morsi rejected the idea of the free trade zone. Publicly, this was out of fear that with an open border between Gaza and Egypt, Israel would wash its hands of Gaza and close its own crossing point at Karem Shalom. Such a move would entrench the split between Hamas and Fatah, potentially leaving responsibility for Gaza solely in Egyptian hands. Such a situation is not without precedent: until 1967 Gaza was in fact administered by Egypt. However, rather than accepting greater responsibility for Gaza, Egypt has sought to further separate itself from the territory, especially since 2014 under President al-Sisi. Pragmatically, in the post-Arab Spring environment where unemployment was rife in Sinai and west of the Suez Canal, providing statements of moral support was easy. However, the Morsi government was unwilling to accept the political risk of Palestinians vying for scarce work inside Sinai and wider Egypt. Furthermore, despite the ideological links between the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, the Morsi government was nevertheless cautious of allowing militants from across the border further access to the already restive Peninsula.

Back to the status quo: worsening Egyptian relations with Hamas

The Rafah cross-border attack of 2012 represented a turning point in the relationship between Egypt under Morsi and Hamas, decreasing the prospects of support from tangible to rhetorical. On 5 August 2012, a group of militants attacked an Egyptian Border Guard post at dusk near the Israeli border as the soldiers within broke their Ramadan fast for the day.⁹⁶ The attack killed sixteen Egyptian soldiers and injured seven others. The militants

⁹⁵ Breen, "Egypt: Freedom and Justice to the Bedouins in Sinai?," p. 93.

⁹⁶ Ed Blanche, "Danger in the desert," *The Middle East*, October 2012, p. 15.

subsequently stole two armoured personnel carriers and breached the international border in search of Israeli targets.⁹⁷ Though the threat was readily countered by the IDF, the audacious raid caused authorities on both sides of the border to reassess the security environment. Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak stated that the attack should serve as a 'wake-up call for the Egyptians to take matters into their own hands'.⁹⁸ For its own part, Israel continued to discretely build up its military presence along its southern border as previously described.

Numerous competing theories of the militants' provenance and affiliations have been posited by both Egypt and Israel given the nexus of interests that intersect in the Peninsula. No group ever claimed responsibility for the attack, though Israel declared that the perpetrators were 'operatives of a global jihad network'.⁹⁹ Alternatively, the Muslim Brotherhood suggested that the attack had been orchestrated by Israeli intelligence agencies to undermine President Morsi and worsen relations between Egypt and Gaza.¹⁰⁰ Egypt declared that the attack's perpetrators were either Gazan or being supported by elements in Gaza. This included accusations that the attack was supported by mortar fire from Gaza and that the perpetrators wore uniforms manufactured in the Palestinian city of Nabulus.¹⁰¹

The identity of the militants remains unclear. In this case perception, however, proved more important than reality and the blame centred squarely on Gaza. There is little evidence to suggest that the perpetrators had any links to Hamas. In fact, Hamas has actively worked to retain a monopoly on

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Barak: Attack on Israel-Sinai border is 'wake-up call' for Egypt government," Haaretz, last modified 06 August, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/barak-attack-on-israel-sinai-border-is-wake-up-call-for-egypt-government-1.456298>.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ "Egypt's Brotherhood blames Sinai raid on Israel's Mossad," British Broadcasting Corporation, last modified 07 August, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19154090>.

¹⁰¹ "Egypt Says Sinai Attack was Backed by Gaza Mortar Fire," Naharnet Newsdesk, last modified 07 August, 2012, <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/49119-egypt-says-sinai-attack-was-backed-by-gaza-mortar-fire>. and "Forensics report gives clues to identity of Sinai attackers," Al-Masry Al-Youm, last modified 09 August, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/forensics-report-gives-clues-identity-sinai-attackers>.

violence in Gaza, resulting in some militant groups labelling it as too moderate in its resistance against Israel.¹⁰² Limited from employing force in Gaza, several *Salafi-Jihadi* groups have used the tunnels to cross into the Peninsula.¹⁰³ These groups benefitted from greater freedom to operate in Sinai, away from Hamas control. The area has thus served as strategic depth for a number of militant Islamist groups, who will be detailed in chapter three.

Hamas was quick to declare solidarity with the Egyptian people, as well as deny any involvement following the attack. Mahmoud Zahar, one of the movement's co-founders, refuted claims of involvement stating that 'Hamas cares about Egypt's national security and would never use weapons against the Egyptian army.'¹⁰⁴ Accusations against Hamas sought to further the varied interests at play beyond the Peninsula; the non-Islamist constituency within Egypt including the military and security services was content to use links to Hamas to undermine support for the Muslim Brotherhood, whilst Israel was eager for Hamas to return to its Mubarak-era degree of international isolation. Under pressure to respond to the attack, Morsi chose security and stability over solidarity – as Benedetta Berti aptly put it 'brothers they may be, but Egypt remains wary of its neighbour.'¹⁰⁵

This was a blow to Hamas, whose natural preference was for a sympathetic regime in Cairo that supported the movement's rule in Gaza, a preference that it thought it had realised under Morsi. Yet were such a situation unavailable, the next best thing would be an under-governed Sinai Peninsula with a small Egyptian security presence. This would provide a permissive environment for the tunnel trade and its concomitant enablement of Hamas.

¹⁰² Gus Martin, *Essentials of Terrorism: Concepts and Controversies* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014), p. 121.

¹⁰³ Gold, "Sinai Security: Opportunities for Unlikely Cooperation Among Egypt, Israel, and Hamas," p. 14.

¹⁰⁴ "Gaza's Hamas denies involvement in Egypt border attacks," Ahmed Eleiba, *Ahram Online*, last modified 06 August, 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/49693/Egypt/Politics-/Gazas-Hamas-denies-involvement-in-Egypt-border-att.aspx>.

¹⁰⁵ Berti, "No Blank Cheques: Morsi and Hamas," p. 49.

The effect of the August 2012 cross-border attack was a move by the Egyptian state to eliminate both possibilities.

The fallout from the Rafah attack provided the stage not only for conflict between Egypt and Gaza, but also internally between Morsi's government and the Egyptian military. Morsi used the incident as an opportunity to extend his dominance over the country's powerful armed forces and intelligence services in response to the attack. This was represented by his dismissal of the Director of the General Intelligence Directorate Murad Muwafi and the North Sinai Governor, along with a number of other senior generals. Days later, he forced the leader of the SCAF Field Marshal Mohamad Hussein Tantawi into retirement, ironically appointing the seemingly more malleable General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi as both Minister of Defence and the Chief of the Armed Forces.¹⁰⁶

Yet as much as Morsi used the incident to consolidate the Muslim Brotherhood's power, in turn, it forced him to surrender some of the operational aspects of security in Sinai. Thus, in spite of the Muslim Brotherhood's affinity to Hamas, the Egyptian military was left to define how state policy was enacted in the Peninsula. A key line of operation for the armed forces in achieving this security was the destruction of the tunnels between North Sinai and Gaza. Counter-tunnel operations had previously been half-hearted and for every tunnel destroyed, many more were left untouched. With Israeli consent under the Agreed Activity mechanism, the Egyptian military brought engineering plant into Sinai and used it along with explosives and other methods to destroy the tunnels. The efficacy of these operations was unclear however; of the 250 tunnels destroyed in 2012 it was estimated that more than half returned to operation shortly after the military departed.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ "Egypt leader Mursi orders army chief Tantawi to resign," British Broadcasting Corporation, last modified 12 August, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19234763>.

¹⁰⁷ "Tunnel Vision," Zack Gold, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, last modified 22 October, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2013/10/22/tunnel-vision/gqxa>.

Free from the constraints of the Muslim Brotherhood's rhetorical support for Hamas, the Egyptian military further intensified its isolation of Gaza following its overthrow of President Morsi in July 2013. This included keeping the Rafah border above ground predominantly closed or else severely limiting the flow of goods and people between Egypt and Gaza, even during the humanitarian crisis resulting from Operation Protective Edge in 2014.¹⁰⁸

In tandem, Egypt's counter-tunnel operations were stepped up, including flooding tunnels to degrade their structural integrity. Military sources claimed to have destroyed 794 tunnels in 2013 alone.¹⁰⁹ Whilst it is unclear exactly how many tunnels exist, such a high number suggests that the same tunnel systems could be repeatedly repaired and returned to operation, only to be targeted again by the military. In a bid to combat this issue, Egypt's armed forces commenced the clearance of a five hundred metre wide buffer zone to the west of the international border. They destroyed homes and bulldozed densely wooded areas adjacent to the border fence.¹¹⁰ With the proliferation of tunnels failing to abate, this buffer was widened by the Egyptian authorities to a five kilometre wide strip. The Egyptian military's creation of such a buffer zone will undoubtedly aid counter-tunnelling operations. However, in doing so the Egyptian military will further alienate North Sinai Bedouin, who having already lost their livelihood will have now also lost their homes.

The increase in counter-tunnelling operations had a devastating effect on the Gazan side of the border. Reliant on the flow of imports through the tunnels, Gaza quickly ran down its reserves of fuel, construction materials and consumer goods. The operations caused massive shortages and prices skyrocketed. The UN estimated that in July 2013 fuel imports dropped by 90

¹⁰⁸ "Rafah border crossing closed: Gaza Interior Ministry," Daily News Egypt, last modified 11 July, 2014, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/07/11/rafah-border-crossing-closed-gaza-interior-ministry/>.

¹⁰⁹ "Egypt destroyed 1055 Gaza tunnels since January 2011: Army official," Ahram Online, last modified 04 October, 2013, <http://english.ahram.org/News/83189.aspx>.

¹¹⁰ "Egypt's Buffer-Zone Move Shocks Hamas," Adnan Abu Amer, Al Monitor, last modified 04 September, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/egypt-buffer-zone-gaza-hamas.html>.

percent in the space of a month, whilst the decreasing availability of construction materials in Gaza led to a 50 percent increase in cost over the same period.¹¹¹

The knock-on effects of these shortages were felt across the Gazan economy: the tightened blockade led to increasing unemployment as the construction industry slowed to a halt and power cuts lasting up to sixteen hours per day due to fuel shortages affected essential services such as hospitals.¹¹² Given its reliance on taxation of the tunnel trade, Egypt's counter-tunnel operations spelled financial disaster for Hamas too. The loss of its tunnel income drastically affected Hamas' revenue. Its government was no longer able to pay thousands of its 45,000 civil servants.¹¹³ Egyptian operations on the west of the border had proved so successful that in April 2014 a Hamas spokesperson announced the disbandment of the TAC, as Egypt's mass closure of tunnels had made the commission redundant.¹¹⁴

The enduring relationship between the people of Gaza and Sinai's Bedouin is a geopolitical fact. Economic, cultural and familial ties, along with shared security interests, bind the two together. The tactics that isolate and deprive the Palestinian people are thus unlikely to lead to greater security in the Peninsula in the long term. Given the measurable drop in imports into Gaza, it is clear that Egypt's counter-tunnel operations have been effective, at least at a tactical level. The operations have effectively limited the two-way flow of weapons and militants between Sinai and Gaza. What the operations have failed to do is address the root causes of the tunnel industry or to provide an alternative means to satisfy Gaza's humanitarian and consumer demands. If the past is any indicator of the future, these imperatives, like the need for the

¹¹¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "Protection of Civilians: Weekly Report 25 June - 1 July 2013," (East Jerusalem: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, 2013), pp. 3-4.

¹¹² IRIN, "Analysis: A tunnel-free future for Gaza?".

¹¹³ Breuer, "Unrest in Egypt: Closed Tunnels Could Ruin Hamas".

¹¹⁴ "Gaza govt scraps tunnels agency over Egypt crackdown," Ola Atallah, TurkishPress.com, last modified 09 April, 2014, <http://www.turkishpress.com/news/399937/>.

Bedouin of Sinai to make a living, will likely see the resumption of the industry once Egyptian forces withdraw from the area.

More ominously, Egypt's strengthening of the Gaza blockade from the time of the Mubarak regime has shaped Gaza into what Caspit describes as a 'bubbling pressure cooker that has no safety valves'.¹¹⁵ Starved of resources and led by an impoverished and marginalised Hamas, Egypt may well have added to future instability by creating a desperate and potentially irrational actor to its east. As articulated by Holt-Ivry, in Sinai the destruction of tunnels is a tactic rather than a strategy.¹¹⁶ Though the tunnel trade has been largely halted, the loss of income for the many Bedouin who rely on the industry has not been replaced and thus the military operations against the tunnels serve only to further separate Sinai locals from the state. In such an environment of continued marginalisation, it is perhaps unsurprising that many Bedouin have grown sympathetic to militant Islamist groups that operate in the Peninsula and it is these groups that will be the focus of chapter three.

¹¹⁵ "Israel waits for Egypt to deal with terrorists in Sinai," Ben Caspit, *Al Monitor*, last modified 18 February, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/02/terror-sinai-egypt-israel-gen-sisi-eilat-hilton-taba-hamas.html>.

¹¹⁶ Holt-Ivry, "Arms Control in Civil Society: Controlling Conventional Arms Smuggling in Sinai," p. 108.

Chapter Three – The growth of militant Islamism in Sinai

The purpose of this final chapter is to explain why militant Islamism has grown in Sinai following the Arab Spring. Whilst Egypt has a significant history of Islamist violence, both its frequency and brutality have been markedly different from previous iterations. This chapter demonstrates this difference through an analysis of militants' violent methods, including beheadings, and the frequency of attacks. It explains the causes of this difference through studying previous waves of militant Islamism in Egypt in order to interpret the present security environment. This chapter examines the nexus of interests shared by domestic and foreign non-state actors, as well as the role of states, which it argues have contributed to the Peninsula's growing radicalisation. This chapter will demonstrate that in removing the existing political regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, the Arab Spring's fallout across Egypt and the wider region has promoted worsening violence in Sinai.

Western academics, as well as Egyptian and Israeli media sources, employ varied terminology to describe the armed groups that have proliferated in Sinai and have been largely responsible for violence following the Arab Spring. These descriptors include *Salafi*, *Jihadi* and *Takfiri*. The first group, Salafis, are adherents of a puritanical interpretation of Islam. They strive to apply Shari'a consonant with their interpretation of its implementation during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the first three generations of Muslims.¹ There is a broad spectrum of Salafi thoughts and practices in Egypt. They range from those who are willing to participate in the democratic system, as represented by the Al Nour party, to those in what Brown titles the 'quietest' camp that reject any form of political opposition and instead focus on perfecting their own practice of Islam.² In this spectrum there are

¹ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Tara Vassefi, "Perceptions of the "Arab Spring" within the Salafi-Jihadi movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35, no. 12 (2012): p. 832.

² Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," p. 3.

those who favour political change and use violence to further this goal, such as the militant Islamist group ABM.

Similarly, the use of the term Jihadi is imprecise and represents a broad spectrum of views. The Arabic term Jihad embodies the Islamic concept of 'struggle' and incorporates the concepts of greater and lesser Jihad. The greater Jihad is the 'inner' form and refers to self-purification. It is widely employed by Muslims in terms of a peaceful inner struggle to follow the dictates of their faith.³ The lesser Jihad is the 'outer' form and refers to participating in a military conflict and is categorised into offensive and defensive Jihad. It is the latter military meaning of Jihad that largely dominates Western media usage, and is used by militant Islamist groups such as al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Lastly, Elie Podeh describes Takfiri groups as the most extreme of the three, regarding the whole of Egyptian society as *Kafir* (infidels) due to its participation in secular society and governance. While Egyptian Jihadi groups have targeted the regime and foreigners, Podeh states that Takfiri groups make no distinction between the regime and the ordinary population, who as apostates constitute legitimate targets.⁴ For example, Hauslohner documented the growth of Takfiri group Takfir wal-Hijr in Sinai, which intimidated local civilians and attacked police in the six months following Mubarak's overthrow.⁵

As this chapter shows, elements of all three groups exist in the Peninsula, however, the term militant Islamists is preferred so as to not presume the motivation or ideology of groups where this information is not stated. This term has been favoured over Islamist alone, which in Middle Eastern sources denotes individuals and groups that use Islamic teachings as a guideline for participation in the public domain and does not necessarily infer adherence

³ Gartenstein-Ross and Vassefi, "Perceptions of the "Arab Spring" within the Salafi-Jihadi movement," p. 832.

⁴ Elie Podeh, "Egypt's Struggle against the Militant Islamic Groups," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 8, no. 2 (1996): p. 46.

⁵ Hauslohner, "What Scares the Sinai Bedouin: the Rise of the Radical Islamists".

to violent means. This is distinct from the Western interpretation of the term, which describes Islamists as 'actors who use violence not only as a means but also as an end, while subscribing to dogmatic principles that pay no attention to the will of the people and their worldly aspirations.'⁶

Modern Egyptian militant Islamism

Egypt has a noteworthy history of militant Islamism dating back to the 1970s, which can be broadly split into two separate waves. The first wave emanated from disillusionment in President Anwar al-Sadat, the self-styled 'pious President'. On assuming power in 1970 al-Sadat sought to use this image to co-opt Islamists as a counterweight to his Nasserist and Marxist opponents on the left. However, his failure to implement the Shari'a desired by groups such as al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group, IG) and subsequent signing of the Treaty of Peace with Israel resulted in a growing militant Islamist revolt against the regime and al-Sadat's own assassination in 1981 by Lieutenant Khalid Islambouli.⁷

During the al-Sadat period two militant Islamist organisations emerged that posed the primary security concern to the Egyptian government until the end of the 1990s. The first was al-Jihad al-Islami (Egyptian Islamic Jihad, EIJ), of which Islambouli was a member, whilst the second was IG. The ranks of both organisations were filled with former Muslim Brotherhood members, disaffected by what they viewed as the Brotherhood's excessively moderate stance. The two groups could be defined as Salafi-Jihadist, as both EIJ and IG sought to replace the secular Egyptian regime with Shari'a through the use of force.⁸

⁶ Are Knudsen and Basem Ezbidi, *Popular Protest in the New Middle East: Islamism and post-Islamist politics* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), pp. 231-32.

⁷ Heidi Breen, "Violent Islamism in Egypt from 1997 to 2012," (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), 2013), pp. 10-11.

⁸ Chris Heffelfinger, "Trends in Egyptian Salafi Activism " (Westpoint, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007), p. 9.

Tactical cooperation between the two groups was common and there was a degree of fluidity in membership between the two. Both conducted a series of attacks across the country, although notably not in the growing tourist destination of South Sinai. These attacks focussed on destabilising the Egyptian government, employing high profile attacks aimed at deterring foreign investment and destabilising the economy. From 1992, militants from both groups conducted sustained attacks against foreign tourists and tourist attractions, as well as against police targets and members of Egypt's Coptic minority.⁹

The culmination of these attacks was the 1997 Luxor massacre, when gunmen from IG attacked the tourist hotspot of Luxor, killing some fifty-eight foreigners along with four Egyptians.¹⁰ The massacre involved not only automatic weapons but also the more shocking use of machetes, claiming victims as young as five years of age. The attack sought to damage the Egyptian government's international standing, however, its extreme violence and negative effect on the country's reputation caused public outrage.¹¹ Reflecting popular opinion, the head of Egypt's foremost seat of Sunni learning, al-Azhar University, described the perpetrators as 'traitors and cowards who sold their souls to the devil'.¹²

Sensing that they had overplayed their hand, EIJ and IG ceased their attacks. Indeed, the massacre was the last attack perpetrated by IG, subsequently embarking on a path of de-radicalisation.¹³ Luxor thus signalled the end of this first wave of militant Islamism in Egypt, having alienated the more moderate Islamist masses by relying exclusively on 'shock tactics' to

⁹ Sherifa Zuhur, "Egypt: Security, Political, and Islamist Challenges," (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), p. 73.

¹⁰ "Bloodbath at Luxor," *The Economist*, last modified 20 November, 1997, <http://www.economist.com/node/106278>.

¹¹ Fawaz A. Gerges, "The End of the Islamist Insurgency in Egypt?: Costs and Prospects," *Middle East Journal* 54, no. 4 (2000): p. 594.

¹² Barry Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Egyptian Politics* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 163.

¹³ Omar Ashour, "Lions Tamed? An Inquiry into the Causes of De-Radicalization of Armed Islamist Movements: The Case of the Egyptian Islamic Group," *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 4 (2007).

bring about the Islamisation of Egyptian politics and society.¹⁴ This alienation was evidenced by Egyptians protesting against such attacks, as well as denying the militants shelter and bases from which to operate.¹⁵ The apparent link between extreme violence and the end of Egypt's first wave of militant Islamism raises the question of whether such a pattern might be repeated. In the late 1990s, excessive violence undermined the support of Egypt's moderate Islamists. It remains to be seen whether increasingly brutal methods, including beheadings and targeting of civilians, will have a similar effect on popular support in Sinai.

Chris Heffelfinger identifies a second wave of militant Islamism as commencing in 2004 with the bombing of Sinai tourist sites in Taba and Ras Shaitan that was discussed in chapter one.¹⁶ This was followed by the attacks against similar targets in Sharm El Sheikh in 2005 and Dahab in 2006.¹⁷ This second wave of militancy differed in method and motivation from the first. Abandoning the small arms attacks of EIJ and IG, this new wave of militancy favoured the use of explosives and in some cases suicide bombers.¹⁸ Following the model of global Jihadi activism, the hitherto largely unknown militant groups in Sinai were smaller and less hierarchically organised than their predecessors.

Rather than solely focussing locally on 'the near enemy' of the Egyptian regime, these groups were more outwardly motivated. For example, all three militant Islamist groups that claimed responsibility for the 2005 Sharm El Sheikh bombings claimed that the attack was aimed at Jews and Christians, with the Abdullah 'Azzam Brigades group stating the attack was a response to the 'crimes of worldwide evil powers' in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Chechnya.¹⁹ This followed the Salafi-Jihadi trend championed by al-Qa'ida's

¹⁴ Gerges, "The End of the Islamist Insurgency in Egypt?: Costs and Prospects," p. 593.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 593-94.

¹⁶ Heffelfinger, "Trends in Egyptian Salafi Activism " p. 12.

¹⁷ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 4.

¹⁸ Heffelfinger, "Trends in Egyptian Salafi Activism " p. 12.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

leader Osama bin Laden of attacking 'the far enemy'.²⁰ The term 'far enemy' is employed by Jihadis to refer to the US and its Western allies. Bin Laden's political grievances with the West included the US presence in Saudi Arabia and US-led sanctions against Iraq. Al-Qa'ida used these grievances to frame attacking the far enemy, whether in the Middle East or in Western states themselves, as a form of defensive jihad that was a religious obligation.²¹

Militant Islamism versus Bedouin pursuit of leverage

It is important to distinguish between militant Islamism in Sinai and the limited Bedouin use of force to achieve their aims, such as release of imprisoned tribesmen. The Bedouin's use of force has increased in the post-Arab Spring environment, and has been emboldened by the decreased police and intelligence presence in the Peninsula. For example, between February and July 2012, the kidnapping of foreigners increased significantly with Bedouin tribesmen taking three pairs of Americans, three South Koreans, a pair of Brazilians, and a Singaporean hostage.²² Whilst kidnap is an inherently violent act, the kidnapped tourists described their captors as offering traditional Bedouin hospitality rather than violence during their brief periods of incarceration.²³ Likewise, in March 2012, Bedouin in North Sinai described as 'demonstrators' targeted the MFO, surrounding the peacekeeper base near El Gorah and preventing logistical resupply for eight days.²⁴ This was followed by similar blockades on smaller MFO bases, along with the abduction of an MFO peacekeeper from a bus in March 2013.

Whilst criminal, these acts are manifestly different from the tactics employed by militant Islamists. Kidnappings and blockades by the Bedouin have been a predominantly non-violent means to draw the attention of Egyptian

²⁰ Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: why Jihad went global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²¹ "Declaring War on the 'Far Enemy'," Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, last modified 09 August, 2011, <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/declaring-war-on-the-far-enemy/>.

²² Sarah A. Topol, "Tea and Kidnapping," *The Atlantic*, October 2012, p. 24.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Multinational Force and Observers, "Multinational Force and Observers Director General's Report to the 2012 Trilateral Meeting," (Rome: Multinational Force and Observers, 2012), p. 1.

authorities to local grievances, generally relating to the imprisonment of fellow tribesmen. Nicholas Pelham states that kidnappers in South Sinai uphold tribal customs of safeguarding the life of hostages and the use of negotiation, unlike in the 'jihadi-infused North'.²⁵ However, this pattern of avoiding unnecessary violence and willingness to negotiate in fact likewise applies to Bedouin attempts to gain leverage in North Sinai. For example, a statement from the Bedouin responsible for the March 2012 blockade of the MFO's North Camp declared that the group had no issue with the organisation, but believed that targeting it would 'bring a more rapid response from Cairo authorities'.²⁶ Following eight days of non-violent demonstration, the Bedouin received assurances that the imprisonment of fellow tribesman would be reviewed, following which they ended the blockade.

Though other groups that employ the tactic of kidnap likewise demonstrate a willingness to safeguard hostages and negotiate with authorities, its use by the Bedouin is differentiated by their willingness to release their captives without substantive redress of their demands. Similarly, even when their demands have not been fulfilled by the Egyptian authorities there has been no use of violence against captives.²⁷ Such largely non-violent attempts by the Bedouin to address local grievances with the authorities are wholly distinct from the violence of militant Islamists in Sinai, which has increased post-Arab Spring. As will be seen, while the severity and frequency of attacks have grown since the 2011 revolution, this trend has built upon increasing Bedouin radicalisation from the mid-2000s onwards. This radicalisation results from the Egyptian state's socio-economic exclusion and harassment of the Bedouin.

²⁵ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 6.

²⁶ "Bedouin in Egypt's Sinai 'end siege of monitor camp'," British Broadcasting Corporation, last modified 16 March, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-17398542>.

²⁷ "To be heard, Egypt's Bedouin Take Tourists Hostage," Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, last modified 28 March, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/03/28/149145272/to-be-heard-egypts-bedouin-take-tourists-hostage>.

Islamism amongst Sinai's Bedouin

Historically, Sinai's Bedouin have not practiced orthodox Islam, due to their nomadic and remote lifestyle, and resultant isolation from Islamic institutions.²⁸ Anthropologist Clinton Bailey describes Bedouin religious practice in Sinai as simultaneously incorporating pre-Islamic belief in magic and agents of evil with their own interpretation of Islam, moulded by the austere and isolated desert environment.²⁹ The Islamic identity of Sinai's Bedouin, however, underwent resurgence as a result of intrusive contacts with their Israeli occupiers. This was particularly true in South Sinai where the presence of Israeli tourists encouraged an Islamic revival, with the Bedouin seeking to differentiate themselves from the tourists and the Israeli authorities. This trend further increased following the Kissinger Agreements of 1975, which heralded the gradual return of the Peninsula to Egypt from Israel. Cautious of how they would be received by 'mainland' Egypt after years of occupation, the Bedouin cultivated their faith as a means of affirming their affinity to Egypt west of the Suez Canal.³⁰

Whilst traditional syncretic religious practice persisted in South Sinai, in the north of the Peninsula sedentarisation, urbanisation and greater access to information through the spread of technology have contributed to a growth of Islamism, as well as Salafism. The Bedouin were exposed to Salafism from the late twentieth century whilst studying in the Nile Delta as well as further afield in Wahhabi Saudi Arabia.³¹ Yehudit Ronen identifies this spread of Salafi ideology as consistent with its growth throughout wider Egypt, with adherents having exceeded one million nationwide by 2013.³² Concomitant with deepening Islamisation of the Peninsula is the increased practice of

²⁸ Clinton Bailey, "Bedouin religious practices in Sinai and the Negev," *Anthropos* 77, no. 1-2 (1982): p. 66.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-81.

³⁰ Lavie and Young, "Bedouin in Limbo: Egyptian and Israeli Development Policies in Southern Sinai," p. 40.

³¹ Holt-Ivry, "Arms Control in Civil Society: Controlling Conventional Arms Smuggling in Sinai," p. 107.

³² Yehudit Ronen, "The effects of the 'Arab Spring' on Israel's geostrategic and security environment: the escalating jihadist terror in the Sinai Peninsula," *Israel Affairs* 20, no. 3 (2014): p. 305.

Shari‘a, which has been noted by Sarah El-Rashidi and Mara Revkin. This has further decreased reliance on both tribal and secular law. Pelham posits that greater adherence to Shari‘a has created a power struggle between Salafi preachers and tribal leaders, and has destabilised traditional Bedouin power structures further.³³

However, religious fundamentalism and violent extremism are not synonymous. Gilbert and al-Jebaali dispute what they view as a commonly reported link between the Bedouin and militant Islamism, at least in South Sinai.³⁴ Their research suggests that there is significantly lower interest in political Islam in South Sinai than in Egypt as a whole, especially amongst the young.³⁵ This is consistent with the general absence of attacks by militant Islamists in the South following the Arab Spring. Whilst there have been numerous rocket attacks targeting the Israeli city of Eilat emanating from South Sinai, as well as an attack on a police facility in the southwestern city of El Tor, there is no evidence to suggest that the perpetrators are from South Sinai Bedouin tribes.

The growth of militant Islamism amongst North Sinai Bedouin has been driven by a number of factors. First, the socio-economic exclusion of the Bedouin from Egyptian society discussed in chapter one has created an environment in which the Bedouin see little hope for the future through the existing paradigm. The pessimistic socio-political situation has left a population ripe for militant Islamism. Angry young men tired of a poor economic and social development and unequal exploitation of the region’s resources see the Egyptian authorities benefitting from repression in the north, along with the twenty years of economic development in the South.³⁶ This is a common view amongst analysts considering Sinai’s security issues.

³³ Nicholas Pelham, "In Sinai: The Uprising of the Bedouin," *The New York Review of Books*, 06 December, 2012.

³⁴ Gilbert and al Jebaali, "'Not philanthropists but revolutionaries.' Promoting Bedouin participation in the 'new Egypt': a case study from South Sinai," pp. 25-26.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ International Crisis Group, "Egypt's Sinai Question," p. 22.

Fawaz Gerge is typical amongst these, stating that revolutionary Islamic activism feeds on unemployment, poverty, and alienation.³⁷

In contrast, May Elsayyad and Shima'a Hanafy analysed education and poverty as predictors of voting patterns in the 2012 Egyptian parliamentary elections.³⁸ They concluded that whilst a lack of education is linked to increased support for Islamist parties, this is not the case with poverty as they expected.³⁹ Given that North Sinai is one of Egypt's poorest governorates, these findings question the assumption that the region's poverty has a causal link to support for Islamism. However, the applicability of these conclusions to North Sinai in particular is questionable, given the below average voter turnout in the governorate and the reported boycott by some Bedouin because candidates from their own tribe were not running. Furthermore, electoral results are a poor indicator for proponents of more extreme or militant Islamist views, with many Salafis rejecting participation in democratic processes.

Maltreatment and harassment by Egyptian authorities represents a second cause of Bedouin radicalisation in North Sinai. As discussed in chapter one, following the Taba bombing of 2004, authorities commenced a campaign of arrests that resulted in the detention of an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 predominantly Bedouin and Palestinian Sinai residents.⁴⁰ This was despite announcement of the identities of the nine alleged perpetrators, with the detention in many cases lasting for months, with victims held without charge, incommunicado and often suffering torture and ill-treatment.

This pattern of repression was repeated following each terror attack over the subsequent years, generating resentment amongst the Bedouin and further diminishing popular support for the authorities. In his research on the de-radicalisation of IG, Omar Ashour details how prison overcrowding in the late

³⁷ Gerges, "The End of the Islamist Insurgency in Egypt?: Costs and Prospects," p. 611.

³⁸ Elsayyad and Hanafy, "Voting Islamist or voting secular? An empirical analysis of voting outcomes in Egypt's 'Arab Spring'."

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-28.

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Mass Arrests and Torture in Sinai," p. 8.

1990s and early 2000s led prison administrators to house detainees from different ideological backgrounds in the same cell.⁴¹ Ashour posits that this had a de-radicalising effect on militant Islamists, with members of IG being exposed to the ideas of secular liberals and pro-democracy campaigners. Conversely, this same transfer of ideology through proximity occurred in the prisons of Sinai. However, in the Peninsula it was instead the Bedouin who were exposed to militant Islamists, providing a receptive audience for Salafi-Jihadi ideology.⁴²

Gaza's Islamists

As highlighted by Are Knudsen in his study of the growth of Islamism in the post-Arab Spring era, the link between state repression and political exclusion with radicalisation is not conclusive.⁴³ However, the Egyptian state's marginalisation of the Bedouin as detailed in chapter one is compounded by the propagation of extremism from outside the Peninsula. The key extremist influence has been from Gaza, facilitated by the illicit network of tunnels discussed in chapter two.⁴⁴ Since the late 1970s militant Islamists have developed a strong presence in Gaza, with their main areas of support being the cities of Khan Younis and the border city of Rafah.⁴⁵ Leila Stockmarr suggests that Israel's 2005 disengagement from Gaza led to a further proliferation of militant Islamist groups in Gaza.⁴⁶ Movement of both ideology and people between these groups in Gaza and the Peninsula has been significant: in early 2011 alone, some 1,500 Palestinians reportedly travelled from Gaza to Sinai to train in camps established near El Arish.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Ashour, "Lions Tamed? An Inquiry into the Causes of De-Radicalization of Armed Islamist Movements: The Case of the Egyptian Islamic Group," p. 618.

⁴² Holt-Ivry, "Arms Control in Civil Society: Controlling Conventional Arms Smuggling in Sinai," p. 107.

⁴³ Knudsen and Ezbi, *Popular Protest in the New Middle East: Islamism and post-Islamist politics*: p. 10.

⁴⁴ Nikola Kovač and Trista Guertin, "Armed Groups in the Sinai Peninsula," (Norfolk, VA: Civil Military Fusion Centre, 2013), p. 2.

⁴⁵ Beverley Milton-Edwards, "Islamist Versus Islamist: Rising Challenge in Gaza," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 26, no. 2 (2014): p. 265.

⁴⁶ Leila Stockmarr, "Gaza's new Islamists: The atomization of Palestinian Islamism since 2006," (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2011).

⁴⁷ Ronen, "The effects of the 'Arab Spring' on Israel's geostrategic and security environment: the escalating jihadist terror in the Sinai Peninsula," p. 309.

These camps, along with the tunnels, facilitated the transfer of Salafi ideology to the Peninsula's natives.⁴⁸

Hamas is considered a terrorist organisation by Israel and the US and has indeed employed terrorist methods against Israel.⁴⁹ It is, however, just one of the Islamist factions operating in Gaza. Some commentators, such as Akram and Kershner, argue that Hamas is one of the more moderate of these groups as evidenced by their attempts to restrain Salafi-Jihadists from attacking Israel.⁵⁰ The organisation is neither Salafi nor Jihadi, instead it seeks territorial goals as opposed to the implementation of Shari'a or the creation of a caliphate. Since its 2007 victory in parliamentary elections, Hamas has worked to hold on to power and maintain its monopoly on violence in Gaza by curtailing other militant Islamist groups, so as to avoid Israeli reprisals. This is balanced against its desire to be perceived as a leader of what it terms resistance against Israeli occupation. The Hamas government's attempts to constrain more extreme Islamist groups are illustrated by its deployment of its security forces to prevent rocket fire against Israel.⁵¹ Likewise, it has acted against Islamist groups that challenge its control over the territory. For example, one of the more prominent militant Islamist groups in Gaza, Jund Ansar Allah, has been critical of Hamas and its ceasefire with Israel, along with its failure to implement Shari'a. In August 2009, the group proclaimed the establishment of an Islamic emirate in Gaza. Hamas sought to eliminate this challenge by arresting many of the group's members as well as killing its leader Abdel-Latif Mousa.⁵²

⁴⁸ "Shin Bet Forms New Unit to Thwart Attacks on Israel by Sinai Jihadists," Barak Ravid, last modified 20 August, 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.542417>.

⁴⁹ "Terrorist Groups: Hamas," National Counterterrorism Center, last accessed 04 November, 2015, <http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/hamas.html>.

⁵⁰ "Hamas Finds Itself Aligned With Israel Over Extremist Groups," Fares Akram and Isabel Kershner, last modified 19 October, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/20/world/middleeast/hamas-works-to-suppress-militant-groups-in-gaza.html?_r=0.

⁵¹ "Hamas deploys border patrol to prevent rocket attacks on Israel," Shlomi Eldar, Al Monitor, last modified 10 February, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/02/hamas-gaza-rockets-israel-izz-al-din-al-qassam.html>.

⁵² Milton-Edwards, "Islamist Versus Islamist: Rising Challenge in Gaza," p. 269.

Zack Gold posits that such pressure placed on Palestinian Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza by Hamas has led many Islamists to shift their operations to Sinai, where they enjoy greater freedom of action and the ability to cooperate with Bedouin and foreign partners.⁵³ According to Israeli sources, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian terrorist organisations are active in the Peninsula, employing the area as strategic depth in which to prepare their operations and from which to target Israel with decreased risk of Israeli reprisals.⁵⁴ There is some evidence to support the assertion that Palestinian groups are active in the Peninsula and cooperating with Egyptian militants. For example, a cross-border raid from the Peninsula in August 2011 left eight Israelis dead near the Israeli port of Eilat. This attack was blamed on the Popular Resistance Committees based in Gaza,⁵⁵ with the Egyptian security forces stating that three of the perpetrators were Egyptian.⁵⁶

Attributing the deteriorating security situation in the Peninsula to its eastern neighbour is a narrative that the Egyptian government has readily employed following the Arab Spring. On 24 October 2014 at Sheikh Zuweid at least thirty-one soldiers were killed in a complex attack involving a car bomb, rocket propelled grenades and roadside bombs placed to target first responders. President al-Sisi blamed 'foreign hands' that desired to 'break the back of Egypt'.⁵⁷ Without explicitly naming Hamas, the Egyptian regime has demonstrated its accusation against Hamas through the closing of the border with Rafah and the February 2015 declaration of Hamas as a terrorist group.⁵⁸ Egypt also intensified its anti-tunnelling operations through the

⁵³ Gold, "Sinai Security: Opportunities for Unlikely Cooperation Among Egypt, Israel, and Hamas," pp. 13-14.

⁵⁴ Yaari, "Sinai: A New Front," pp. 2-4.

⁵⁵ Byman and Elgindy, "The Deepening Chaos in Sinai."

⁵⁶ "Doubts emerge over identity of terrorists who carried out attack in Israel's south," Amira Hass, Haaretz Daily Newspaper, last modified 25 August, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/doubts-emerge-over-identity-of-terrorists-who-carried-out-attack-in-israel-s-south-1.380525>.

⁵⁷ "Egypt blames 'foreign hands' in Sinai attacks," Al Jazeera, last modified 25 October, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/10/egypt-blames-foreign-hands-sinai-attacks-20141025212950330850.html>.

⁵⁸ "Egypt court puts Hamas on terrorist list," British Broadcasting Corporation, last modified 28 February, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31674458>.

creation of a five kilometre wide buffer zone, displacing thousands of Rafah residents along the border with Gaza.

Despite its public declarations and actions targeting Gaza, it is difficult to discern whether the Egyptian authorities genuinely believe Hamas is responsible for violence in the Peninsula. This is due to the possibility that such moves are instead aimed at discrediting the movement, as an extension of its campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the creation of the buffer zone between Egypt and Gaza is a clear indication that Egypt views the influence of Gaza, be it through Hamas or other militant groups, as a key issue in maintaining the Peninsula's security.

The effect of foreign fighters

The final factor contributing to the radicalisation of the Peninsula is the presence of foreign militant Islamists, aside from those originating in Gaza. Sinai has been a magnet for some such militants since the early 2000s, with frequent speculation in Western media that global Salafi-Jihadi groups have succeeded in establishing a presence there. The presence of al-Qa'ida, in the Peninsula has long been postulated by Western journalists, such as Thomas Joscelyn, and academics, such as Emily Dyer. Western sources keen to employ a brand familiar to their audiences have claimed that the group has established a foothold in the Peninsula. Dyer for example accepts that many of the groups in Sinai only have alleged links to al-Qa'ida, before definitively stating that the group formed al-Qa'ida in Sinai Peninsula (AQSP) as its own franchise.⁵⁹ Likewise, in his testimony to the US House Committee on Homeland Security, Joscelyn stated that 'multiple Al Qaeda actors' were operating in the Peninsula.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Emily Dyer, "Fear and Loathing in the Sinai," *The Journal of International Security Affairs* Fall/Winter, no. 25 (2013): p. 82.

⁶⁰ Thomas Joscelyn, "Al Qaeda's Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security," (Washington, DC: Foundation for Defense of Democracies, 2014), pp. 2-3.

It is a tempting link to make. Following the death of Osama Bin Laden in 2011, Egyptian and former EIJ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri assumed leadership of al-Qa'ida. Al-Zawahiri's priorities reflect his background as a leader of a nationalist Islamist movement, having been forced from Egypt by the Mubarak-era's repression. Comparisons of the speeches and statements made by Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri demonstrate that the latter's focus is generally closer to home, focusing on the 'near enemy' of Middle Eastern regimes. This is compared to only 15 percent of speeches and statements focussing on the 'far enemy' of the West.⁶¹

Al-Zawahiri has been a vocal supporter of militancy in the Peninsula. In October 2013, al-Zawahiri released an audio message stating that Muslims needed to 'get rid' of those who took power from Morsi.⁶² In January 2014, he directed a message to 'our people in Sinai', stating:

'I ask Allah to grant you patience and reward you well for your patience before the aggression of the Americanized army of Sisi that conspires with Israel against you, and that Allah accept your martyrs and treat your wounded and hasten the release of your prisoners. I call upon you to offer sanctuary to your brothers the Muhajireen to you from the tyranny of the agent traitor Sisi.'⁶³

Al-Zawahiri's statement does not definitively prove the presence of foreign militant Islamists in the Peninsula. However, it certainly illustrates al-Qa'ida's interest in the region as a theatre for conflict. Observers such as Siboni, Ben-Barak and al-Anani claim that experienced militant Islamists from countries around the Middle East and North Africa including Somalia, Yemen, Algeria,

⁶¹ "Al Qaeda grows as its leaders focus on the 'near enemy'," Murad Batal al Shishani, Abu Dhabi Media, last modified 30 August, 2013, <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/al-qaeda-grows-as-its-leaders-focus-on-the-near-enemy#full>.

⁶² "Prominent cleric calls for jihad against Egyptian army," Ariel Ben Solomon, The Jerusalem Post, last modified 07 November, 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Prominent-cleric-calls-for-jihad-against-Egyptian-army-330919>.

⁶³ "Zawahiri's message 'to our people in Sinai'," David Barnett, Public Multimedia, last modified 27 January, 2015, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/01/zawahiris_message_to_our_peopl.php.

Libya, Syria and Saudi Arabia operate in the Peninsula.⁶⁴ These foreign fighters bring experience gained in other Jihadi theatres from Afghanistan to Syria, as well as providing local militant Islamists with connections to the wider Salafi-Jihadi movement across the region.

Just as both Western and al-Qa'ida sources have readily claimed the latter's influence in Sinai, some Egyptian groups have aimed to leverage off the al-Qa'ida brand. For example, former EIJ member Ahmed Ashush established the group Ansar al-Shari'a Egypt, which he claimed was 'honored to be an extension of al Qaeda'.⁶⁵ Likewise, the Sinai based group Mujahedeen Shura Council of Jerusalem professed links to al-Qa'ida whilst claiming responsibility for attacks against the Sinai gas pipeline, along with the June 2012 cross-border attack near Kadesh Barnea that left one Israeli civilian dead.⁶⁶ Given that such claims of affiliation occur predominantly via Jihadi internet forums, it is difficult to confirm the veracity of such statements. It remains unclear how many groups, if any, are in fact tangibly linked to al-Qa'ida as opposed to sharing its Salafi-Jihadi worldview. Regardless, the radicalising effect on the Peninsula is much the same, regardless of whether the affiliation is material or ideological in nature.

Militant Islamism post-Arab Spring

The combination of these three radicalising factors created an environment ready for an exponential growth in militant Islamist activity post-Arab Spring. As discussed in chapter one, the January 2011 protests resulted in the disappearance of the Egyptian security forces in Sinai, when police were recalled from the Peninsula to maintain calm in Egypt's major cities. This temporary retraction likewise occurred in mainland Egypt and led to mass escapes from prisons nationwide. According to Egyptian Interior Minister

⁶⁴ Siboni and Ben-Barak, "The Sinai Peninsula Threat Development and Response Concept," p. 7. and "The Resurgence of Militant Islamists in Egypt," Khalil al-Anani, Middle East Institute, last modified 14 February, 2014, <http://www.mei.edu/content/resurgence-militant-islamists-egypt>.

⁶⁵ Joscelyn, "Al Qaeda's Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security," p. 5.

⁶⁶ "BICOM Analysis: Disturbing indicators in the Gaza-Sinai-Israel escalation," BICOM, last modified 26 June, 2012, <http://www.bicom.org.uk/analysis-article/7760/>.

Ahmed Gamal El Din, around twenty-three thousand prisoners escaped during the collapse of the Mubarak regime, although that figure included many common criminals as opposed to solely militant Islamists.⁶⁷

Commentators such as Byman and Holt-Ivry state that militancy in Sinai has been bolstered by the presence of former prisoners.⁶⁸ An example of such an escapee is Ramzi Mawafi, often described as Osama Bin Laden's former doctor for his role in managing medical treatment of Jihadis in Afghanistan. In adding Mawafi to its terrorist designation list, the US Department of State declared that he escaped from prison during the 2011 uprisings. Following his escape he moved to Sinai where he is believed to be coordinating militant groups and facilitating materiel and financial support for them.⁶⁹ Whilst many Western commentators portray the Arab Spring as a victory for democracy and secularism, militant Islamist groups likewise viewed the escape of militant Islamists during the revolution as benefitting their operations.⁷⁰

Along with escapees, many inmates were released from Egyptian prisons following the Arab Spring.⁷¹ Since Morsi's ousting, Egyptian authorities have attempted to highlight the link between the Muslim Brotherhood and the upsurge in militant Islamist violence in Sinai. Authorities investigated the nine decrees issued by Morsi during his Presidency that saw the release of some two thousand inmates, and suggested that he was fostering links between his government and militant Islamist groups.⁷² However, the majority of prisoners released were in fact protesters who had been arrested during the

⁶⁷ "Militants at large since Arab Spring complicate anti-terrorism efforts," Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, Tim Lister, and Paul Cruickshank, Cable News Network, last modified 04 October, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/10/04/world/meast/egypt-freed-militants/>.

⁶⁸ Daniel Byman, "Terrorism after the Revolutions: How Secular Uprisings Could Help (or Hurt) Jihadists," *Foreign Affairs* May/June, no. 3 (2011): p. 51. and Holt-Ivry, "Arms Control in Civil Society: Controlling Conventional Arms Smuggling in Sinai," p. 107.

⁶⁹ "Terrorist Designations of Khan Said and Ramzi Mawafi," Office of the Spokesperson, U.S. Department of State, last modified 21 October, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/10/233189.htm>.

⁷⁰ Gartenstein-Ross and Vassefi, "Perceptions of the "Arab Spring" within the Salafi-Jihadi movement," p. 838.

⁷¹ "Who let the jihadis out?," Hossam Bahgat, Mada Masr, last modified 16 February, 2014, <http://www.madamasr.com/sections/politics/who-let-jihadis-out>.

⁷² "Egypt: Morsi's links to jihadists probed," Hamza Hendawi, Associated Press, last modified 03 December, 2013, <http://news.yahoo.com/egypt-morsis-links-jihadists-probed-073304297.html>.

2011 revolt against Mubarak.⁷³ Thus the Egyptian authorities' attempts to demonstrate links between the Muslim Brotherhood and extremism have in this case been unsuccessful. It was rather during the rule of the SCAF immediately following Mubarak's ousting that the majority of Islamists were released. Hossam Bahgat states that Morsi was responsible for the release of just twenty-seven Islamists during his rule, compared to over eight hundred by the SCAF.⁷⁴ Bahgat posits that the SCAF releases were an attempt to restore calm by placating public anger against the police and may have been part of the *détente* reached between the SCAF, Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist movements.

Whether released during the rule of the SCAF or Morsi, or having escaped during the January 2011 revolution, former prisoners have contributed to increased violence in the Peninsula. Along with adding to the number of experienced militant Islamists available to take up arms in Sinai, the tumult of the Arab Spring enhanced the availability of weapons in the Peninsula.⁷⁵ As discussed in chapter one, Sinai has long been a smuggling route between Africa and the Middle East. Historically, Gaza was the main destination for smuggled weapons. Following the Arab Spring, however, reports by the Bedouin as well as increased seizures by Egyptian authorities suggest that increasing quantities of weapons have remained in the Peninsula. The looting of Libyan military and para-military arsenals as a result of the country's civil war and the fall of Muammar Gaddafi bolstered both the quality and quantity of weapons available to this illicit trade.⁷⁶

A February 2014 report by the United Nations Panel of Experts on Libya stated that terrorist groups in countries including Egypt are the key benefactors of arms proliferation from Libyan arsenals, as the country has

⁷³ Bahgat, "Who let the jihadis out?".

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Holt-Ivry, "Arms Control in Civil Society: Controlling Conventional Arms Smuggling in Sinai," p. 105.

⁷⁶ Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," p. 6.

become a prime international source of illicit weapons.⁷⁷ Libyan arms proliferation is acknowledged as a major issue for Egypt, with interim Prime Minister Hazem El-Beblawi calling on Libya to increase its efforts to prevent cross-border arms smuggling in August 2013.⁷⁸ Such Libyan weapons entering the Peninsula have included man-portable air defence systems and anti-tank guided missiles. These weapons provide a significant increase in capability compared to the traditional small calibre weapons employed in Sinai.

In contrast to this theme, the Egyptian government has portrayed Gaza as a key source of weapons for Sinai militants, as evidenced by the construction of the buffer zone.⁷⁹ There is some evidence to support this assertion. For example, the surface-to-air missile used in January 2014 by ABM near the town of Sheikh Zuweid was likely a SA-16 Gimlet sourced from Gaza, as Libyan arsenals did not contain this weapon system.⁸⁰ Whilst there is likely some movement of arms from Gaza into Sinai, it seems implausible that the Palestinian territory represents a major source of weaponry for the Peninsula's militants. Egypt shares porous borders with Libya and Sudan, with Gaza representing its shortest border at just thirteen kilometres in length. Egypt's border with Gaza represents just 0.2 percent of the state's total border. The abundance of supply from Libya, coupled with the blockade of Gaza, thus makes weapon supply from Egypt's western neighbour a far larger issue.⁸¹ Libyan weapon proliferation will likely continue in at least the near term as a result of Libya's significant weapon stockpiles, robust

⁷⁷ Panel of Experts on Libya, "Final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) concerning Libya," (New York, NY: United Nations Panel of Experts on Libya, 2014), p. 27.

⁷⁸ "Egyptian PM calls on Libya to clamp down on border arms smuggling," Ashraf Abdul-Wahab, *Libya Herald*, last modified 30 August, 2013, <http://www.libyaherald.com/2013/08/30/egyptian-pm-calls-on-libya-to-clamp-down-on-border-arms-smuggling/#axzz3awOF771V>.

⁷⁹ "The Politics of the Egypt-Gaza Buffer Zone," Ismail Alexandrani, last modified 25 November, 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=57316>.

⁸⁰ David C. Isby, "SAM used to down helicopter over Sinai," *Janes International Defence Review*, March 2014, p. 21.

⁸¹ "Does Egypt's Sinai offensive misdiagnose the problem?," Sharif Nashashibi, Abu Dhabi Media, last modified 09 November, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/does-egypts-sinai-offensive-misdiagnose-the-problem>.

smuggling networks and the inability of the Libyan state to exercise control over the illicit trade.⁸²

Immediately following the January 2011 revolution, heightened weapon availability and the increased presence of foreign and domestic militant Islamists coalesced in Sinai with the decreased presence of Egyptian security forces. These factors contributed to increased violence in the Peninsula, which was enabled by a permissive environment created by sections of the marginalised Bedouin population. Estimates of the total number of militant Islamists in the Peninsula vary significantly. Ahmed Eleiba estimates that their number is some twelve thousand strong.⁸³ In 2013 an Egyptian army source claimed the number to be as small as one thousand fighters.⁸⁴ Such inconsistency results from the media blackout that exists in Sinai. It also reflects the competing agendas of the sources: the Egyptian authorities readily portray militant Islamist numbers as low in order for these groups to appear as a less significant threat. It is likewise difficult to identify the relative importance of the myriad self-declared militant groups, which are generally clandestine in their operations and yet prone to exaggerate their significance.

Most prominent amongst the groups that have developed post-Arab Spring is ABM. The group is believed to be predominantly composed of Egyptians, however, it includes foreign fighters from Gaza, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen.⁸⁵ ABM's name is commonly translated as 'Champions of Jerusalem', possibly in homage to a similarly named group in Gaza and suggesting a focus on targeting Israel. This is consistent with the attacks claimed by the group following its formation. For example, ABM claimed responsibility for the 22 July 2012 bombing of the pipeline through which Egyptian natural gas

⁸² Panel of Experts on Libya, "Final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) concerning Libya," p. 27.

⁸³ "Sinai, Egypt's unsolved problem," Ahmed Eleiba, Ahram Online, last modified 18 July, 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/76802.aspx>.

⁸⁴ "Morsi removal inspires Sinai militancy," Associated Press, Abu Dhabi Media, last modified 16 July, 2013, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/morsi-removal-inspires-sinai-militancy>.

⁸⁵ Zack Gold, "Security in the Sinai: Present and Future," (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2014), p. 10.

is exported to Israel. In a statement the group claimed to have 'bombed the gas stations and pipelines taking gas to the Zionist entity... to protect the resources and protect the rights of the faithful.'⁸⁶ ABM likewise claimed responsibility for rocket attacks against Eilat in August 2012, and a cross-border incursion that resulted in the death of an Israeli soldier in September 2012.⁸⁷ Notwithstanding the previously detailed kidnappings and limited attacks by the Bedouin for leverage with the authorities, ABM's targeting of Israel is representative of the post-Arab Spring violence observed in the Peninsula.

Changes in militant Islamist violence post-Morsi

Both the frequency and target of this violence changed following the military coup that removed Morsi in July 2013. In the month following the ousting of Egypt's first democratically elected leader, Sinai experienced some 14 attacks resulting in at least 30 dead and over 150 injured.⁸⁸ This increase in violence made attacks in the North Sinai towns of El Arish, Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah an almost daily occurrence, with North Sinai's main hospital receiving two to six patients with gunshot wounds every day.⁸⁹ Moreover, the main target of attacks by militant Islamists shifted from Israel to the Egyptian state and in particular the police and army. A notable example of the violence was the August 2015 killing of twenty-five off-duty soldiers. The buses in which the soldiers were travelling between Rafah and El Arish were stopped by armed militants in broad daylight, with their passengers summarily executed at the roadside.⁹⁰ On 24 October 2014, ABM claimed an attack of a

⁸⁶ "“Supporters of Jerusalem” claim responsibility for latest pipeline bombing," Connor Molloy, Daily News Egypt, last modified 26 July, 2012, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2012/07/26/supporters-of-jerusalem-claim-responsibility-for-latest-pipeline-bombing/>.

⁸⁷ "Jihadist group claims responsibility for Israel attack," Daily News Egypt, last modified 23 September, 2012, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2012/09/23/egyptian-jihadist-group-claims-responsibility-for-israel-attack/>.

⁸⁸ "A Momentous Month," Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Atlantic Council, last modified 05 August, 2013, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/a-momentous-month>.

⁸⁹ Mayy El Sheikh and David D. Kirkpatrick, "Amid Egypt's Sweeping Crackdown, North Sinai Residents in Crossfire," *The New York Times*, 30 March, 2014, p. A8.

⁹⁰ "25 Soldiers executed in Sinai," Mostafa Salem, Daily News Egypt, last modified 19 August, 2013, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/08/19/25-soldiers-executed-in-sinai/>.

similar magnitude in which some thirty soldiers were killed by an IED that targeted two armoured vehicles at a checkpoint near El Arish.⁹¹ Whilst major operations against security forces have accounted for a significant proportion of fatalities, attacks have more commonly seen a smaller yet steady stream of casualties, with frequent strikes against police stations and military checkpoints.

The reason for the upsurge in violence is not immediately obvious. The al-Sisi regime has attempted to link the ousted Muslim Brotherhood to violence in the Peninsula, despite the group's renunciation of violence in the 1970s.⁹² In December 2013, the Egyptian government declared the group as a terrorist organisation. Deputy Prime Minister Hossam Eissa stated that the Egyptian people would not 'submit to the Muslim Brotherhood terrorism'.⁹³ The government has continued to depict the organisation as responsible for militancy in the Peninsula. For example, in January 2015 President al-Sisi blamed the Muslim Brotherhood, supported by foreign fighters, for a series of bombs that killed at least thirty people in North Sinai.⁹⁴ There is little evidence to support such accusations. Rather they are likely politically motivated as a means of discrediting the Islamist bloc within Egyptian politics and shoring up the regime's own position.

Salafi-Jihadis typically disdain participation in democratic processes. Al-Qa'ida's Ayman al-Zawahiri for example denounced the Muslim Brotherhood as luring 'thousands of young Muslim men into lines for elections... instead of into the lines of jihad'.⁹⁵ In a 2015 statement, ABM stated that the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood and imprisonment of Morsi was 'what happened when the Muslim Brotherhood wanted pride and dignity against God's instructions; it adopted democracy instead of Jihad and the result was

⁹¹ "Attacks in Egypt's Sinai kill 33 security personnel," Yusri Mohamed, Thomson Reuters, last modified 24 October, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/24/us-egypt-sinai-idUSKCN0ID1BZ20141024>.

⁹² Breen, "Egypt: Freedom and Justice to the Bedouins in Sinai?," p. 31.

⁹³ "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood declared 'terrorist group'," British Broadcasting Corporation, last modified 25 December, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25515932>.

⁹⁴ Kirkpatrick, "Sisi Blames Muslim Brotherhood for Bombings in Sinai".

⁹⁵ Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 2 (2007): p. 107.

humiliation and shame.⁹⁶ Given that the militant Islamist groups operating in Sinai were neither supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood nor the political process in which it participated, it is curious that Morsi's ousting resulted in such an increase in violence in the Peninsula.

Since the commencement of the Arab Spring, Jihadi ideologues such as Ayman al-Zawahiri have argued that the West and its regional proxies would never allow an Islamist government to actually rule.⁹⁷ Morsi's ousting by Egypt's Western-backed military vindicated this argument. Hossam Bahgat posits that despite their rejection of democracy and the Muslim Brotherhood, Sinai based militant Islamists including ABM objected to the Morsi coup, and perceived it as an attack on the Islamist movement in general.⁹⁸ This combination of a perceived attack on Islamism and the vindication of Salafi-Jihadi thought provided the rationale for increased violence by militant Islamists.

Egypt's increased vulnerability to militant Islamist violence in Sinai can be understood through Little and Rogova's model of threat, which views it as the result of the combination of opportunity, capability and intent.⁹⁹ Following Mubarak's ouster, the Egyptian security forces' temporary withdrawal from Sinai provided heightened opportunity for militant Islamist activities. The aforementioned increased availability of militants and weaponry both provided an increase in capability. The overthrow of Morsi and resultant strengthening of the Salafi-Jihadi narrative thus provided the final facet of intent, garnering the support of locals who had been previously undecided as to whether to support government or militant Islamist forces.

⁹⁶ "Sinai jihadists blame Brotherhood's choice of democracy for troubles," Middle East Monitor, last modified 24 April, 2015, <http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/africa/18233-sinai-jihadists-blame-brotherhoods-choice-of-democracy-for-troubles>.

⁹⁷ "What Morsi's Ouster Means for Radical Islamists," William McCants, Council on Foreign Relations, last modified 07 July, 2013, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139565/william-mccants/salafis-after-the-coup?page=2#pq=3LZPko>.

⁹⁸ "The Arab Sharkas cell: The quasi-covert military trial of Ansar Beit al-Maqdes," Hossam Bahgat, Mada Masr, last modified 02 September, 2014, <http://www.madamasr.com/sections/politics/arab-sharkas-cell-quasi-covert-military-trial-ansar-beit-al-maqdes>.

⁹⁹ Little and Rogova, "An Ontological Analysis of Threat and Vulnerability."

Although radicalisation has undoubtedly occurred in North Sinai, it is unlikely that all the Bedouin participating in or supporting the increased violence in the Peninsula are ardent Islamists. As this research has identified, a significant proportion of their participation represents a marriage of convenience that serves both militant Islamists and the Bedouin, aggrieved by their treatment by the Egyptian state. ABM's propaganda videos include shots of military operations targeting civilians along with police brutality. Similarly, a statement by the militant group al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya accused Egypt's military of targeting civilians and included photos of a mosque purportedly damaged by military operations.¹⁰⁰ As posited by Holt-Ivry, by couching their rhetoric in the language of local grievances, militant Islamists have used the police and army's often imprecise and excessive use of force to recruit Bedouin.¹⁰¹

The Egyptian state's response

The Egyptian state's strategy to deal with the growing threat of militant Islamism following Morsi's overthrow is described by Alexander Velez-Green as 'separate, silence and neutralise'.¹⁰² The attempt to 'separate' Islamists from the Egyptian population has already been illustrated by the al-Sisi administration's attempts to link the Muslim Brotherhood to terrorism and to declare the organisation as a terrorist group.

The 'silence' line of operation has aimed to limit the public space available for the propagation of extreme Islamist views. For example, in August 2013 authorities dictated that only state-endorsed al-Azhar imams could preach in mosques, barring some fifty-five thousand unlicensed clerics who

¹⁰⁰ Holt-Ivry, "Arms Control in Civil Society: Controlling Conventional Arms Smuggling in Sinai," p. 109.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² "Is the Muslim Brotherhood the Key to Egypt's War on Terror?," Alexander Velez-Green, The National Interest, last modified 17 April, 2015, <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/the-muslim-brotherhood-the-key-egypts-war-terror-12654>.

predominantly preached in small unlicensed mosques and prayer areas.¹⁰³ Egypt's Minister of Endowments Mohamed Mokhtar Gomaa stated that the government was imposing the ban to limit fundamentalist preaching, which threatens Egyptian security.¹⁰⁴ This was a continuation of Mubarak-era attempts to control local clerics, who the Egyptian authorities blame for fundamentalism.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood had historically developed its social influence by taking over local mosques.¹⁰⁶ The control of teaching within places of worship therefore provided an additional means to combat the group. Furthering this trend of silencing extremist views, in September 2013 the Ministry of Religious Endowments banned the operation of neighbourhood places of worship of less than eighty square metres. This attempt to control mosques and limit exposure to extremist teaching effectively closed twenty-seven thousand mosques nationwide.¹⁰⁷

Given the increase in violence against government targets, authorities in North Sinai have struggled to impose such measures within the governorate. The Ministry of Religious Endowments warned that it will dismiss any imam or employee in North Sinai who is proven to have knowledge of underground tunnels or weapons hidden within government controlled mosques.¹⁰⁸ This threat was also extended to those who spread radicalism, and included a ban on mosques disseminating unauthorised publications, CDs and audio cassettes in an attempt to limit the spread of extremism.¹⁰⁹ The efficacy of such threats remains unclear. Attempts to counter the messages of extremist preachers have included al-Azhar deploying its preachers in limited numbers

¹⁰³ "Egypt bans mosque preachers in crackdown on Islamists," Yasmine Saleh, Thomson Reuters, last modified 10 September, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/10/us-egypt-protests-idUSBRE9890NF20130910>.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ "Egypt closes 27,000 places of worship," Rami Galal, last modified 03 March, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/egypt-endowments-decision-close-worship-places.html#>.

¹⁰⁶ Rubin, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Egyptian Politics*: p. 164.

¹⁰⁷ Galal, "Egypt closes 27,000 places of worship".

¹⁰⁸ "Egypt's government pledges to fire Imams promoting radical thought in North Sinai," Ahram Online, last modified 02 November, 2014, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/114546/Egypt/Politics-/Egypsts-government-pledges-to-fire-Imams-promoting-.aspx>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

to Sheikh Zuweid, Rafah and El Arish.¹¹⁰ However, the ability to 'silence' militant Islamists has been ineffective with the Egyptian authorities not providing the dominant narrative in North Sinai.

Rather, battlefield successes by militant Islamists have attracted increasing numbers of Bedouin to their cause as well as encouraged the identification of Sinai as a theatre for foreign Jihadis, though not to the same extent as regional hotspots Syria and Iraq. For example, in November 2014 two Jihadist websites published a statement by Abu Musab al-Gharib encouraging Jihadists to 'hurry to consolidate the Islamic caliphate's province in Egypt starting from Sinai' by fighting the 'apostate' Egyptian army.¹¹¹ Recruitment has likewise been aided by the final 'neutralise' strand of the Egyptian strategy in the Peninsula. Collateral damage from military operations as part of this strategy has further decreased Bedouin support for the authorities.¹¹² Under Morsi's rule, limited use was made of non-military means to counter violence in the Peninsula. In August 2012, following attacks against the military, Morsi employed militant Islamists formerly imprisoned by the Mubarak regime as intermediaries in his negotiations with North Sinai militants.¹¹³ This employment of soft power drew the ire of the military and fuelled its subsequent suspicion of his links to militancy.¹¹⁴ However, the use of negotiation with militant groups was an outlier in the Morsi government's handling of security in the Peninsula. As discussed in chapter two, Morsi largely delegated this responsibility to the military and it was under his administration that the armed forces commenced significant

¹¹⁰ "Al-Azhar dispatches aid convoy, Islamic mission to N. Sinai " The Cairo Post, last modified 21 January, 2015, <http://www.thecairopost.com/news/134206/news/al-azhar-dispatches-aid-convoy-islamic-mission-to-n-sinai>.

¹¹¹ "Islamic State supporters advertise Sinai as jihadist destination," Thomas Joscelyn, last modified 01 December, 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/12/islamic_state_supportor.php.

¹¹² "Sinai civilians caught in Egypt's 'war on terror'," Louisa Loveluck, British Broadcasting Corporation, last modified 10 October, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24477507>.

¹¹³ "Egypt's Morsi using former Islamists as intermediaries in negotiations with Sinai militants," Avi Issacharoff, Haaretz Daily Newspaper, last modified 29 August, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/egypt-s-morsi-using-former-islamists-as-intermediaries-in-negotiations-with-sinai-militants-1.461453>.

¹¹⁴ "Sinai: Tipping Point or Pretext for Ouster?," Sahar Aziz, last modified 12 September, 2013, <http://www.mei.edu/content/sinai-tipping-point-or-pretext-ouster>.

post-Arab Spring military operations, including their first airstrikes in Sinai since the 1973 war against Israel.¹¹⁵

Thus under both the Morsi and al-Sisi governments the 'neutralise' element of the strategy has seen the Egyptian military employed as the dominant element of national power to combat the Peninsula's increasing violence, which Western sources have termed an insurgency. Egypt's conscript based military is the largest in both the Middle East and Africa, with its structure, capabilities and doctrine based on combating conventional, inter-state threats. Daniel Byman categorises the Egyptian armed forces as a developing world, garrison-based military.¹¹⁶ He typifies its soldiers as exercising scant initiative at all levels, with bureaucratic structures leading to a lack of information sharing and a culture of unwillingness to recognise failures. Though there are well trained, professional forces within the Egyptian military, Byman's assessment bears truth in Sinai. The troops permitted in the various zones of the Peninsula as dictated by the Treaty of Peace are predominantly employed in garrison and static roles, manning ubiquitous checkpoints that control roads around the Peninsula.¹¹⁷ Ironically, the troops guarding the border with Israel itself face west to observe threats emanating from within, as opposed to observing east towards Israel.

The Egyptian military is ill suited to counterinsurgency operations, which Byman describes as requiring both military skill and political astuteness, with soldiers on the ground acting at once as fighters, policemen, intelligence officers, diplomats and aid workers.¹¹⁸ This requirement is reflected in counterinsurgency theory. In his seminal work, theorist David Galula argues that states facing insurgencies have little use for heavy, sophisticated forces but rather require infantry based armies that can operate amongst the

¹¹⁵ Sara Khorshid, "How the Revolution has Impacted the Debate over Minority Rights and Multiculturalism," in *Multiculturalism and Democracy in North Africa: Aftermath of the Arab Spring*, ed. Moha Ennaji (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 232.

¹¹⁶ Daniel L. Byman, "Friends like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006).

¹¹⁷ New Zealand Defence Force, "Deployment Post Activity Report (PAR): Op Farad Senior National Officer (SNO) V749428 Lt Col R.P. Moody," p. A-6.

¹¹⁸ Byman, "Friends like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," p. 90.

population, applying nuanced force to influence popular support.¹¹⁹ This has been recognised in the Egyptian context, with the US government encouraging Egypt's military to adapt its forces to better face non-conventional threats. According to cables released by Wikileaks, the Egyptian military has resisted such pressure, stating that the armed forces' principal role is the protection of Egyptian territory and the Suez Canal, with a strong conventional force aiding the maintenance of regional security.¹²⁰

With its only tool being conventional forces, the Egyptian military response to the increase in violence post-Arab Spring has been ineffective. The tactical application of the governments' 'neutralise' line of operation has been characterised by a continuation of garrison focused checkpoint operations, generating resentment by significantly impeding locals' freedom of movement.¹²¹ Such dispositions have likewise provided large numbers of static and readily identifiable targets for militant Islamists. These checkpoints, presumably aimed at limiting militant movement, have been coupled with large-scale kinetic operations that have caused significant collateral damage. For example, under the Agreed Activities mechanism facilitated by the MFO, Egyptian forces have employed M-60A1 main battle tanks and Apache attack helicopters to target militants. Despite the influx of such advanced military equipment into the Peninsula, Egyptian forces have achieved little decisive success, with their tactics unlikely to win the support of the population.¹²²

These tactics have included the destruction of homes thought to be harbouring militants, with significant collateral damage and civilian deaths. The internet abounds with videos purporting to show casualties of the Egyptian army's campaign in North Sinai, including children. These images are difficult to independently verify, in part due to restrictions placed on journalists in the Peninsula. Journalistic freedom in Egypt as a whole

¹¹⁹ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).

¹²⁰ "DASD Kahl Meeting With Egyptian Military Officials," Wikileaks, last modified 28 February, 2010, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2010/02/10CAIRO257.html>.

¹²¹ Hauslohner, "Insurgency takes root in Egypt's Sinai".

¹²² New Zealand Defence Force, "Deployment Post Activity Report (PAR): Op Farad Senior National Officer (SNO) V749428 Lt Col R.P. Moody," p. A-5.

increased immediately following the overthrow of Mubarak, however, regressed following the 2013 coup against Morsi. International watchdog Freedom House downgraded its assessment of Egypt's press to 'not free' in 2013, a rating that it currently maintains.¹²³ In November 2014 the Egyptian cabinet began consideration of a sweeping law prohibiting publication of any news regarding the military, as well as military documents or statistics, without prior written consent, a move that Amnesty International stated would effectively exempt Egypt's armed forces from media scrutiny.¹²⁴ Though the law is still to be ratified, it is in de facto effect in Sinai with arrests of journalists accused of spreading 'false news' regarding the armed forces taking place.

Footage of Egyptian forces destroying homes in the Peninsula is more readily verified and is consistent with attacks observed by the MFO. The level of destruction has led commentators such as Louisa Loveluck and Omar Ashour to dub the Egyptian military's actions 'scorched-earth' tactics.¹²⁵ Such measures have also included the creation of a one kilometre wide buffer zone along the border with Gaza, as discussed in chapter two. This zone was decreed by law 1975/2014 by Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab following the October 2014 militant attacks, with the statute permitting the forcible eviction of residents who refused to leave.¹²⁶ Work on the buffer zone had in fact commenced in February 2014, with its width increased multiple times to its current level. By the end of April 2015 the Egyptian military had destroyed some 1,110 houses displacing over 1,000 families.¹²⁷ However, the number of affected homes is expected to rise to ten thousand,

¹²³ "Egypt: Freedom of the Press 2015," Freedom House, last accessed 07 June, 2015, <http://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/egypt#.VXPdyc-qqko>.

¹²⁴ "Egypt: End wave of home demolitions, forced evictions in Sinai amid media blackout," Amnesty International, last modified 27 November, 2014, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2014/11/egypt-end-wave-home-demolitions-forced-evictions-sinai-amid-media-blackout/>.

¹²⁵ "Desert Fury," Louisa Loveluck, Foreign Policy, last modified 10 October, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/10/10/desert-fury/.and Sinai> and Ashour, "Sinai's enduring insurgency".

¹²⁶ Amnesty International, "Egypt: End wave of home demolitions, forced evictions in Sinai amid media blackout".

¹²⁷ "Egypt to evacuate 10,000 homes in ongoing Gaza buffer zone expansion," Ma'an News Agency, Al Bawaba, last modified 06 June, 2015, <http://www.albawaba.com/news/egypt-evacuate-10000-homes-ongoing-gaza-buffer-zone-expansion-704056>.

with North Sinai's Governor indicating the buffer would eventually be five kilometres wide.¹²⁸ This destruction, coupled with a near-continuous curfew in North Sinai since the Morsi coup all contribute to an atmosphere of repression.

Wilayat Sinai: Ansar beit al-Maqdis and the Islamic State

This feeling of repression inflicted on civilians by the armed forces precipitated ABM's December 2013 pronouncement of Takfir against the Egyptian military and police, declaring them apostates and hence legitimate targets.¹²⁹ This announcement represents formalisation of the group's de facto policy change following the Morsi coup, with militant Islamist violence largely neglecting Israel and focussing on the 'near enemy' of the al-Sisi government. Whilst the marriage of convenience between militant Islamists and the Bedouin in Sinai has facilitated an exponential increase in violence in the Peninsula, attacks have occasionally also spilled across the Suez Canal. Resultantly, the counter-insurgency issue that exists in Sinai is likewise driving a heightened counter-terrorism requirement nationwide.

As a Salafi-Jihadi group, ABM shares much of al-Qa'ida's ideological outlook. However, on 10 November 2014 ABM declared allegiance to ISIL and rebranded itself as Wilayat Sinai – the Province of Sinai as part of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's Islamic State. The declaration followed moves to develop links between the two groups that extended to at least January of that year. For example, in September 2014 ISIL spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani praised ABM's 'blessed operations against the guards of the Jews, the soldiers of Sisi, the new Pharaoh of Egypt.'¹³⁰ Over the course of 2014, ABM likewise sought to emulate ISIL, employing the shock value of beheadings in

¹²⁸ "Demolition of Rafah continues in 2nd phase of Gaza buffer zone," Daily News Egypt, last modified 24 January, 2015, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/01/24/demolition-rafah-continues-2nd-phase-gaza-buffer-zone/>.

¹²⁹ Nelly Lahoud, "The Province of Sinai: why bother with Palestine if you can be part of the "Islamic State"?", *Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel* 8, no. 316 (2015): p. 14.

¹³⁰ "Islamic State takes aim at Egypt through Sinai terror group," Reuters, The Jerusalem Post, last modified 22 September, 2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Islamic-State-takes-aim-at-Egypt-through-Sinai-terror-group-376012>.

increasingly media-savvy propaganda videos. The formal linkage of ABM to ISIL is seemingly significant, raising the Peninsula's profile as an area of regional unrest. News outlet Al Monitor describes the move as 'raising the stakes' for Egypt,¹³¹ whilst International Crisis Group's Issandr El Amrani views it as cause for alarm due to ISIL's propensity for causing splits within the societies in which it operates.¹³²

In spite of dire predictions, the link between ABM and ISIL is less significant than it appears. Unlike ISIL, ABM does not currently control territory, making its self-identification as a province grandiose. Crucially, it is likely that the pledge of allegiance has weakened militant Islamism in the Peninsula in the short term. Historically Sinai militants have been affiliated with al-Qa'ida. Therefore, ABM's pledge of allegiance to al-Qa'ida's main competitor for pre-eminence in the global Salafi-Jihadi movement is likely to cause friction. The declaration may lessen ABM's ability to collaborate with other al-Qa'ida affiliated groups in the Peninsula. Internally, the affiliation with ISIL has likely caused divisions within the group. According to Gartenstein-Ross, ABM's membership is geographically split in its support for the alliance: Sinai based members are predominantly pro-ISIL, whilst those in the Nile Valley generally oppose the pairing.¹³³

The linkage of ABM to ISIL undoubtedly makes the former group appear more brutal. The group released several propaganda videos showing beheadings, such as an October 2014 video in which three Egyptians described as 'agents of the apostate army' were beheaded and a January 2015 video in which a captured ports security officer was forced to denounce the police before being executed.¹³⁴ Whilst ABM has stated that it would not

¹³¹ "Islamic State pledge in Sinai raises stakes for Egypt," Al Monitor, last modified 19 November, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/11/islamic-state-pledge-sinai-raises-stakes-for-egypt.html>.

¹³² "Islamic State Offshoots Spring Up in Egypt, Other Countries," Yaroslav Trofimov, Dow Jones & Company, last modified 28 January, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-states-sway-spreads-in-middle-east-north-africa-1422483739>.

¹³³ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "The Hype Jihad," *The Spectator*, 10 January, 2015, pp. 114-16.

¹³⁴ "Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis's Oath of Allegiance to the Islamic State," (Washington, DC: Wikistrat, 2015), p. 11.

target civilians, Sinai's residents are increasingly at risk of being labelled collaborators, with competition for support between the authorities and militant Islamists.

As this chapter has shown, multiple factors have contributed to the growth of militant Islamist violence in Sinai. Foremost amongst them is the marriage of convenience between Islamist groups and the Peninsula's aggrieved Bedouin population. The longevity of this relationship is uncertain. Given public reaction to the brutality of the 1997 Luxor massacre, it is possible that an increase in violence by ABM, actual or perceived through its linkage to ISIL, may in fact backfire on the group. Likewise, the potential influx of foreign fighters in what is a tribal region driven by local grievances has the potential for schism. Already there have been accounts of growing tension between the tribes and militant Islamists. In May 2015 it was reported that the Tarabeen tribe had placed a one million Egyptian pound bounty on the head of ABM's leader, as a result of the group's execution of tribe members.¹³⁵ Whilst too early to suggest a major shift in the common interests between the Bedouin and militant Islamists, it is clear that the relationship is far from set in stone.

¹³⁵ "Tribal coalition in Egypt's Sinai puts bounty on head of militant leader," Middle East Eye, last modified 02 May, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/tribal-coalition-egypts-sinai-puts-bounty-head-militant-leader-1244577872>.

Conclusion

The series of popular uprisings that swept across the Middle East in 2011 – the Arab Spring – represented a key moment in the region's modern history. In Egypt, riling against economic deprivation and political exclusion, protesters filled the streets and squares of Cairo and the country's other cities and demanded regime change. The resultant ousting of President Hosni Mubarak in January 2011 seemingly marked the end of autocratic rule over the most populous Arab nation and demonstrated the Egyptians' desire for political and social reforms. In June 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi became Egypt's first democratically elected President. The 2013 coup that deposed him, however, highlighted that such reforms were far from guaranteed.

The purpose of this thesis was to map how the momentous events of the 2011 revolution affected the security environment of the Sinai Peninsula. Prior to the Arab Spring, the Peninsula had experienced a history of instability and violence, as a result of being an under-governed buffer zone that had witnessed terror attacks since the mid-2000s. In the four years since Mubarak's overthrow, the frequency and intensity of violence in Sinai have increased markedly, and generated security instability that affects Egypt's government, its neighbours and crucially, the Peninsula's inhabitants. Key to this thesis was to identify and map the manner in which the security environment has altered. It also centred on determining the factors that contributed to this change.

The focus of this study was to explain the upsurge in violence in Sinai since January 2011, which occurred in two phases. In discussing the first phase, this thesis covered the period following Mubarak's ousting in January 2011 to the coup against the Morsi government in July 2013. In this section, the thesis highlighted the Bedouin's attempts to gain leverage with the Egyptian authorities and the militant Islamist attacks against Israel as the most evident characteristics. This thesis argued that this phase is both qualitatively and

quantitatively distinct from the second phase, which commenced with the July 2013 coup against President Morsi and the concomitant end of Muslim Brotherhood domination of Egyptian politics. This second phase has resulted in hundreds of fatalities and many more casualties amongst militant Islamists on one side and the Egyptian police and armed forces on the other. Such increases in casualties demonstrate the intensification of the conflict in the Peninsula. Caught in the cross-fire, Sinai's civilian population has likewise suffered significant casualties, destruction of property and further curtailment of their freedom during the conflict that can be aptly described as an insurgency.

The key theme of this thesis is to demonstrate the central role that the Peninsula's Bedouin population have in its security as the majority of Sinai's population, who occupy traditional tribal areas with multiple links that transcend state borders. Based on this assessment, chapter one of this study focussed on the recent history of Sinai's Bedouin tribes, detailing their systematic marginalisation by the state in political, economic and social terms. This thesis argued that their marginalisation has left many Bedouin predisposed to a marriage of convenience with militant Islamists, despite not all Bedouin subscribing to the militants' Salafi-Jihadi ideology. This study demonstrated that whilst foreign fighters both from Gaza and the wider region have played a significant role in the upsurge of violence in the Peninsula, their ability to operate in Sinai is enabled by Bedouin sympathy along with their active support. This includes the provision of intelligence and materiel, as well as participating in attacks. The goals of militant Islamists currently coalesce with those of the Bedouin, presenting opportunity for collaboration. Following Galula's model of counter-insurgency, this thesis argues that it is thus the hearts and minds of Sinai's inhabitants that constitute the true battleground between militant Islamists and the Egyptian authorities.

This research explains how in the period since Mubarak's ousting, Sinai has evolved from an under-governed province with a marginalised population to a significant security concern for Egypt. It showed that whilst the number of

militant Islamists remains unclear, their growing presence has affected not just the Egyptian state but is extended to Israel and Gaza to the east. Once a buffer between Egypt and Israel, the Peninsula today represents a venue for unlikely security cooperation between the two former enemies and represents a clear nexus of interests between Egypt and Israel. As chapter two demonstrated, due to the extension of insecurity to Israel and Gaza, whilst anti-Israeli rhetoric remains common in Egypt, cooperation between Israel and Egypt with regards Sinai's security has reached its zenith during the post-Arab Spring era. The chapter concluded that in practice, regardless of which government holds power in Cairo, it is the Egyptian armed forces who manage the country's relationship with Israel and protect Sinai's security.

Whilst state interaction between Egypt and Israel forms the foundation of Sinai's security architecture, this thesis demonstrated that non-state entities including militant Islamists, Hamas and the quasi-state of Gaza have become key actors that affect Sinai's security environment. Gaza shares clear economic and security interests with the Peninsula. Historic and social ties bind the Palestinians in Gaza with Egypt. Suffering under blockade by Israel and Egypt since 2007, Sinai played a key role in sustaining Gaza's 1.8 million inhabitants. Underground tunnels between North Sinai and Gaza have provided a lifeline to the Gazan people and financially supported the Hamas government.

Re-invigorated Egyptian anti-tunnelling operations following the Morsi coup and the creation of a buffer zone clearly indicate that the Egyptian government attributes heightened instability to Gaza. This thesis concluded that regardless of Egypt's stance towards Hamas, these operations have backfired on Egypt's security strategy in Sinai. The reality of Gazans' needs for subsistence goods and the Bedouin's requirements for economic opportunities remains. Based upon this, chapter two argued that any approach to security in Sinai that fails to address the needs of Gaza's population will not succeed. It is in this context that the tunnel industry has acted as a centrifugal force that has pushed the Bedouin and the Egyptian

authorities further apart. Anti-tunnelling operations exacerbate this divide, whilst failing to address the lack of employment and poor economic conditions that necessitate Bedouin participation in the illicit industry. Whilst economic needs remain unfulfilled on both sides of the border, the maintenance of the illicit trade between the two will continue to act as a driver of instability in the Peninsula.

The divide between the Bedouin and the Egyptian authorities has left a space readily filled by militant Islamists. As chapter three demonstrated, Egypt has a recent history of militant Islamism. It also has a track record of being able to curtail it through state repression, as occurred to the Islamic Group and Egyptian Islamic Jihad movements that were active from the 1970s to the 1990s. Egyptian government repression forced key leaders, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, to flee Egypt. This was coupled with de-radicalisation precipitated by the loss of public support following the Luxor massacre. Yet whilst both first and second waves of militant Islamism may have been constrained, the movement was not eliminated. State repression such as the 'drag net' arrests of Bedouin in the mid-2000s failed to address its causes, and fostered the conditions for its return post-Arab Spring.

Based on Little and Rogova's model of threat, this research demonstrated how the Arab Spring generated prime conditions for an upsurge in violence in the already radicalised Peninsula. Chapter three showed how factors such as the fall of Gaddafi and the proliferation of Libya's weapons have contributed to this increase in threat, which reinforces the futility of considering Sinai's security environment in isolation from the wider region.

Whilst media commentators have been quick to describe a 'restive Sinai', this thesis has shown that the deteriorating security environment in the Peninsula and its inherent violence are largely limited to the governorate of North Sinai. As stated in the introduction, differing tribal reactions to the security environment post-Mubarak were outside the scope of this thesis. Future research that seeks to better understand Bedouin diversity and these differences would aid understanding of the complex security environment.

Though both North and South Sinai are inhabited by the Bedouin and have suffered marginalisation by the Egyptian authorities, militant Islamism has failed to take root in the South. The causes of this disparity are likewise worthy of further research, as it is too simplistic to suggest that South Sinai's geographical separation from the tumult of Gaza is the sole cause for this difference. The absence of radicalisation in South Sinai and the pattern of increased democratic participation reported by Gilbert and al-Jebaali suggest key differences between north and south. Understanding such differences would be a useful start in addressing the deteriorated security environment in the north. Finally, this thesis highlighted a link between a lack of economic opportunities for the Bedouin and the Peninsula's security environment. The role of economics in the Peninsula, especially in North Sinai, is therefore an important line of future investigation.

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, the Egyptian state's reaction to the deteriorating environment in Sinai has been couched in terms of security. Its response has accordingly been led by the armed forces and police. However, the neutralisation strand of the government's strategy has failed to improve Sinai's security environment. Instead, the Egyptian state's actions have exacerbated local issues, and have entrenched the divide between the Peninsula's Bedouin and the state. They have also allowed violence to spill over into other areas of Egypt and across the border into Israel.

The issues affecting Sinai are varied, however, they undoubtedly encompass more than security alone. Future Egyptian strategy should include a security line of operations to neutralise those militant Islamists who are incapable of de-radicalisation. Egypt faces an insurgency in Sinai and requires Bedouin support to improve security in the Peninsula. Egypt should therefore tailor its forces and tactics to be able to apply nuanced force to influence popular support. The security line of operations should be complemented by economic development for the Bedouin that accounts for the proximity of Gaza. It must also include political representation that acknowledges Bedouin aspirations and enhances their social inclusion within the Egyptian state. Given the significant impact that the governors of North and South

Sinai have on Sinai's Bedouin, it would be logical for Egypt to enhance Bedouin participation and representation at the governorate level in the first instance. Without such a multi-faceted strategy, the current state of discord in the Peninsula is likely to be long lasting and continue to negatively affect both Egypt and the wider region.

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