

## ANALYSIS PAPER



## Jihadi-Salafism's Next Generation

by Haim Malka and William Lawrence

### SUMMARY

Popular uprisings across North Africa have unleashed a new wave of jihadi-salafism that is increasingly mainstream and appeals to a younger generation of activists. Al Qaeda attracted young men to take up arms against Western-backed governments and fight an international jihad, but it failed to inspire a large mass of adherents. This new extremism uses social activism and outreach as its primary tactics, and it threatens to undermine fragile governments and radicalize publics in divided societies. While the governmental response to al Qaeda focused on counterterrorism tactics, the antidote to this emerging extremism will have to be more complex and navigate local socioeconomic, religious, and political divisions. Ultimately, this mainstream or popular jihadi-salafism is less dramatic than al Qaeda's version, but it will have a far greater impact on the region's future. ■

For the better part of two decades, al Qaeda's North Africa efforts consisted largely of bands of a few dozen fighters seeking the violent overthrow of Western-backed governments. They claimed to be salafists fighting a holy war or jihad in the name of Islam, but in their tactics and ideology they were distinct from the puritanical orthodoxy of mainstream salafists, who tended to be quietist in their political orientations. For the most part, the jihadi-salafi<sup>1</sup> groups affiliated with al Qaeda gained the headlines, but the mainstream salafi groups quietly gained adherents.

The 2011 Arab uprisings permitted and facilitated the emergence of a new wave of jihadi-salafism that has become increasingly mainstream and popular. Its adherents share al Qaeda's goals and worldview, but they are generally far more selective in their use of violence. They combine social activism and proselytism, or *da'wa*, with a new enthusiasm for violent struggles worldwide, the most important at the moment being the fight against the Assad regime in Syria. Young jihadi-salafists often idolize those fighting in the Syrian jihad and their predecessors in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Yet rather than focusing primarily on drawing young, disenfranchised men on the margins of society to head to Syrian or Saharan training camps, they increasingly seek to transform society from within through direct action. They can mobilize en masse to demonstrate at an embassy, attack an art exhibit, or protest policies they deem offensive. The main objective and modus operandi of this new jihadi-salafism is no longer producing spectacles of violence against the state or Western targets, such as the January 2013 attack against the In Amenas gas facility in Algeria, which grab attention but do not aim to win over populations. Instead, the new jihadi-salafists are undertaking a more strategic, grassroots effort to Islamize society while occasionally using targeted direct action, including violence, to advance their goals.<sup>2</sup>

### THE MAGHREB IN TRANSITION

While the Maghreb has long been at the margins of U.S. policy in the Middle East and North Africa, trends in this region increasingly reverberate throughout the Middle East. In this new environment, developments in the Maghreb will continue to have an impact both on the broader Middle East and on U.S. interests. The CSIS Middle East Program examines changing political, economic, and security trends in the Maghreb—defined here as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya—through original research and analysis and by convening events that highlight issues of importance in the Maghreb to business and policymaking audiences. More broadly, the program focuses its research on the drivers of social and political change in the Middle East. To the greatest degree possible, we seek to be “opportunity driven” rather than “threat driven,” seeking out opportunities for positive change rather than merely reacting to crises. For more information on the program's work on the Maghreb, visit <https://csis.org/program/maghreb>. ■

As this new popular jihadi-salafism evolves, it threatens to undermine fragile governments and radicalize publics in societies increasingly polarized by economic crises and cultural, socioeconomic, and political cleavages. A large, entrenched mass of adherents that occasionally resorts to violence is ultimately more destabilizing to states than a hardened group of dozens or hundreds of fighters hiding out in the mountains or desert. While the governmental response to al Qaeda's strategy focuses on counterterrorism tactics, the antidote to this emerging extremism will have to navigate local socioeconomic, religious, and political dynamics and will necessarily be more complex. The United States continues to promote regional stability in North Africa through economic growth, political accommodation, and security cooperation. This evolving popular jihadi-salafism will affect all of those efforts, creating new challenges for U.S. engagement in the region. Ultimately, this popular jihadi-salafism creates less of a media spectacle than the violent attacks of al Qaeda and its affiliates, but its success or failure will have a greater impact on the direction of North African societies and politics in the years ahead.

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Separating the new generation of jihadi-salafists from the old generation is itself problematic, since generational divides are more approximate than categorical. But it is increasingly clear that, at least for the moment, the new generation's use of violence is more calculated and measured than absolute. Rather than relying mainly on armed resistance to further its goals, the new generation sees social and political activity as equally or more important tools. This combination of social action and violence is

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powerful and appeals to a much broader cross-section of society than al Qaeda's narrow focus ever did. It also creates a new ambiguity about the use of violence on both rhetorical and practical levels, one that raises challenges for policymakers and analysts attempting to define and address what is changing. As previous categories and definitions of jihadi-salafism become less and less relevant in the social and political environment unfolding in North Africa, a new understanding of the movement—including its likely impact on societies in the region and how it can be countered—becomes all the more crucial.

## DEFINITIONS AND THE LIMITS OF LABELING

Jihadi-salafists are part of the broader salafi movement, whose beliefs and practices attempt to emulate those of the earliest Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Contemporary salafists tend to take a literalist approach to the Qur'an and Sunna, seeing the latter in particular as a guide for daily behavior. They are ultraconservative in their outlook and puritanical in their religious practice, placing great emphasis on what is permissible (*halal*) or impermissible (*haram*) in daily life. They seek to establish a pious state based on Islamic law, yet differ in how to achieve this goal. Salafists are often divided into three distinct yet overlapping categories: scripturalists, who focus primarily on spiritual outreach, charity, and education; political salafists, who participate in contemporary representative politics; and jihadi-salafists.<sup>4</sup>

Until recently, Western analysis and action focused primarily on jihadi-salafists. The term was applied to salafists who

held that violence was necessary to overthrow “corrupt” or Western-backed governments and establish Islamic states.<sup>5</sup> In North Africa numerous jihadi-salafi groups emerged following government crackdowns, primarily in the 1990s.<sup>6</sup> In the 2000s, some groups swore allegiance to Osama bin Laden and what has become known as “al Qaeda Central,” and others consulted with al Qaeda’s leadership. The most well-known jihadi-salafi group is al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which emerged in 2007 from the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) after years of dialogue between the two organizations.<sup>7</sup> The different jihadi-salafi movements shared the goal of overthrowing “apostate” governments, but efforts to pursue this goal generally ended in disaster for the movements and for the fighters, many thousands of whom fled, were imprisoned, or were killed by security forces. Those who remained retreated to apolitical religious outreach, went underground, or were co-opted into politics, especially in Morocco and Algeria.<sup>8</sup>

What distinguished the previous generation of jihadi-salafists from other salafists was the rejection of both preaching and politics as the chief means to their ends, in favor of directly waging violent jihad. Though AQIM, its antecedents, and its offshoots integrated themselves to some extent in northern Mali and southern Algeria by building networks of economic interdependence with local tribes, they never garnered widespread support in North Africa, even among potentially sympathetic populations who resented their governments and the West. This was due in part to AQIM’s preference for violence that could be indiscriminate and often seemed more wanton than ideological.

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To be sure, the old jihadi model still exists. The takeover of northern Mali by militias allied with al Qaeda in mid-2012 and the January 2013 attack on a gas facility near In Amenas in Algeria make clear that the al Qaeda version of jihadi-salafism still poses a threat to both local and international targets. Tunisia’s ongoing clash with the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade in the Chaambi Mountains on the Algerian-Tunisian border and the exploitation of lawless zones in southern Libya also illustrate the perseverance of traditional jihadi-salafi activities. Yet while al Qaeda’s version of jihadi-salafism has produced dramatic terrorist attacks, it has remained a fringe phenomenon and failed to mobilize a critical mass. Today, al Qaeda-associated jihadists might still attract hundreds or even thousands across the region to fight in Syria or join isolated militant groups, but they have not been able to inspire the tens of thousands that it would take to overthrow governments.

Since the 2011 Arab uprisings, a new generation of jihadi-salafists has emerged. The new generation favors a combination of aggressive grassroots community activism, direct action, and occasional violence. They marry the messaging of the scripturalist salafists with the political salafists’ desire to govern, all the while retaining the rhetoric of the more violent jihadi-salafism of al Qaeda. The creation of new groups engaged in civic activism and direct political action that do not (at least in principle) reject violence has brought the most violent type of salafism into the mainstream. Clearly defining and categorizing contemporary jihadi-salafism, however, has been difficult, and the different strands’ ideas and actions overlap. According to Will McCants, “Those salafis who turn to violence do not stand apart from non-violent salafis. They often attend the same mosques, follow many of the same scholars, go to the same universities.” What has changed,

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he posits, is the political context, “which forces salafis to reevaluate their methods.”<sup>9</sup>

One approach to categorizing jihadi-salafists is offered by Thomas Hegghammer, who suggests a preference-based typology to understand different Islamist actors more broadly. He lays out five basic motivations for Islamist groups—they may be state-oriented, nation-oriented, *umma*-oriented, morality-oriented, or sectarian—and then divides each group into violent and nonviolent manifestations. Most violent Islamists, he suggests, are motivated by several or all of these agendas at the same time, yet most have one that is stronger than the rest—one that shapes their strategy and priorities and that usually determines the direction and form of their violence.<sup>10</sup> Monica Marks, who has conducted field research among Tunisia’s salafists, suggests that identity is the primary factor in determining whether someone will be a salafist, what kind of salafist a person becomes, and one’s position towards violence. She finds that “those young salafis who reject the quietism of the *‘alimiya* [scripturalists] and the party politics of political salafis identify overwhelmingly as jihadi-salafi.”<sup>11</sup>

The new generation of jihadi-salafists eludes most categories and definitions in part because its members deploy different tactics in different contexts, based on changing local circumstances. The political environment following the Arab uprisings provides new opportunities for young salafists to evolve based on their specific circumstances. The categories are blurred to some degree because salafists themselves seek to dispense with them.

The rise of new jihadi-salafi groups represents more than a rebranding of the ideology of which bin Laden was the most famous advocate. In fact, it is shaped by the failure of that ideology, or at least the failure of its strategy. Over the last decade, North Africa’s jihadists murdered and terrorized in

the name of overthrowing governments. Though violence has been accompanied by the vigorous debate over what a legitimate target may be, the sheer carnage of terrorist attacks tended to turn local populations in the Maghreb against insurgent groups, even where the Islamist revival message of salafism has had continuing resonance.<sup>12</sup>

## JIHADI-SALAFISM GOES MAINSTREAM

At first, popular uprisings in 2011 across North Africa weakened the appeal of salafism as a primary motor of social and political change. While young salafists participated, they did not lead the various revolts. The Arab uprisings sent a clear message to young people that there were other ways to transform society than simply armed revolt, among them nonviolent mass protest by populations against entrenched regimes. Amidst these protests and the changing political contexts they ushered in, salafism did not evaporate; it adapted.

The most obvious adaptation is its movement into the mainstream. This is in contrast to al Qaeda’s version of jihadi-salafism, which existed on the margins of society, both geographically and socially. The post-uprising political environment has created space for a range of social and political actors, fostering new jihadi-salafi groups such as Ansar al Shari’a, which laud jihad against authoritarian or Western-backed governments while emphasizing social and political activism as the main tools to Islamize society and ultimately establish an Islamic state.<sup>13</sup>

The freedoms unleashed by the uprisings in Tunisia and Libya in particular have given young jihadi-salafists new space to propagate their message with fewer constraints and have allowed the groups to emerge as social and political movements.<sup>14</sup> They are open about their religious practice

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and express support for al Qaeda publicly, while constantly challenging the habits and culture of “corrupt” Westernized society. The sheer boldness of their actions and willingness to use force to defend their public positions, as with the sit-ins and other direct actions that shut down Manouba University in Tunisia in 2011,<sup>15</sup> set them apart from other salafists.

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Young jihadi-salafists respect the previous generation of jihadists, as they admire those who set off to fight in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere. They generally reject current experiments with representative democracy, and they believe not only that Western forces historically set up, prop up, and reestablish authoritarian regimes, but also that former authoritarian regimes are poised to regain control across the region. While they favor waging violent jihad in Syria or to fight American and Western forces, they have generally not called for jihad against post-Arab-uprising governments,<sup>16</sup> though they do advocate or voice support for a range of tactical violent acts.

These new popular jihadi-salafi groups accept the use of violence as legitimate means for a range of goals. They tend to resort to vigilante violence against persons and property, rather than directly confronting security forces or the symbols of the state. Their adherents attack individuals who are publicly intoxicated or who are engaged in the alcohol trade. But much more systematically, groups in both Tunisia and Libya have destroyed dozens of mausoleums and other popular Islamic shrines dedicated to venerated saints as a first step in “cleansing” their societies of over a millennium of “corrupting” influences on Islam.<sup>17</sup> Estimates of the numbers of sites destroyed in Libya range from five dozen to over 200, with the greatest concentration in the areas of Tripoli and Benghazi; the destruction occurred at

times with the complicity of security authorities.<sup>18</sup>

But some actions have been more aggressive and consequential. Tunisia’s Ansar al Shari’a is accused of orchestrating the attack on the U.S. embassy in Tunis on September 14, 2012, over the inflammatory *Innocence of Muslims* film, but its leader, Abu Ayadh al-Tunsi, who has gone underground, has denied such a role. While Benghazi’s Ansar al Shari’a denies killing U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans *as an organization*, virtually no one denies that its members participated actively in the attack on the U.S. consulate. The attacks may not have been directed by Ansar al Shari’a leadership, but significant numbers of its members participated in both assaults.<sup>19</sup>

Young jihadi-salafists share the outrage and frustration of non-salafi revolutionary youth. And like them they strive for socioeconomic justice and often articulate the common position that socialist and capitalist economic philosophies are bankrupt. Outwardly, young jihadi-salafists adopt jihadi lifestyles as part of an effort to distinguish themselves entirely from the world in which they live, in part through physical markers such as beards, *kamis* (baggy pants), *jilbab* (head-covering cape), and *niqab* (face-covering veil) combined with the separation of the sexes. Monica Marks has identified this new generation as a distinct “subculture that represents an alternative form of political protest and lifestyle” than those that dominated the Arab uprisings in 2011.<sup>20</sup>

As jihadi-salafi groups become more mainstream, they institutionalize popular jihadi messages publicly through new organizations and networks that allow greater interaction with other local youth. Though some have encouraged a

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subset of young people to abandon society for the Syrian front lines, these new movements primarily seek jihadi opportunities locally that are not a priori acts of violence against foreign occupiers or “infidel” regimes. The leading theorist of this new jihadism is Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, whose ideas influence several Ansar al Shari’a groups, and who advocates carefully planned and targeted violence that actually helps jihadi groups consolidate power—instead of “tactical” short-term violence, which may backfire.<sup>21</sup> Thus, young jihadi-salafists refer to themselves as “jihadi” but tend to distinguish themselves from other violent groups.<sup>22</sup> While they do not reject violence in principle, they seek to promote their values through preaching and persuasion in the first instance, similar to the scripturalist salafists, with the ultimate goal being the implementation of a strict version of Islamic law within an Islamic state.

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What differentiates these groups from armed al Qaeda affiliates and ultimately makes them more of a strategic threat is that they are better integrated into society.<sup>23</sup> Their leaders and activists are shopkeepers, teachers, construction workers, and (very often) well-networked informal economic sector actors. Their presence in society and existing networks help to recruit others. Unlike al Qaeda’s jihadi-salafists, who disappear from society to wage jihad, the new generation can wage jihad while remaining a part of society. This enables them to directly interact with and potentially influence a much wider audience than al Qaeda ever could.

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this strategic shift depends primarily on changing contexts since the Arab uprisings, it also depends on how groups have evolved over the two previous decades and the level of state repression. Libya’s repression of Islamists was the most ferocious in North Africa, resulting in the exile or imprisonment in the 1990s of virtually all of its Islamist activists. Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali’s repression in Tunisia was also severe and led in part to the Islamist victory at the polls after his fall. Algeria, which began with great ferocity and continues to fight holdouts from the decade-long war of the 1990s after its own experiment with democratization, has promoted a national reconciliation process with militants and succeeded in integrating some Islamists into formal political structures. Morocco also achieved success in affording political space for some Islamists to express themselves in the context of gradual democratization.

The leaders of Benghazi’s Ansar al Shari’a brigade, and in particular Sheikh Muhammad al-Zahawi, spent years in Muammar el-Qaddafi’s prisons, and the Ansar al Shari’a group in Derna—a town in eastern Libya—is led by a former Guantánamo detainee Abu Sufian bin Qumu. After 2011, neither group advocated violent actions against the revolutionary Libyan state; in fact, the Benghazi group returned to provide security at hospitals and government buildings, even after some of its members were involved in the Benghazi attack.

Abu Ayadh al-Tunsi, the leader of Tunisia’s Ansar al Shari’a, also traveled a typical path from total exclusion to return. In the late 1990s and early 2000s he led the Tunisian Combat Group in Afghanistan before being imprisoned under Ben Ali. While he is currently in hiding following the attack on the U.S. embassy in Tunis in September 2012, he continues to exhort both the Tunisian government and

his youthful followers to avoid violence toward each other. In a pronouncement on August 5, 2013, he urged Tunisian authorities to “protect” salafi youth from presumably violent outcomes following the July assassination of secular political leader Mohammed Brahmi.<sup>24</sup> More traditional jihadi-salafists have also urged Ansar al Shari’a in Tunisia to be cautious of clashing with security forces after a series of confrontations in May 2013.

It is too early to determine whether embracing violence while limiting its application is a shift in ideology or a shift in tactics intended to avoid clashes with security forces. On at least one occasion a member of AQIM’s shari’a committee, Abu Yahya al-Shanqiti, urged younger salafists to be patient. He reportedly posted a tweet that counseled, “Don’t you ever be provoked by the regime and its barbarism to do rash acts that might spoil your blessed popular embrace.”<sup>25</sup> A direct and ongoing clash would allow salafists to exploit their victimhood for popular support but would also risk diminishing broader tolerance for their wide-ranging activities.

## ADDRESSING THE NEW JIHADI-SALAFISM

Because these new jihadi groups tend not to explicitly use violence against their governments or against Western targets, it is more difficult to counter their ideology. Governments in North Africa have searched for different strategies for accommodating these groups, but with only limited success.

In Tunisia the relationship between the Ennahda party and Ansar al Shari’a has gone from tolerance to confrontation in less than two years. Ennahda initially sought dialogue with Ansar al Shari’a and other salafists, even when they pushed the limits of violence and violent rhetoric. Its tolerance

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began eroding after the September 2012 attack on the U.S. embassy in Tunis, and in May 2013 the government banned Ansar al Shari’a’s national conference, sparking clashes between security forces and salafi activists.<sup>26</sup> Then on August 27, 2013, the Tunisian government declared Ansar al Shari’a a terrorist organization, citing its links to the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade and to the 2013 assassinations of left-wing politicians Chokri Belaid and Mohammed Brahmi.<sup>27</sup> Those assassinations helped spark a deeper political crisis in Tunisia.<sup>28</sup> The move to ban Ansar al Shari’a gave Ennahda an opportunity to distance and distinguish itself from more extremist Islamists, a move on which it has yet to fully capitalize. And rather than solving Tunisia’s political crisis, in the short term the move will likely push salafists further underground and increase the likelihood of renewed violent attacks.

In Algeria, the government has denied salafists’ request to participate in politics because it considers the legalization of the Islamic Salvation Front in 1989 to have been a mistake, whereas in Morocco, dozens of former jihadi-salafists have been pardoned and are being allowed to reintegrate. Some, like Muhammad Fizazi, have shown interest in forming a political party.<sup>29</sup> In 2003 Fizazi was sentenced to 30 years in prison for links to the Casablanca bombings, but he was pardoned and released in early 2011. In 2009 he wrote an open letter to his daughter living in Germany in which he attempted to distance himself from his violent and extremist past.<sup>30</sup> In June, three Moroccan salafists announced that they seek to participate in politics through an existing political party.<sup>31</sup>

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Ennahda's failure to promote a more conservative religious agenda and its outlawing of Ansar al Shari'a affirmed the fear among some jihadi-salafists that politics will force them to compromise their beliefs. Moreover, the July military coup and August crackdown against the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt confirms to them that the outcomes of democratic elections are not always respected. Jihadi-salafists, like a large percentage of youth in general, are already deeply suspicious of the state and democratic politics, and recent events reinforce those suspicions.

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The result is that many jihadi-salafists will choose to stay out of electoral politics, a choice that involves more freedom and less pressure to compromise. By remaining outside the political system, they will be able to retain their principles and ambiguous status. This ambiguity ultimately makes them more difficult to deal with, especially for weaker governments and deeply polarized societies prone to violence. Just as it is important to encourage jihadists to abandon violence in favor of political activity, it is equally important to prevent them from crossing the Rubicon into all-out jihad against the state, and from turning local political competition into destabilizing local conflict. Given the new generation's rejection of previous salafi tactics and accommodations to power and their propensity for limited, more calculated violence, the traditional strategies of steering jihadi-salafists toward quietist or political salafism will be increasingly difficult to implement.

## LOOKING FORWARD

Jihadi-salafists have not captured the Arab uprisings in North Africa, but they are capitalizing on them. Political

transitions and more open political contestation provide new opportunities for jihadi-salafists to spread their message and recruit followers. Given their admiration for al Qaeda and occasional use of violence against individuals, organizations, and states, these new groups pose a growing threat.

To counter this evolving threat, it is crucial to strengthen government capacity in transitioning states such as Tunisia and Libya and improve transparency across the region. Supporting economic initiatives that stimulate inclusive growth, create jobs, and provide young people meaningful employment opportunities is also critical to broader stability. A strictly security-focused approach is likely to backfire. Governments must focus on the trifecta of security sector reform (including reining in of security forces prone to excess), justice sector reform (including transitional justice and national dialogue), and economic sector reform. Holistic solutions will not be forthcoming in short order because the tasks at hand are enormous, but governments can signal to populations in significant ways that the most important principle is the rule of law and the most important objectives are economic empowerment, transparency, and political representation. Extremists will continue to operate and attract a certain number of followers, providing reassuring certainties in times of national uncertainty.

The challenge ahead will be to better understand the conditions under which this new generation of jihadi-salafists might resort to wide-scale violence against their political opponents and the state. Distinguishing them from the more violent manifestation of jihadi-salafism that AQIM represents, and preventing them from crossing the line to more direct violence and jihadi activity, are crucial steps. Deradicalization programs and state-led Islamic

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institutional reform have a role to play in these efforts, albeit a limited one. It is important that religious authorities articulate alternative visions of Islam that deemphasize jihadi-salafi rhetoric and emphasize the project of reforming society from the bottom up and the top down. Morocco and Mauritania have developed comprehensive strategies aimed at promoting interpretations of Islam that are more in line with their national histories and cultures than those offered by some Islamists. These deradicalization programs operate to some effect throughout the broadcast media, education system, prisons, and the military.

While these efforts can be part of a broader strategy, they will have only limited applicability to politically volatile or revolutionary settings. They are also less effective against salafists because salafists are inherently antistate and suspicious of the long history of state manipulation of official Islam and the co-optation of Islamic political parties. For the foreseeable future, jihadi-salafi groups will continue to disrupt fragile political transitions, exploiting the disorder caused by political instability and weak governments.

As greater numbers of young people across the region see violence as one acceptable political tool, and as they act on this belief in myriad ways, extremism will continue to undermine the promise of the Arab uprisings. Jihadi-salafism's low-level localized and targeted violence does not compare with al Qaeda's spectacular and grisly violence, so it will attract less attention. Over the next generation, however, the impact of popular jihadi-salafism will be far greater. ■

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## NOTES

1. French academic Gilles Kepel was one of the first to use the term jihadi-salafi. See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 218–19.

2. Some quietist salafists embrace violent jihad in theory and support violent groups, yet are more cautious about expressing their views publicly.

3. Salafists specifically seek to emulate the companions of the Prophet Muhammad and the two generations to follow. Salafism's late-nineteenth-century focus on modernist approaches to empower Arab and Muslim peoples, as advanced by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, flipped in the twentieth century toward the propagation of a conservative version of Islamist teachings, which nonetheless fell under the same banner of "salafism" and helps explain the continuing focus of many salafists on education and outreach.

4. *Salafiya 'almiya*, or "scripturalist" salafism, focuses primarily on personal piety and proselytism. Its adherents generally eschew politics as a corrupt and corrupting influence, emphasizing *da'wa* or spiritual outreach, charity, and education. They believe that society must return to Islam before an Islamic state can be established, and that politics, including elections, can function properly only within such an Islamic state. Political salafists are those who participate in contemporary representative politics to defend and advance the same societal project. The Arab uprisings and ensuing political changes created unprecedented opportunities for political salafists to organize and run for local and national office. These two salafi trends—one apolitical and the other politically engaged—tend to represent the approaches of the older generation of salafists. While both groups may be sympathetic to the idea of jihad against Western targets, they generally oppose violence against Muslim governments. For a detailed description of salafism see Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006): 207–39, [http://www.cerium.ca/IMG/pdf/WIKTOROWICZ\\_2006\\_Anatomy\\_of\\_the\\_Salafi\\_Movement.pdf](http://www.cerium.ca/IMG/pdf/WIKTOROWICZ_2006_Anatomy_of_the_Salafi_Movement.pdf).

5. Ibid.

6. The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), also formed by Afghan veterans, emerged as Libya's largest jihadi-salafi group. The Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group and the Tunisian Combat Group also emerged in the 1990s. For a discussion of the origins and connections between North African jihadi groups and al Qaeda, see Camille Tawil, *Brothers in Arms: The Story of Al-Qa'ida and the Arab Jihadists* (Saqi Books: London, 2010), 33.

7. After Algeria's military canceled elections that an Islamist party was poised to win in 1992, several smaller jihadi groups consolidated in 1993 and 1994 and became the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The GIA later evolved into the GSPC, the precursor to AQIM, and was founded in part as a backlash against the GIA's wanton attacks against civilians. AQIM, its precursors, and its offshoots have struggled to balance their focus between global or Western targets and more local, primarily Algerian, targets, and to decide what is a legitimate civilian or state target. AQIM's active Sahara branch, which has operated largely in northern Mali, has had some difficulty recruiting young North Africans to its ranks, and several other groups such as the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa have broken off from AQIM.

8. After ferocious crackdowns in Algeria and Tunisia in the 1990s, salafi proselytism largely went underground. But not entirely. In Tunisia, for example, there was limited tolerance for preaching salafi messages by *tabligh* movements as long as the practitioners stayed out of politics. In Morocco and Algeria, there was a relatively high tolerance for Islamists who were willing to stay out of politics completely or who were willing to participate in the establishment-dominated political systems, especially after 1999 (the advent of Mohammed VI in Morocco and the Concorde Civile and reconciliation in Algeria).

9. Will McCants, "A New Salafi Politics," *Foreign Policy*, October 12, 2012, [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/10/12/a\\_new\\_salafi\\_politics](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/10/12/a_new_salafi_politics).

10. Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries?" in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 259.

11. Monica Marks, "Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism:

Understanding the Jihadi Current,” *Mediterranean Politics* 18, no. 1 (2013): 109. On individual cultural psychology and Islamism, see also the works of Gary Gregg, in particular *Self-representation: Life Narrative Studies in Identity and Ideology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), and *Culture and Identity in a Muslim Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

12. The exception seems to be in northern Mali and the expanses of the Sahara desert, where jihadi groups have engaged in lucrative economic and criminal activity that created interdependent support networks with local populations and tribes.

13. For a complete discussion of Tunisian salafism and youth, see Marks, “Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism,” 107-114. For a discussion of young salafists’ worldview, see Fabio Merone, “Salafism in Tunisia: An Interview with a Member of Ansar al-Sharia,” *Jadaliyya*, April 11, 2013, [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11166/salafism-in-tunisia\\_an-interview-with-a-member-of-](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11166/salafism-in-tunisia_an-interview-with-a-member-of-).

14. See Stefano M. Torelli, Fabio Merone and Francesco Cavatorta, “Salafism in Tunisia: Challenges and Opportunities for Democratization,” *Middle East Policy* 19, no. 4 (2012): 140-154, <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/salafism-tunisia-challenges-and-opportunities-democratization>.

15. In November 2011 salafi students at Manouba University near Tunis launched a series of protests, sit-ins, and hunger strikes after faculty refused to allow women students to wear full-face coverings (*niqab*) in class. The standoff between salafis and faculty lasted several months.

16. See Raphael Lefevre, “Current Events in North Africa,” *Journal of North African Studies* 17, no. 5 (2012): 925.

17. This method of attacking “inanimate” Islamic corruption has a long history in the Arabian Peninsula, but it is relatively new in North Africa, where Maliki Islam accommodated local cultural practices such as saint veneration centuries ago. The destruction of these traditional places of pilgrimage and worship is construed by many Libyans and some Tunisians as a “victimless crime”

because the victim is not human, but rather “corrupt” popular Islamic practices.

18. One Libyan citizen who called the police during the destruction of an Islamic school near his place of business was informed that “the police are already there.” “Police” turned out to be brigades serving under the Ministry of Interior, which had instructed the salafi marauders not to destroy the entire building but to feel free to trash its contents. The mob unearthed 400-year-old graves and smashed Qur’anic passages inscribed in stone. Interview with coauthor William Lawrence, September 2012, Tripoli, Libya.

19. Jihadi-salafists also likely carried out the assassination of a local sufi leader Sheikh Mustafa Rajab Al-Mahjoubi in Derna, Libya, on September 20, 2013. See Ashraf Abdul-Wahab and Hadi Fornaji, “Derna Sufi Leader Murdered,” *Libya Herald*, September 22, 2013, <http://www.libyaherald.com/2013/09/22/derna-sufi-leader-murdered/#axzz2foiOqN1o>.

20. Marks, “Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism,” 113. This “alternative” is to all other forms of political protest, including socialist, Marxist, liberal, feminist, Amazighist, nationalist, and moderate Islamist.

21. See Aaron Zelin, “Maqdisi’s Disciples in Libya and Tunisia,” *Foreign Policy*, November 14, 2012, [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/11/14/maqdisi\\_s\\_disciples\\_in\\_libya\\_and\\_tunisia](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/11/14/maqdisi_s_disciples_in_libya_and_tunisia). See also Merone, “Salafism in Tunisia.”

22. Merone, “Salafism in Tunisia.”

23. Social activism and charity have long been central to the Islamist project and to Islamism’s popularity. Islamist organizations across the Middle East and North Africa, whether primarily Sufi-oriented, salafi-oriented, or resistance-oriented, have successfully exploited the combination of militancy and social activity over many decades. Hamas, Hezbollah, and other organizations emerged in different contexts, but they also harnessed this combination successfully, in part due to weaker local political infrastructures in the Palestinian Territories and war-racked Lebanon. In all cases local populations

initially tolerate, participate in, and even come to depend on these social activities.

24. See, for example, “Abou Ayadh appelle les sheikhs à soutenir les jeunes salafistes,” *Mosaique FM*, <http://www.mosaiquefm.net/fr/index/a/ActuDetail/Element/24610-abou-iyadh-appelle-les-cheikhs-a-soutenir-les-jeunes-salafistes>.

25. “SITE: Qaeda Warns Tunisia Salafists of Government Provocations,” AFP, May 19, 2013, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/05/19/SITE-Qaeda-warns-Tunisia-Salafists-of-government-provocations.html>.

26. For a discussion of Ennahda’s strategy toward salafists, see Kevin Casey, “A Crumbling Salafi Strategy,” *Sada*, August 21, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2013/08/21/crumbling-salafi-strategy/gjkq>.

27. Tunisian security forces have been engaged in an ongoing clash with jihadi militants along the Algerian border in the Chaambi Mountains since January 2013. As of August 2013 at least 10 Tunisian soldiers have been killed and 24 wounded in violence connected to the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade, which has alleged links to AQIM and is said to include Algerians as well as Tunisians. For analysis of potential links between Ansar al Shari’a and Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigades, see Andrew Lebovich, “Confronting Tunisia’s Jihadists,” *Foreign Policy*, May 16, 2013, [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/16/confronting\\_tunisian\\_jihadists](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/16/confronting_tunisian_jihadists).

28. Tunisian Prime Minister Ali Larayedh offered his resignation in favor of a caretaker government if that would “solve the problem” of jihadi threats destabilizing the government.

29. Fizazi is one of Morocco’s leading proponents of jihadi-salafism.

30. For the text of the letter, see “Mohammed El Fazazi’s Letter: ‘Germany Is No Battle Zone,’” *Der Spiegel*, October 29, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/>

[world/mohammed-el-fazazi-s-letter-germany-is-no-battle-zone-a-658103.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/mohammed-el-fazazi-s-letter-germany-is-no-battle-zone-a-658103.html).

31. See Siham Ali, “Salafists Take Up Politics in Morocco,” *Magharebia*, June 14, 2013, [http://magharebia.com/en\\_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/06/14/feature-04](http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/06/14/feature-04).

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