



TSAS

canadian network for research on
terrorism, security and society

Working Paper Series

No. 16-11

July 2016

Jihad in the *Jazeera*:

**Explaining The Islamic State's Growing
Insurgent Threat in Egypt**

Michael Shkolnik and Uri Marantz

Co-Directors: Daniel Hiebert, University of British Columbia
Lorne Dawson, University of Waterloo

The TSAS Working Paper Series can be found at tsas.ca/research/tsas-working-papers

The Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society

TSAS is supported as a national strategic initiative funded by **SSHRC** and **Public Safety Canada**, along with the following departments of the federal government:

- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Canadian Security Intelligence Service
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada
- Correctional Services Canada
- Defence Research and Development Canada
- Global Affairs Canada
- Security Intelligence Review Committee
- Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner

TSAS also receives financial support from several Canadian universities, including the University of British Columbia and the University of Waterloo.

Views expressed in this manuscript are those of the author(s) alone. For more information, contact the Co-directors of the Centre, Daniel Hiebert, Department of Geography, UBC (daniel.hiebert@ubc.ca) and Lorne Dawson, Department of Sociology and Legal Studies, University of Waterloo (ldawson@uwaterloo.ca).

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW | 2 |
| Greed vs. Grievance | 3 |
| Weak States & Safe Havens | 4 |
| Counterinsurgency | 7 |
| External Support | 8 |
| EXPLAINING INSURGENCY IN SINAI | 10 |
| EXPLAINING THE RISE OF WILAYAT SINAI | 13 |
| Safe Haven | 14 |
| Egyptian Counterinsurgency | 16 |
| External Support | 18 |
| POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS | 24 |
| THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS | 25 |
| CONCLUSION | 26 |
| WORKS CITED | 28 |



TSAS

canadian network for research on
terrorism, security and society

Working Paper Series

JIHAD IN THE JAZEERA:

**EXPLAINING THE ISLAMIC STATE'S GROWING INSURGENT THREAT
IN EGYPT**

Michael Shkolnik

Uri Marantz

Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University



INTRODUCTION

In the past two years, the Islamic State's affiliate in the Sinai Peninsula—Wilayat Sinai (Sinai Province)—has drastically increased both the quantity and quality of its attacks. From 2012 to 2015, militant attacks in the Sinai have increased tenfold.¹ On average, roughly 30 attacks per month occurred in 2014, quadrupling the rate of attacks in previous years. That figure increased to over 100 attacks per month on average in 2015.² Egypt's continuing struggle and inability to defeat the Wilayat Sinai-led insurgency is puzzling considering its numerical superiority, better military equipment, and extensive support from powerful countries, like the United States and Israel. Egyptian military casualties are estimated to be roughly over 700 deaths and counting—far higher than the 400 killed during the five-year Islamist insurgency in the 1990s.³ Why did Wilayat Sinai evolve to become an unprecedented challenge to the Egyptian state?

This paper argues that the onset of the 2011 Sinai insurgency is best explained by a combination of factors, from the necessary but insufficient permissive conditions of weak governance and persistent grievances to the proximate conditions of sudden regime change and radical jihadist ideology. These last two factors allowed Salafi-jihadists to exploit the security vacuum and foment a sustained insurgency. The emergence of this Islamic State-affiliated group as the most effective insurgent organization capable of inflicting mounting casualties among Egyptian security forces is best explained by three factors: the militants' ability to consolidate a safe haven in northeastern Sinai, ineffective Egyptian counterinsurgency tactics, and the securing of vital external support. While current perspectives on civil wars and insurgencies shed some light on this important process, existing theories do not fully explain why Wilayat Sinai emerged as an unparalleled threat to the Egyptian state.

The paper proceeds as follows. The first section outlines the standard scholarly explanations of civil war and insurgency outbreak. The second section briefly reviews what the literature says

1 "The Peninsular War," *The Economist*, November 14, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21678260-egypt-losing-control-sinai-peninsular-war> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

2 Since 2015, attacks in the North Sinai have occurred on a near-daily basis. See Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, "Egypt's Rising Security Threat," Washington, DC, 2015, http://timep.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Tahrir_Report_FINAL_WEB.pdf (accessed on May 10, 2016).

3 Omar Ashour, "Sinai's Stubborn Insurgency: Why Egypt Can't Win," *Foreign Affairs*, November 8, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/egypt/2015-11-08/sinai-stubborn-insurgency> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



about how insurgencies end and why some insurgent groups ultimately defeat the states they fight. The third section applies these theoretical insights to the outbreak of the Sinai insurgency in 2011 and outlines the main factors that best explain Wilayat Sinai's growing success against the Egyptian regime. This paper contributes to the literature on a poorly understood phenomenon related to why some militant groups evolve into insurgent organizations capable of launching a sustained violent campaign against the states they fight. Moreover, there are virtually no accounts that apply insights from the literature to the insurgency in Sinai. The final sections offer policy recommendations, implications for theory, and concluding remarks.⁴

LITERATURE REVIEW

Insurgencies are political-military campaigns by non-state actors to overthrow a government or secede from a country using mostly unconventional military strategies and tactics.⁵ Insurgencies tend to develop in countries with civil warlike conditions, possibly because the conditions enabling insurgencies are conceptually similar to the conditions leading to civil wars. In fact, conventional explanations for why insurgencies occur overlap with the civil war literature. There are three general theories on why civil wars occur. The first two theories stem from the "greed versus grievance" debate.⁶ The third theory relates to state weakness and institutions as a permissive condition for insurgencies and civil wars.⁷ This section also explores theories related to why some insurgent organizations thrive, with particular focus on the role of safe haven, counterinsurgency practices, and external support for militants.

4 While this working paper does not outline a comprehensive theory for insurgency development, the insights from this important case will help contribute to the formulation of a model associated with a broader dissertation (Michael Shkolnik) concerning the evolution of clandestine militant groups into full-fledged insurgent organizations. From a quantitative standpoint, the dissertation looks at why certain groups in the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) reach the PRIO Armed Conflict dataset—featuring organizations that inflict at least 25 battlefield deaths—for at least 5 years. According to PRIO, Wilayat Sinai reaches the dataset in 2014, which the broader research project would operationalize as a strategic success—the primary dependent variable.

5 For a comprehensive definition of insurgency see Central Intelligence Agency, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*, U.S. Government, Washington, DC, n.d. (1980s), released January 5, 2009: 2.

6 This debate emerged from the pioneering work of World Bank economists, primarily Collier and Hoeffler: Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "On Economic Causes of Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 50, no. 4 (1998): 563-573, and Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563-595.

7 Among others, this other causal mechanism is apparent in the work of James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75-90. Collier and colleagues follow later: Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner, "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 61 (2009): 1-27.



Greed vs. Grievance

Collier and Hoeffler (2004) consider what motivates rebels or insurgents to initiate sustained campaigns of violence against host governments. Their analysis revolves around two competing causes of civil war—greed and grievance. The “greedy rebels” argument builds off the economic literature by assuming that strategic violence in certain contexts can be a lucrative enterprise. Natural resource riches often feed this dynamic as violence-wielding opportunists loot and extort primary commodities, like oil and agriculture, and other raw materials, like minerals and gemstones.⁸ Resource wealth contributes to conflict by creating funding opportunities for rebels, making separatism financially attractive for resource-rich regions, and whetting rebel appetites to capture the “prize” of the state.⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, that most studies on resources and conflict find that greater levels of resource production and/or exports are correlated with higher levels of violence since the greed-based rationale for rebellion suggests there would be more opportunities for rebel predation.

The second set of theoretical arguments on civil wars and insurgencies stems from the role of “grievances”.¹⁰ Collier and Hoeffler (2004) outline four ways of measuring objective grievances: ethnic or religious hatred, political repression, political exclusion, and economic inequality. Ethnic conflicts are theorized to be the most violent and least amenable to resolution since ethnic ties are more durable and emotional than other forms of social cohesion, but the evidence is mixed as to whether homogeneous or diverse societies are associated with more conflict.¹¹ Political repression and exclusion are often proxied in the literature by regime type and suggest that the likelihood of violence is parabolic, peaking with mixed and democratizing regimes because

8 Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and Cameron Thies, “Resource Curse in Reverse: How Civil Wars Influence Natural Resource Production,” *International Interactions* 38, no. 2 (2012): 218-242, and Vally Koubi, Gabriele Spilker, Tobias Böhmelt, and Thomas Bernauer, “Do Natural Resources Matter for Interstate and Intrastate Armed Conflict?” *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 2 (2014): 227-243.

9 Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), and Michael L. Ross, “A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006): 265-300.

10 The extensive literature on societal grievances emerged from influential theorists in sociology and political science, like Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), and Charles L. Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (New York, NY: Random House, 1978).

11 Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); David Carment and Patrick James, “Internal Constraints and Interstate Ethnic Conflict: Toward a Crisis-based Assessment of Irredentism,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39, no. 1 (1995): 82-109; Stephen M. Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001).



of instability and uncertainty but low in democracies and dictatorships.¹² Finally, economic inequality is fundamentally about the misallocation of finite resources in society: if control over a particular resource is monopolized or unfairly distributed, especially along ethnic or identity-based cleavages, then grievances may manifest as violent conflict.¹³ When these grievances interact in unpredictable ways and generate irreconcilable demands, they can motivate rebel groups to launch insurgencies.

Weak States & Safe Havens

Fearon and Laitin (2003) challenge Collier et al.'s (1998; 2004; 2009) assumptions and techniques but agree that a third set of arguments about weak states favour insurgencies. Weak governments lack the financial, organizational, political, or military capabilities to successfully prevent or defeat insurgencies. Insurgencies are encouraged by shoddy policing practices and inept or corrupt counterinsurgency tactics, which typically include brutal and indiscriminate retaliation and drive non-combatants toward rebels. Furthermore, weak states result from several conditions associated with "rentierism." States that generate their revenues from natural resource rents are known in the literature as "rentier" states and are often associated with dysfunction.¹⁴ Rentier states lack the bureaucratic infrastructure to tax their citizens and provide basic services, in effect abrogating the social contract between the state and its citizens.¹⁵ Weak social structures and unrepresentative political institutions are the result, which ultimately lower a government's capacity to respond effectively to public demands.¹⁶ Rents from natural resources prop up regimes and enable weak, corrupt, and unaccountable governments to hold onto power, but rents can be derived from international sources too. Egypt itself derives large revenues from international rents, including oil and natural gas exports, economic aid and assistance, military

12 For an early work on this intuitive empirical relationship, see Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security* 20, no. 5 (1995): 5-38.

13 Katharina Wick and Erwin Bulte, "Contesting Resources: Rent Seeking, Conflict, and the Natural Resource Curse," *Public Choice* 128, no. 3-4 (2006): 457-476.

14 Hossein Mahdavy, "The Pattern and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran," In *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, edited by M. A. Cook (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1970); Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World." In *The Arab State*, edited by Giacomo Luciani (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

15 Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); Ragnar Torvik, "Natural Resources, Rent Seeking, and Welfare," *Journal of Development Economics* 67, no. 2 (2002): 455-470.

16 Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," 2003; Richard Snyder and Ravi Bhavnani, "Diamonds, Blood, and Taxes: A Revenue-Centered Framework for Explaining Political Order," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 4 (2005): 563-597.



aid, worker remittances, and tourism revenues.¹⁷

Similar to the weak states logic outlined in the civil war literature, the role of safe havens for militant activity is described and debated extensively in the insurgency literature.¹⁸ Prominent research shows that fragile and failing states provide easier access for militant organizations to operate.¹⁹ Safe havens allow insurgents to plan more effectively, build training camps, enhance recruitment, and increase fundraising opportunities.²⁰ Safe havens have also been strongly associated with increased lethality among militant groups, an important measure of operationalizing success throughout an insurgent campaign.²¹ Some scholars argue that militant safe havens emerge as a direct function of state capacity, and the level of economic development influences rebel strategies.²² According to these perspectives, poor states provide militant groups with the opportunity to seize territory and engage in rural guerrilla warfare, while states with intermediate levels of development force militant groups to operate clandestinely—generally in urban contexts. States lacking the capacity to adequately police their territories are likely to become safe havens for militants that engage in higher levels of transnational terrorist attacks.²³ While low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita has been shown to serve as the most robust predictor of civil war onset, the logic underpinning this relationship is not fully understood.²⁴ Kalyvas (2003) argues that low GDP per capita may reflect the inability of weak states to control and distribute goods to peripheral areas, providing militants with the opportunity to supplant the

17 Matthew J. Costello, "Rentierism and Political Insurgency: A Cross-National Analysis of Transnational Rent Dependency of Terrorism and Guerrilla Warfare," PhD Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2012.

18 There are three broad types of safe haven. Internal sanctuary within the borders of the country where the insurgency primarily occurs, external voluntary sanctuary which tends to be offered by a willing neighboring country or non-state actor, and external involuntary sanctuary in a neighboring country or territory where safe haven is provided unwittingly. Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010): Appendix.

19 James A. Piazza, "Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?" *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2008): 469-488.

20 Luis de la Calle and Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenza, "Rebels Without a Territory: An Analysis of Nonterritorial Conflicts in the World," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 4 (2012): 580-603; Daniel Byman, "Understanding Proto-Insurgencies," RAND (2007): 1-57.

21 Daniel Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001; Victor Asal and R. Karl Rethemeyer, "The Nature of the Beast: Organizational Structures and the Lethality of Terrorist Attacks," *Journal of Politics* 70, no. 2 (2008): 437-449.

22 Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Calle and Sanchez-Cuenza, "Rebels Without a Territory," 2012.

23 Brian Lai, "Draining the Swamp: An Empirical Examination of the Production of International Terrorism, 1968-1998," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 24, no. 4 (2007): 297-310.

24 Havard Hegre and Nicholas Sambanis, "Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 4 (2006): 508-535.



state.²⁵ While “ungoverned” territories usually refer to areas that are outside central government control, it is important to stress that these territories are often “governed” by non-state forms of social and political organization—such as the traditional tribal system.²⁶ Especially since they are often overlooked, these non-state actors may end up providing active support or fertile recruiting grounds for nascent insurgencies.

Geographic and social environments also contribute to the formation of safe havens. Some scholars argue that rough or mountainous terrain allows militants to evade security forces and inhibits counterinsurgents’ ability to operate while others find no systematic support for the role of rough terrain on insurgent movement success.²⁷ Rough terrain also might prevent insurgents from accessing the broader urban population and fomenting a wider revolution.²⁸ Others discount the role of terrain and argue that distance from the center of the target state is important, as states face increasing difficulty projecting power the farther the insurgency is located from the capital.²⁹ It is likely that militant organizations seek to set up bases of operation in areas that offer the best comparative advantage to launch an insurgency. Several factors attract insurgent groups to consolidate bases of operation in certain areas. Regions that host sympathetic ethnic or religious communities and areas that provide economic opportunities for survival and expansion offer important advantages for militant groups seeking refuge, recruitment, and finances.³⁰ The interaction between rough terrain and border areas also attract militants for a variety of reasons. For example, the tri-border area in Latin America is a notorious safe haven that enables Hezbollah to engage in illicit financial and smuggling operations on the border with Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. The porous, rugged terrain hosts a large Lebanese diaspora and has minimal law

25 Stathis N. Kalyvas, “The Ontology of “Political Violence”: Action and Identity in Civil War,” *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 475-494.

26 Stewart Patrick, “‘Failed’ States and Global Security: Empirical Questions and Policy Dilemmas,” *International Studies Review* 9, no. 4 (2007): 644-662.

27 Fearon and Laitin (2003) argue that rough terrain facilitates insurgency and makes civil war more probable; however, a notable and systematic study of insurgency outcomes found no significant support for rough or mountainous terrain. See Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson III, “Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars,” *International Organization* 63, (2009): 67-106. It is important to note that the quantitative literature on terrain and conflict depends on structural, country-characteristic data and does not explore the specific interaction between rebel groups operating in rough terrain and their subnational geopolitical effects.

28 Thomas J. Moriarty, “The Vanguard’s Dilemma: Understanding and Exploiting Insurgent Strategies,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 3 (2010): 476-497.

29 Sebastian Schutte, “Geography, Outcome, and Casualties: A Unified Model of Insurgency,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 6 (2014): 1-28.

30 Rem Korteweg, “Black Holes: On Terrorist Sanctuaries and Governmental Weakness,” *Civil War* 10, no. 1 (2008): 60-71.



enforcement, allowing Hezbollah to consolidate bases of operation for logistics, financing, and planning attacks on Israeli/Jewish targets.³¹ Despite nuanced debate, consolidating some form of safe haven is crucial to initiating and sustaining insurgent operations.

Counterinsurgency

The literature focusing on how insurgencies end and why some insurgents ultimately defeat states sheds some light on the main factors that enable militant groups to evolve into insurgent organizations capable of posing a serious challenge to the state. Lyall and Wilson III (2009) demonstrate that states have been increasingly less likely to overcome insurgents decisively since World War I because modern militaries adopted highly mechanized force structures that diminished the ability to gather critical intelligence from the population.³² Modern militaries thus face increasing difficulty in discerning between insurgents and civilians, thereby contributing to insurgent organizational recruitment. Other scholars explain why weak insurgents emerge victorious based on the strategic interaction between the state and the insurgent group. Arreguin-Toft argues that weaker forces can make up for their deficiencies by using the opposite strategy of the enemy.³³ Indiscriminate and harsh state responses against nascent insurgencies are often the most important factors that encourage insurgencies to flourish.³⁴

There is no single formula for conducting successful counterinsurgency, as much of the scholarly literature argues that each case requires a unique set of tactics, and lessons learned from historical examples are difficult to apply to contemporary insurgencies.³⁵ However, relatively successful counterinsurgency would ideally rely on the highly discriminate use of violence against insurgents coupled with the provision of various public goods to the civilian population.³⁶ States that rely primarily on brute force to counter insurgencies are largely unsuccessful

31 Louise I. Shelley and John T. Picarelli, "Methods and Motive: Exploring Links Between Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism," *Trends in Organized Crime* 9, no. 2 (2005): 60.

32 Lyall and Wilson III, "Rage Against the Machines," 2009.

33 Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

34 Kelly M. Greenhill and Paul Staniland, "Ten Ways to Lose at Counterinsurgency," *Civil Wars* 9, no. 4 (2007): 402-419; Byman, "Understanding Proto-Insurgencies," 2007.

35 Greenhill and Staniland, "Ten Ways to Lose at Counterinsurgency," 2007.

36 Daniel Branch and Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Revisiting Counterinsurgency," *Politics and Society* 38, no. 1 (2010): 3-14.



and often drive neutral members of the population into insurgents' ranks.³⁷ Since insurgencies are largely political phenomena, core grievances need to be addressed to avoid further alienating the targeted population and driving new recruits into insurgent ranks. As the U.S. government counterinsurgency guide states: "unlike conventional warfare, non-military means are often the most effective elements, with military forces playing an enabling role."³⁸ Moreover, intelligence that differentiates between active insurgents and civilians is vital in successful counterinsurgency campaigns. However, effectively discriminating between active combatants and non-combatants is inherently difficult, particularly if militants actively blend into the civilian population in order to avoid detection and provoke civilian collateral damage. Byman (2008) argues that one of the most efficient ways to mitigate a nascent insurrection from fomenting into a full-blown insurgency is through in-group policing. Even if efficient counterinsurgency practices are utilized, powerful external support for the insurgent organization can stifle the state's campaign.

External Support

State sponsorship and external support for insurgencies are strong indicators of an insurgent group's ability to ultimately defeat the state.³⁹ In a study of 89 prominent insurgencies, Connable and Libicki (2010) found that groups with state sponsorship achieved their objectives at a 2:1 ratio among the cases studied.⁴⁰ The study also finds that the withdrawal of outside state support diminishes an insurgent group's ability to wage violent campaigns and contributes to the increased likelihood that a group is defeated. While some have argued that state sponsorship may inhibit insurgent groups by prioritizing the state's interests, support from an external state is still one of the more robust indicators correlated with insurgent success. Outside support is important to mobilize resources for insurgent organizations and is most critical during the early phases of an insurgency. As Byman et al. (2001) note, "insurgents seek externally what they cannot acquire internally: One movement may need a haven; another, weapons; and third, political sup-

37 Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 2006; Luke N. Condra and Jacob N. Shapiro, "Who Takes the Blame? The Strategic Effects of Collateral Damage", *American Journal of Political Science* 56 no. 1 (2012): 167-187.

38 Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, "U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide," U.S. Department of State, 2009: 2, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

39 Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010).

40 For more on the main factors associated with how insurgencies end see Connable and Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, 2010.

port.”⁴¹ Outside assistance can also help a group defeat its rivals within an overall movement or broader constituency. Iran’s crucial support for Hezbollah in the early 1980s, for example, helped the Lebanese group overshadow its rival Amal and evolve into a dominant insurgent force.⁴² In addition to states, external insurgent organizations can offer critical forms of support and guidance.

The scholarly literature provides evidence that militant groups with strong relationships to other militant groups are more lethal.⁴³ Horowitz and Potter (2014) build off this insight and demonstrate that the quality of alliances is a better predictor of militant group lethality than quantity. According to their study, forging alliances with the strongest node of a larger network provides more benefits than maintaining multiple relationships with peripheral or less influential external groups.⁴⁴ Similar to the logic behind state-sponsorship of insurgent groups, alliances with external militant groups can improve the capacity of both parties. Relationships with states and other insurgent organizations help a group gain tactical insights, new technologies, joint training, and weaponry. Even if allied insurgent groups differ considerably in ideology—or are even in conflict with one another—tactical cooperation in the short-run often outweighs perceived costs of violating organizational values.⁴⁵ Notable examples of unlikely allies include Hamas and Hezbollah, Palestinian militants and leftist terrorist groups, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA).⁴⁶ Collaboration is often required to facilitate knowledge transfer and expertise, especially with respect to assembling and deploying sophisticated weapons systems or constructing powerful explosive devices. While the scholarly literature offers important theories on why civil wars begin and how insurgent groups ultimately win, several insights are particularly relevant in explaining the evolution of Wilayat Sinai as an exceptional threat to the Egyptian military.

41 Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, 2001: 104.

42 Marc R. DeVore, “Exploring the Iran-Hezbollah Relationship: A Case Study of How State Sponsorship Affects Group Decision-Making,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 4 (2012): 85-107.

43 Asal and Rethemeyer, “The Nature of the Beast,” 2008.

44 Michael C. Horowitz and Philip B. K. Potter, “Allying to Kill: Terrorist Intergroup Cooperation and the Consequences for Lethality,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58, no.2 (2014): 199-225.

45 Ibid.

46 Roi Kais, “Hamas: ‘There is Always Cooperation’ With Iran, Hezbollah,” *YNet News*, July 12, 2014, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-4542067.00.html> (accessed on May 10, 2016); Steven Morris, “IRA’s Links With FARC and ETA Revealed,” *The Guardian*, August 25 2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2001/aug/25/spain.northernireland> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



EXPLAINING INSURGENCY IN SINAI

The following section applies theoretical insights to the Egyptian case, moving through the permissive and proximate conditions that accelerated the insurgency. There is little support for a greed-based mechanism in the case of Egypt's Bedouin population. Natural resources and primary commodity exports make up a negligible component of the Bedouin's economic profile. While Egypt has been exporting oil and natural gas for decades, they are simply not "lootable" in the same way Nigerian militants hack into pipelines to steal, refine, and sell their own crude oil abroad.⁴⁷ Sinai-based militants motivated by ideology have attacked the natural gas pipelines to Israel at least 30 times since the beginning of 2011 and the regime transition following Mubarak's fall from power.⁴⁸ However, this activity resembles more of a tactical ploy to deter foreign investment and weaken Egyptian control and morale in the region than rebel looting to finance an insurgency. At the same time, Bedouin traders excluded from the formal economy have found creative ways to profit from a fractious security situation across the border in the Gaza Strip and Israel. Black markets and transnational crime have emerged in the smuggling of drugs and narcotics, small arms and weapons transfers, human trafficking, the kidnapping and ransoming of migrants, and other economic opportunities.⁴⁹ Interestingly, intra-ethnic competition over illicit profits has been circumvented as tribes in the north dominate tunnel smuggling and southern tribes specialize in the overland trafficking routes. An underground economy upwards of \$300 million has effectively been parcelled out by geography.⁵⁰ In contrast to the greed narrative, the causes of insurgency in Egypt must be found elsewhere since they did not originate in the loot-

47 This illegal economic activity is known as bunkering and accounts for nearly 10% of Nigerian oil production, or \$1 billion USD a year. It is notoriously difficult to prevent in the Niger Delta, where the crude is sweet and easy to refine, looting costs are low, resale profits are high, local communities are marginalized, ethnic groups are unrepresented, and tens of thousands of kilometres of pipeline are difficult to protect. See Sarah Berger, "Nigerian Army Uncovers Massive Illegal Oil Bunkering Site," *International Business Times*, September 3, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/nigerian-army-uncovers-massive-illegal-oil-bunkering-site-2082541> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

48 See "Egypt Jihadists Claim Attack on Pipeline to Jordan," *Yahoo News*, January 19, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/egypt-jihadists-claim-attack-sinai-pipeline-jordan-205846613.html?ref=gs> (accessed on May 10, 2016), and Riccardo Dugulin, "Several Industries Hit by Conflict in the Sinai Peninsula," *Global Risk Insights*, August 2, 2015, <http://globalriskinsights.com/2015/08/several-industries-hit-by-conflict-in-the-sinai-peninsula/> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

49 It should be noted that these illegal markets predated the black market activity that arose following the Egyptian-Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip as a result of the Hamas coup in 2007, which consisted of underground smuggling in staples and other goods in short supply, like food, fuel, construction materials, and weapons. See Zachary Laub, "Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Security," *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 12, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/egypt/egypts-sinai-peninsula-security/p32055> (accessed on May 10, 2016), and Ashour, "Sinai's Stubborn Insurgency," 2015.

50 Ehud Yaari, "Sinai: A New Front," *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, January 2012: 10, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/sinai-a-new-front> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



ing of natural resources or revenues derived from criminal activities.

There is substantial evidence to suggest that grievances contribute to the Sinai insurgency. Although the Sinai Bedouin people are Sunni Muslim Arabs, just like the rest of mainstream Egyptian society, their ethnic exclusion likely originates from their traditionally nomadic lifestyles and closer historical and cultural ties to the Levant and Arabian Peninsula.⁵¹ Aside from the corrupt and undemocratic regime in Egypt, the Bedouin's political marginalization is partly explained by the memory of Israel's presence in the Sinai from 1967–1982. Many in Cairo perceive the Bedouin as collaborators of Israel's occupation and view them as a "potential fifth column."⁵² Economically, the Bedouin were excluded from tourism and energy development projects led by long-time president, Hosni Mubarak, and investment was diverted from badly needed schools and hospitals in the underdeveloped North to villas for tourists in the resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh in the sparsely populated south.⁵³ Recruit-ready youths among Sinai's Bedouin population disproportionately feed into the problem of rebel recruitment: national youth unemployment was just over 34% in 2013, and these figures are no doubt higher in an economically neglected region like the Sinai.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the central government encouraged labour migration to Sinai, giving internal migrants preferential access to land and jobs while denying basic public services like running water and property rights to the native Bedouin.⁵⁵ All these factors suggest the Bedouin had longstanding grievances with the Egyptian state that served as permissive conditions for greater instability post-chaos in 2011.

51 Sarah El-Rashidi, "Egypt's Sinai Bedouins Cry Out," *Ahram Online*, September 29, 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/1/54170/Egypt/Egypt-Sinai-Bedouins-cry-out.aspx> (accessed on May 10, 2016); Laub, "Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Security," 2013.

52 Nicolas Pelham, "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes," Chatham House, September 2012, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/186061> (accessed on May 10, 2016); Omar Ashour, "Enduring Repression and Insurgency in Egypt's Sinai," Chatham House, August 14, 2015, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/enduring-repression-and-insurgency-egypts-sinai> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

53 Amr Yossef, "Securing the Sinai: More Troops Won't Keep the Peace or Save the Egyptian-Israeli Relationship," *Foreign Affairs*, September 28, 2011, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2011-09-28/securing-sinai> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

54 Zack Gold, "Sinai Security: Opportunities for Unlikely Cooperation Among Egypt, Israel, and Hamas," *Brookings*, October 22, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2013/10/22-sinai-hamas-egypt-israel-gold> (accessed on May 10, 2016); Jeremy M. Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, February 25, 2016: 5, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

55 Lina Attalah and Heba Afify, "Sinai: States of Fear," *Mada Masr*, February 28, 2015, <http://www.madamasr.com/news/politics/sinai-states-fear> (accessed on May 10, 2016); Hebatalla Taha, "Insecurity in the Sinai Peninsula," *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, May 19, 2015, <https://www.iiss.org/en/iiss%20voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2015-dda3/may-d09d/insecurity-and-the-sinai-peninsula-986e> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



There is also ample evidence that the weakness of the Egyptian state explains, in part, the rise of the Sinai insurgency. Egypt's reliance on rent-based revenues contributed to its dysfunctional governance and institutions, rendering it particularly vulnerable to social disaffection and political violence. Egypt is the largest oil producer in Africa outside of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the second-largest natural gas producer, and it derives significant revenue from commerce and transportation passing through the Suez Canal.⁵⁶ Recently, the largest-ever natural gas field in the Mediterranean was discovered off the coast of Egypt, a source of future revenue that may prove to be more of a "resource curse" than blessing if past threats to Egypt's energy export revenues from Sinai insurgents go unaddressed.⁵⁷ A recent congressional report found that Egypt received \$76 billion in bilateral foreign aid from the US between 1948 and 2015.⁵⁸ The tourism sector is also substantial for Egypt; after creating special tourist districts with lower fees and fewer taxes, the state collected nearly one-fifth of its revenue from tourism in the years before the fall of Mubarak in 2011.⁵⁹ Egyptian tourism revenues, an important source of foreign currency for the country, have nearly halved from \$13 billion in 2010 to \$8 billion in 2015.⁶⁰ Egypt's reliance on internal and external rent-generating mechanisms indicate weak governance over its people and in particular the Sinai region.

Importantly, the Bedouin's grievances and Egypt's weak state capacity are essentially equally permissive conditions for insurgency; but they do not explain why an insurgency began when it did or why the Islamic State-affiliated Sinai Province rose to prominence. For decades, internal tribal divisions within the Bedouin community precluded their effective mobilization and uprising. Instead, more proximate conditions explain these outcomes: radical jihadist ideology and

56 International Energy Agency, "Egypt," 2016, <https://www.iea.org/countries/non-membercountries/egypt/> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

57 Adel Abdel Ghafar, "Egypt's New Gas Discovery: Opportunities and Challenges," Brookings, September 10, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2015/09/10-egypt-gas-discovery-abdelghafar> (accessed on May 10, 2016); Associated Press, "Vast Reserves of Natural Gas Found Off the Coast of Egypt," New York Times, August 30, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/31/business-energy-environment/vast-reserves-of-natural-gas-found-off-the-coast-of-egypt.html> (accessed on May 10, 2016); Firas Abi Ali, "Egypt's Stability Threatened by Militants in Three-to-Seven Year Outlook with Energy, Infrastructure, and State Assets Key Targets," IHS Jane's 360, May 31, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/51899/egypt-s-stability-threatened-by-militants-in-three-to-seven-year-outlook-with-energy-infrastructure-and-state-assets-key-targets> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

58 This makes Egypt the second-largest recipient of US military and economic aid. See Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," 2016: 13.

59 Thomas Richter and Christian Steiner, "Politics, Economics and Tourism Development in Egypt: Insights into the Sectoral Transformations of a Neo-Patrimonial Rentier State," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 5 (2009): 939-959.

60 Heba Saleh and Aliya Ram, "Egypt's Tourist Industry Counts the Cost of Terrorism Fears," *Financial Times*, November 7, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b519e56e-83bd-11e5-8095-ed1a37d1e096.html> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



disorderly regime transition. The influx of Salafi-inspired jihadist radicalism into the Sinai Peninsula provided a cohesive framework for the Bedouin to unite around and reduce their collective action problems. Another critical proximate condition for insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula is the regime turnover and instability that followed the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.⁶¹ The popular discontent and political uncertainty that emerged from the Arab Spring revolutions across the Middle East gave militants operating in Sinai a window of opportunity to expand their operational presence that would not have existed otherwise.⁶² Armed groups were able to challenge the demilitarized status quo between Egypt and Israel that existed since 1979, deepen ties with Hamas in Gaza, and launch attacks against undertrained and underequipped security forces in Sinai.⁶³ The interregnum following Mubarak's rule and the interlude of the Muslim Brotherhood's reign with Mohammad Morsi from 2012–2013 further contributed to the confusion. Since Abdel Fatah el-Sisi assumed power in 2014, Egypt continues to struggle to reassert its authority and restore confidence in its governance in the Sinai.⁶⁴ These proximate factors interacted with the permissive conditions outlined to accelerate the insurgency and enable Wilayat Sinai to rise to prominence.

EXPLAINING THE RISE OF WILAYAT SINAI

From 2004 until the fall of the Mubarak regime in 2011, attacks emanating from the Sinai were primarily focused on soft targets and civilians. Since 2011, however, an increasingly structured insurgency developed as militants began to focus on striking military and security targets. Egyptian military casualties are difficult to confirm, but estimates hover above 700 deaths and counting—far higher than the 400 killed during the five-year Islamist insurgency in the 1990s.⁶⁵ By 2010, jihadists in the Sinai reorganized and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), later known as

61 Michael E. Brown, ed., *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 1996); Daniel Byman and Stephen Van Evera, "Why They Fight: Hypotheses on the Causes of Contemporary Deadly Conflict," *Security Studies* 7, no. 3 (1998): 1-50.

62 Kirsten Henderson and Rajat Ganguly, "Mubarak's Fall in Egypt: How and Why Did It Happen?" *Strategic Analysis* 39, no. 1 (2015); Toby Dershowitz, "Political Instability in Egypt," *Foundation for Defence of Democracies*, April 2013, <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/political-instability-in-egypt/> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

63 Gold, "Sinai Security," 2013; Laub, "Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Security," 2013.

64 Eric Trager, "Egypt's Durable Misery: Why Sisi's Regime is Stable," *Foreign Affairs*, July 21, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/egypt/2015-07-21/egypts-durable-misery> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

65 Ashour, "Sinai's Stubborn Insurgency," 2015.



Wilayat Sinai, emerged as the most powerful and active militant group in the Peninsula. The remainder of this paper is devoted to explaining why Wilayat Sinai has become an unprecedented challenge to the Egyptian state.⁶⁶ First, consolidating insurgent safe havens in north-eastern Sinai allowed militants to establish a stable base of operations and increase recruitment through ideological indoctrination and the provision of social services. Second, poor Egyptian counterinsurgency efforts further alienated the Bedouin community and enhanced militant group recruitment. Finally, by strengthening ties with Palestinian militant organizations in the Gaza Strip—mainly Hamas’ armed wing—and becoming a formal province of the Islamic State, Wilayat Sinai secured crucial forms of external support. These factors are mutually reinforcing and operate simultaneously, contributing to Wilayat Sinai’s emergence as an unparalleled and growing threat to the Egyptian regime.

Safe Haven

Despite nuanced debates in the literature, it is clear that some form of sanctuary or safe haven is necessary for insurgent organizations to thrive. Some of the main structural attributes describing attractive militant safe havens above characterize areas in the Sinai Peninsula that have enabled Bedouin fighters to operate freely over the last decade. The Sinai Peninsula is desert and mountain terrain, located on Egypt’s eastern periphery, and geographically isolated from the Egyptian mainland by the Suez Canal.⁶⁷ The vast, rugged desert terrain in the Sinai renders the transportation, deployment, and maintenance of stationary military forces as prohibitive as mountains or forests in other countries with insurgencies. However, most of the high mountains are located in the southern half of the Peninsula—not in Wilayat Sinai’s core territorial stronghold in northeastern Sinai.⁶⁸ Though rugged terrain is not a factor in the group’s success, the central government’s distance from the insurgents’ stronghold plays an important role in Egypt’s

66 A different IS affiliate—IS-Misr (Islamic State in Egypt) has emerged recently and operates clandestinely in Cairo. While attacks in Cairo are sometimes attributed broadly to the Islamic State, it is sometimes unclear which affiliate directly facilitated or carried out the operation. The Islamic State’s connection with its affiliates and provinces is complex and is beyond the scope of this paper’s analysis. Nevertheless, this section focuses exclusively on Wilayat Sinai (by far the largest, most powerful, and most active insurgent organization) not on other militant groups operating in Sinai or other parts of Egypt.

67 For context, 550,000 people (0.7% of Egypt’s population)—primarily nomadic Bedouin—inhabit the sparsely populated North and South Sinai which comprises 6% of Egypt’s total landmass. See Laub, “Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula and Security,” 2013.

68 New World Encyclopedia, “Sinai Peninsula,” July 6, 2015, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Sinai_Peninsula (accessed on May 10, 2016).



inability to project force to its periphery. Moreover, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979 demilitarized the Sinai Peninsula, which contributed to a weak military presence for decades.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the insurgents' stronghold is in close proximity to Israel and Gaza, enabling critical cross-border smuggling opportunities that help finance the insurgency and strengthen relationships with Palestinian militants. It is increasingly clear that Egypt's military now considers Wilayat Sinai's stronghold a no-go zone.

Despite several attacks on soft targets including civilians and gas pipelines, the vast majority of jihadist attacks from 2012 until today targeted Egyptian military and security forces located on the coastal road between Rafah and el-Arish.⁷⁰ The high geographic concentration of these attacks reflects the proximity of Wilayat Sinai's primary stronghold in the northeast of the Peninsula. Wilayat Sinai has shown an ability to maintain territorial control of the Moqataa and Mehdiya areas.⁷¹ The organization also continues to enforce checkpoints in the areas of El-Arish, Sheikh Zuweid, and Rafah.⁷² Though securing a stable safe haven for long term operations requires more than brute force and a physical presence, deep connections with the local population is crucial. Some observers believe the decline of traditional tribal structures and the increasing embrace of Salafist ideology is helping to fuel militancy among segments of the Bedouin population.⁷³ By exploiting legitimate local grievances and shaping an emerging identity among Bedouin youth, Wilayat Sinai and its precursor were able to further radicalize individuals and garner dedicated recruits. More importantly, the precursor to Wilayat Sinai embarked on an extensive social services program similar to efforts by al-Qaeda affiliates to integrate into local populations and solidify support. According to high quality propaganda, Wilayat Sinai markets itself as an effective substitute to the state, by distributing food and financial assistance to the local population and

69 For a map of the Sinai Peninsula's demilitarized zones, see the Multinational Force & Observers website, set up to supervise the implementation and security provisions of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and prevent any violation of its terms at <http://mfo.org/en/sinai> (accessed March 7, 2016). Also see the Yale Law School's archived "Peace Treaty Between Israel and Egypt," signed on March 26, 1979, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/isregypt.asp (accessed May 10, 2016).

70 Ashour, "Sinai's Stubborn Insurgency," 2015.

71 Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, "Egypt's Rising Security Threat," 2015.

72 Omar Ashour, "Sinai's Tragedy: Between Brutal Repression and Armed Insurgency," Middle East Eye, March 7, 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/sinai-s-tragedy-between-brutal-repression-and-armed-insurgency-1552693351> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

73 Yaakov Lapin, "Sinai's Resilient Insurgency," IHS Jane's 360, July 16, 2015. <http://www.janes.com/article/53024/sinai-s-resilient-insurgency> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



investing in efforts to counter drug trafficking.⁷⁴ It also helps families who suffered during the military's "home demolition" campaigns.⁷⁵ With the help of ongoing ideological indoctrination and the dissemination of jihadist propaganda, Wilayat Sinai has proved capable of enhancing organizational cohesion and control of a critical safe haven.⁷⁶

Egyptian Counterinsurgency

Egypt's counterinsurgency efforts have proved counterproductive, producing significant collateral damage, higher insurgent recruitment, and little effort to win "hearts and minds." Egypt's historically indiscriminate counterinsurgency strategy was devoted to essentially repressing an entire population that the regime perceived was hostile. During previous crack-downs on militants throughout the 2000s, the regime engaged in brutal tactics, including torture, extrajudicial killings, house demolitions, and forced evacuations. Decades of discrimination against the Bedouin and indiscriminate counterinsurgency tactics preclude critical cooperation with the state against the militants. More importantly, there is no concrete effort to promote development projects in the Sinai and enhance the Bedouin community's socioeconomic status. In fact, the Egyptian regime is engaging in draconian measures in a bid to stifle the instability, which will further alienate the broader Sinai population. For example, more than 5,000 homes have been destroyed to create a buffer zone along the Gaza border. Most of the destroyed homes were located in eastern Rafah, but some were located in Sheikh Zuweid—far from the border—indicative of collective punishment for the families of suspected militants. It is therefore not surprising that the regime is failing to recruit and arm tribal fighters to help counter the jihadist insurgency.⁷⁷ Insurgencies are essentially a contest for the loyalty of the largely uncommitted

74 Propaganda and media battles are a vital front of insurgency warfare; however, this paper does not explore the relationship further, considering its impact secondary to the other factors described throughout the analysis. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Wilayat Sinai is, by most accounts, more effective than the Egyptian regime in the propaganda war. See Zack Gold, "One Year of the Islamic State in the Sinai Peninsula," Institute for National Security Studies, October 25, 2015, <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=10852> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

75 Ashour, "Sinai's Tragedy," 2016.

76 Staniland (2012) argues that militant groups founded on strong socio-institutional ties are capable of allocating resources effectively and improving organizational cohesion. See Paul Staniland, "Organizing Insurgency: Networks, Resources, and Rebellion in South Asia," *International Security* 47, no. 1 (2012): 142-177.

77 Ahmed Aboulenein, "In Islamic State Battle, Cairo Struggles to Rally Sinai Tribes," Reuters, March 2, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-sinai-insurgency-insight-idUSKCN0W41JO> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



population to side with either the state or the insurgents.⁷⁸ Loyalty remains divided among the 300,000 residents of the northeastern Sinai population. Almost every tribe in the area has members and supporters of the insurgency and the regime. Both sides also claim support from individuals across the region's main cleavages including rural-urban, tribal, or settler-Bedouin.⁷⁹ Even though radical jihadi ideology remains unpopular among the majority of the broader Bedouin population, the brutality of the Egyptian regime precludes any progress in securing meaningful and effective collaboration with the state.

Based on the theoretical insights described earlier, the Egyptian approach to counterinsurgency in the Sinai will continue to provoke the conflict and be a major factor behind Wilayat Sinai's success. Without any attempt to shift strategy, the military continues to employ such tactics in a bid to punish the broader Bedouin population. The Egyptian Observatory for Rights and Freedoms (EORF) reported that the military detained 11,906 people, deported 26,992 and extrajudicially killed 1,347 between September 2013 and June 2015 alone.⁸⁰ The Egyptian military is failing to stifle the growing insurgency and depends on heavy-handed and counterproductive tactics to address the threat, such as utilizing aerial bombardment and heavy artillery in residential areas.⁸¹ For example, the military has relied on its fleet of Apache helicopters and has even fired Hellfire antitank missiles in densely populated villages on several occasions.⁸² Moreover, the military's containment strategy isolates the Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah regions from the rest of Sinai Peninsula; this only reinforces Wilayat Sinai's territorial control and has not reduced the number of attacks.⁸³ Egypt's increasingly deficient capabilities, poor training, and diminishing morale contribute to ongoing counterinsurgency setbacks. Some Egyptian military defectors—from all branches of the armed services including special forces—now train Wilayat Sinai oper-

78 David H. Petraeus, James F. Amos, and John A. Nagl, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007): 79-136.

79 Ian Lee, "Exclusive: ISIS in Sinai Held Back by Egypt's Bedouins," CNN, November 12, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/10/middleeast/egypt-isis-sinai-bedouins/> (accessed on May 10, 2016); Ashour, "Sinai's Tragedy," 2016.

80 Ashour, "Sinai's Stubborn Insurgency," 2015.

81 Private information from workshop in Ottawa, 2016.

82 David Schenker, "Apaches in the Sinai," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 16, 2014, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/apaches-in-the-sinai> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

83 Levantine Group, "Levantine's Data Reveals: Insurgency Escalating in Egypt's Sinai." February 9, 2016, <http://www.levantinegroup.com/#!/Levantine-Data-Reveals-Insurgency-Escalating-in-Egypt-s-Sinai/c21xo/56b9d40a0cf2b4e0b621e90a> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



atives.⁸⁴ The insurgent organization also capitalizes on Egypt's weak military performance and has successfully looted extensive caches of Egyptian military hardware and ammunition during major battles. While domestic resource mobilization fuels the ongoing insurgency, Wilayat Sinai's increasing success is augmented by external Hamas support and Islamic State sponsorship.

External Support

While Wilayat Sinai does not receive sponsorship from an United Nations-member state, the group does receive critical forms of support from both Hamas and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (IS), powerful insurgent organizations that resemble proto-states with significant territorial control and access to considerable resources. Support from Palestinian militant groups—particularly Hamas' armed wing—for Wilayat Sinai has proved critical to sustaining operations and improving the quality of attacks. Wilayat Sinai does not enjoy large diaspora or refugee support like other powerful insurgent organizations and therefore depends primarily on local mobilization and neighbouring alliances. There have been numerous reports over the past several years describing the nature of Hamas-Wilayat Sinai ties.⁸⁵ Some reports indicate that Hamas' armed wing has been transferring tens of thousands of dollars a month to Wilayat Sinai to secure arms shipments that are smuggled to Gaza through the Sinai Peninsula.⁸⁶ Weapons flowing into Gaza mainly consist of military and propellant material required for Hamas' missile production capacities. Hamas, in turn, transfers sophisticated weaponry and military equipment to Wilayat Sinai.⁸⁷ In addition to cross-border arms transfers, Hamas provides critical logistics and military training for Wilayat Sinai militants. Moreover, wounded IS operatives receive critical medical assistance in Gazan hospitals. Even when Wilayat Sinai faced difficulties transferring injured militants to

84 Jared Malsin, "Egypt is Struggling to Cope with its ISIS Insurgency," *Time*, July 23, 2015, <http://time.com/3969596/egypt-isis-sinai/> (accessed on May 10, 2016); Tom Wyke, "ISIS unveil new jihadi training camp in the Egyptian desert with recruits shown tackling assault courses and practicing military tactics with machine-guns," *The Daily Mail*, February 6, 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3434847/ISIS-unveil-new-jihadi-training-camp-Egyptian-desert-recruits-shown-tackling-assault-courses-practicing-military-tactics-machine-guns.html> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

85 Zack Gold, "Wilayat Sinai: The Islamic State's Egyptian Affiliate," in *The Islamic State: How Viable Is It?*, ed. Yoram Schweitzer and Omer Einav (Tel Aviv, Israel: Institute for National Security Studies, 2016), <http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/IslamicStateENG5.pdf> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

86 Alex Fishman, "Hamas is Funding Islamic State in Sinai," *YNet News*, December 14, 2015, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-4739234.00.html> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

87 Ehud Yaari, "Hamas and the Islamic State: Growing Cooperation in the Sinai," *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, December 15, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hamas-and-the-islamic-state-growing-cooperation-in-the-sinai> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



Gaza, Hamas dispatched professional medical teams into the Sinai. Strengthened relations between the two organizations are evident at the leadership level as well. One of the founding members of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis and now leader of Wilayat Sinai—Shadi al-Menei—has utilized sanctuary in Gaza to evade Egyptian security forces. In December 2015, al-Menei reportedly met with leaders of Hamas' armed wing to discuss solidifying coordination to a new level.⁸⁸

From Hamas' perspective, Wilayat Sinai is viewed as a major facilitator of the cross-border smuggling network in the north of Sinai, especially as the Egyptian military is actively destroying significant components of Hamas' underground tunnel infrastructure. Despite combatting its own Islamic State insurrection in Gaza, Hamas is overlooking ideological differences with Wilayat Sinai to preserve their economic lifeline. Despite the mutually beneficial relationship, some IS operatives in Sinai are expressing their disdain for ongoing ties. In February 2016, a letter written by an IS fighter in Sinai to leader Abu Bakr-Al Baghdadi was leaked, outlining the close coordination between Wilayat Sinai and Hamas.⁸⁹ In it, he argues that ties with Hamas should be prohibited since Hamas is viewed as an apostate group by IS leadership in Syria and Iraq. Nevertheless, the letter confirmed numerous areas of cooperation between both groups, including Hamas' transfer of wireless communication hubs to Wilayat Sinai in order to avoid detection by Egyptian forces.

Since the July 2013 overthrow of Muslim Brotherhood President Mohammed Morsi, the ruling Egyptian military regime has been particularly hostile to Hamas—a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot.⁹⁰ The coup also marked a new chapter in the insurgency, as many Sinai residents became suspicious and feared a return to widespread regime brutality. Even unaffiliated Bedouin began to arm themselves, allowing jihadists to exploit rising tensions by increasing recruitment.⁹¹ Violence in the Sinai skyrocketed in this period and has not returned to pre-2013 levels. While cooperation between Sinai Bedouin and Palestinian militants predates the 2011 insurgency, a new

88 Times of Israel, "Islamic State's Sinai Chief Said in Gaza to Coordinate with Hamas," December 3, 2015, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/islamic-states-sinai-chief-said-in-gaza-to-coordinate-with-hamas/> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

89 Middle East Media Research Institute, "Exclusive: Letter by ISIS Fighter to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Reveals ISIS-Sinai's Ties to Hamas," March 2, 2016, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/9051.htm> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

90 Dahlia Kholaf, "Morsi's Downfall Hammers Hamas," Al Jazeera, July 10 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/07/2013710113757741999.html> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

91 Ashour, "Sinai's Stubborn Insurgency," 2015.



era of cooperation between Hamas and Wilayat Sinai's predecessor has emerged now that both groups faced a clear mutual enemy.

Coordination with Hamas has produced noticeable improvements to Wilayat Sinai's force posture and capabilities. While sophisticated weaponry has reached the Sinai from looted Libyan depots, a large component of advanced armaments has come from the Gaza Strip.⁹² In January 2014, Wilayat Sinai's precursor shot down an Egyptian military helicopter with the Russian-made Igla SA-18. According to Israeli intelligence, that particular man-portable air defence system is unlikely to have been acquired from Libyan weapons depots.⁹³ This incident marked the first time that a militant group used a missile to down an Egyptian military aircraft. In mid-July 2015, Wilayat Sinai destroyed an Egyptian naval vessel for the first time, using a Russian Kornet anti-tank precision guided missile system.⁹⁴ The anti-tank missile is featured prominently in the arsenal of various Palestinian militant groups. This major development confirmed reports surrounding Wilayat Sinai's acquisition of the Kornet, emphasizing the importance of weapons smuggling and tactical coordination across the Sinai-Gaza border. The group has also targeted Egyptian tanks and other positions with the advanced system. Furthermore, a significant portion of the higher quality training for Wilayat Sinai operatives takes place within the Gaza Strip.⁹⁵ Even though Egypt successfully destroyed a significant portion of the commercial tunnels used for smuggling contraband and cigarettes, several of Hamas' strategic tunnels used for transferring weapons and fighters remain intact.⁹⁶ Wilayat Sinai remained resilient during this period of financial strain, diversifying external sources of support by securing the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq as its primary benefactor in 2014.

In many ways, the Islamic State in Syria/Iraq acts like a proto-state that controls territory and administers governance, with access to vast resources and a willingness to invest in other IS fran-

92 Leila Fadel, "Smuggle Libyan Weapons Flood Into Egypt," *Washington Post*, October 12, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/libyan-weapons-flooded-egypts-black-weapons-market/2011/10/12/g1QA2YQufL_story.html (accessed on May 10, 2016).

93 Lapin, "Sinai's Resilient Insurgency," 2015.

94 Jeremy Binnie, "Sinai Militants Attack Egyptian Patrol Boat," *IHS Jane's 360*, July 19, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/53070/sinai-militants-attack-egyptian-patrol-boat> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

95 Private information from workshop in Ottawa, 2016.

96 Nidal Al-Mughrabi, "Egyptian Flooding Drowns Gaza's Tunnel Business," *Reuters*, November 4, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-egypt-tunnels-idUSKCN0ST1N620151104> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



chises in the region.⁹⁷ The nature of the relationship between the Islamic State and its affiliates varies significantly. While some affiliates are relatively autonomous and primarily use the Islamic State brand to garner recruits, IS jihadists in Libya and Egypt receive significant assistance and direct orders, allowing the Islamic State to establish a critical foothold in North Africa.⁹⁸ In 2014, the Islamic State received several Ansar Bait al-Maqdis (ABM) emissaries in Syria who were seeking military assistance and tactical training.⁹⁹ Many observers, however, believe ABM's primary motivation for seeking Islamic State support was explained by the group's financial crisis.¹⁰⁰ By November of that year, most ABM factions pledged allegiance to the Islamic State's leader and self-proclaimed Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Sinai insurgent group—rebranded as Wilayat Sinai—gained a benefactor that offered immediate prestige and support, reflecting the relationship between a traditional state-sponsor and its militant proxy. As the Islamic State diverts assets to bolster a new headquarters in Libya, the IS is in a better position to dominate smuggling routes and improve assistance—including weapons transfers, funds, and personnel—to Wilayat Sinai.¹⁰¹

Wilayat Sinai, and its predecessor ABM, carried out over 400 attacks between 2012 and 2015; however, most of the highly sophisticated attacks involving large numbers of insurgents and high quality military tactics have occurred since 2014.¹⁰² At this point, Wilayat Sinai demonstrated a marked ability to utilize combined heavy and light mortar artillery, guided surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles, and high quality guerrilla operations involving well-trained sniper cover. From 2014, Wilayat Sinai significantly improved its ability to orchestrate high profile attacks in the Egyptian mainland and launch mass casualty incursions—an unprecedented development in Egypt's decades-long battle against various jihadist organizations.¹⁰³ Some of these

97 Brynjar Lia, "Understanding Jihadi Proto-States," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 no. 4 (2015): <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/441/html> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

98 Daniel Byman, "ISIS Goes Global: Fight the Islamic State by Targeting Its Affiliates," *Brookings*, February 17, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2016/02/17-islamic-state-affiliates-byman> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

99 Eric Schmitt and David D. Kirkpatrick, "Islamic State Sprouting Limbs Beyond its Base," *New York Times*, February 14, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/15/world/middleeast/islamic-state-sprouting-limbs-beyond-mideast.html> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

100 Gold, "Wilayat Sinai," 2016.

101 Harleen Gambhir, "ISIS's Campaign in Libya: January 4-February 19, 2016," *Institute for the Study of War*, February 19, 2016, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis%E2%80%99s-campaign-libya-january-4-february-19-2016> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

102 Ashour, "Sinai's Stubborn Insurgency," 2015.

103 Mohamed Soliman, "ISIS From Sinai to Paris," *Fikra Forum*, November 19, 2015, <http://fikraforum.org/?p=8134#.VttO85MrJE4> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



attacks included assassinations of senior military officers and security officials. Wilayat Sinai also began to increasingly confront the Egyptian military in the country's Western Desert—farther from its primary stronghold and base of operations in the northeast. In January 2015, Wilayat Sinai conducted multiple coordinated attacks against Egyptian security posts in three different towns, killing over 30 Egyptian security personnel.¹⁰⁴ The incident was one of the deadliest in recent years, indicating that the insurgent group was eager to escalate its confrontation with the regime. In July 2015, Wilayat Sinai launched its most audacious offensive, consisting of simultaneous attacks on over a dozen Egyptian military positions and a coordinated siege on the town of Sheikh Zuwaid. While Egyptian security forces claim that they repelled the attack—killing over 100 militants in the process—Wilayat Sinai was capable of temporarily controlling parts of the town, akin to the Islamic State's takeover of cities in Iraq.¹⁰⁵ Incorporating suicide-bombing attacks with the effective use of mortars and small arms in multi-pronged assaults resembles strategies utilized by the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. By mid-2015, Egypt endured more attacks than in the previous two years combined.¹⁰⁶ Even though some of the group's successes could be attributed to organizational learning over the years, it is clear affiliating with the Islamic State is a major factor explaining the strategic evolution of Wilayat Sinai.

In the past two years, Wilayat Sinai has been able to conduct significant mass casualty attacks every three to six months followed by waves of lighter attacks intended to spread fear among Egyptian security personnel and test defences.¹⁰⁷ These developments suggest that IS direction and technological training helped transform Wilayat Sinai into a more serious strategic threat to the Egyptian state. Knowledge transfer is being realized in the realm of improvised explosive devices (IED) construction as well, as Wilayat Sinai is executing far more sophisticated attacks, including the use of complex vehicle-borne IEDs.¹⁰⁸ In January 2016, Wilayat Sinai suc-

104 Maggie Fick and Yusri Mohamed, "Egypt's Sisi cuts short Ethiopia visit after 30 killed in Sinai," Reuters, January 30, 2015, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/01/30/egypt-violence-sinai-sisi-idINKBN0L30ST20150130> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

105 Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, "Assault in Sheikh Zuweid: A Turning Point in Egypt's Fight Against Terrorism," Washington, DC, July 2, 2015, <http://timep.org/commentary/assault-in-sheikh-zuwaid-a-turning-point-in-egypts-fight-against-terrorism/> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

106 Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, "Egypt's Rising Security Threat," 2015.

107 Levantine Group, "Levantine's Data Reveals," 2016.

108 See Conflict Armament Research, *Tracing the Supply of Components Used in Islamic State IEDs* (London, UK: Conflict Armament Research, 2016), http://www.conflictarm.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Tracing_The_Supply_of_Components_Used_in_Islamic_State_IEDs.pdf (accessed on May 10, 2016); Fatima Bhojani, "How ISIS Makes IEDS: The Supply Chain of Terrorism," Foreign Affairs, March 2, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-03-02/how-isis-makes-ieds> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



cessfully detonated dozens of IEDs targeting Egyptian security forces.¹⁰⁹ Data collected in recent months (November 2015 and January 2016) show that Wilayat Sinai continues to escalate both the quantity and quality of its attacks. The group inflicted 122 fatalities in January 2016—a sharp increase from the previous month’s tally of 51 recorded deaths.¹¹⁰

Operating under the Islamic State’s banner and direction also impacted Wilayat Sinai’s broader strategic objectives and targeting selection. While the group remains primarily focused on striking Egyptian military targets, the organization has successfully conducted several high profile attacks against international civilian targets. In July 2015, IS claimed responsibility for a car bomb in front of the Italian consulate in Cairo, which killed one person and injured several others.¹¹¹ A month later, Wilayat Sinai beheaded a Croatian worker who was kidnapped in Cairo—the first time the organization abducted and killed a foreigner.¹¹² These attacks suggest that the organization is enhancing its presence in the capital and cultivating new terrorist cells. Furthermore, Western and Russian intelligence agencies are convinced that IS was behind the October 2015 downing of a Russian commercial aircraft, which killed all 224 passengers onboard after taking off from Sharm el-Sheikh airport. Israeli intelligence reportedly shared intercepted communications with their American and British counterparts, revealing discussions between Wilayat Sinai operatives and Islamic State figures in Syria who planned the terrorist operation.¹¹³ An IS operative allegedly transferred the improvised explosive device to an EgyptAir mechanic upon learning the airline employee had a relative fighting for IS in Syria.¹¹⁴ This major development emphasizes the threat of the Islamic State’s ability to utilize its transnational networks in order to infiltrate sensitive targets and threaten critical infrastructure. These notable examples illustrate that the group is willing to divert some of its resources from the insurgency in Sinai to

109 Private information from workshop in Ottawa, 2016.

110 Levantine Group, “Levantine’s Data Reveals,” 2016.

111 While IS core claimed credit for the bombing, it is likely that Wilayat Sinai operatives facilitated the attack under IS direction. See Gold, “Wilayat Sinai,” 2016.

112 Kareem Fahim, “ISIS Affiliate in Egypt Says It Has Beheaded Croatian Prisoner,” *New York Times*, August 12, 2015, <http://www.ny-times.com/2015/08/13/world/middleeast/isis-egypt-croatian-beheading.html> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

113 Barbara Starr, Jethro Mullen, Steve Almasy, and Tim Hume, “U.S. Officials Express Growing Confidence Bomb Downed Russian Plane,” *CNN*, November 8, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/08/middleeast/russian-plane-crash-egypt-sinai/> (accessed on May 10, 2016).

114 Peter Graff, ed., “Exclusive: EgyptAir Mechanic Suspected in Russian Plane Crash,” *Reuters*, January 29, 2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-crash-suspects-idUSKCN0V712V?utm_source=twitter (accessed on May 10, 2016).



conduct terrorist attacks against foreign nationals in an effort to stifle foreign investment. With recent attacks and plots targeting prominent tourist destinations, Wilayat Sinai is also seeking to reduce important sources of revenue for the Egyptian government.¹¹⁵ Recent trends concerning Wilayat Sinai's enhanced quality of attacks and diverse target selection suggest Islamic State affiliation has enabled the Sinai-based insurgent group to become an unprecedented threat to the Egyptian state.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Some policy implications are derived from the analysis above. First, the Egyptian regime must come to terms with the fact that its military focused counterinsurgency strategy is failing and begin refocusing its efforts on political solutions. Promoting development programs in the region is vital in the battle against Wilayat Sinai. Drastic reforms are needed to improve Bedouin property rights and access to the economic benefits associated with new lucrative business ventures and tourism industries. Improving the socio-economic conditions of the Bedouin population may discourage some unaffiliated youth from joining the ranks of jihadist organizations. Restricting the financial flows to an insurgent organization is critical to stifling its operations. However, the Sinai insurgency is a complex case.

As the Egyptian military continues to target smuggling tunnels on the Sinai-Gaza border, the regime must acknowledge that many of the destroyed commercial tunnels serve as a crucial economic lifeline for many of the peninsula's inhabitants. Therefore, the Egyptian government should simultaneously target the underground infrastructure while launching economic programs and promoting investments in the Sinai Peninsula to provide economic opportunities for the local residents. Egypt should acknowledge that it is losing the battle for "hearts and minds" in the Sinai Peninsula by continuing its repressive and indiscriminate counterinsurgency campaign. Fortunately for the regime, the majority of Bedouin still remain wary of Wilayat Sinai and jihadist ideology. Concrete efforts to alleviate historic grievances among the Bedouin would enhance the military's ability to recruit and train local tribes to combat the Islamic State affiliate.

115 Henry Johnson, "Months After ISIS Attack, Egypt's Tourism Industry Still Paying the Price," *Foreign Policy*, March 1, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/01/months-after-isis-attack-egypts-tourism-industry-still-paying-the-price/> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



Egyptian counterinsurgents—with international assistance—should be cognizant of potential dilemmas associated with the Islamic State’s influence over its Sinai affiliate. After becoming an IS province, the insurgent organization increased attacks against local civilians to stifle dissent and deter defection. Whereas its predecessor, ABM, sought to avoid civilian casualties during operations and rarely targeted local civilians, Wilayat Sinai became increasingly brutal in killing suspected collaborators.¹¹⁶ While Egyptian military infiltration is a major concern for the group, the brutal methods employed to conduct such executions in the past illustrate the Islamic State’s influence. In 2015, militant attacks produced almost triple the rate of civilian fatalities compared to the previous year.¹¹⁷ Increasingly repressive measures could alienate the group’s constituents. Egyptian state propaganda could highlight the fact that Wilayat Sinai leaders prioritize the goals of a foreign leadership, despite the organization’s primary emphasis on catering to local objectives.

It is also important to understand the nuances surrounding Islamic State affiliates and their external partnerships, such as other militant groups. A problematic relationship could be exploited in order to create and enhance rifts between the affiliate and outside support networks. The Wilayat Sinai-Hamas relationship is a case in point. The letter from an IS operative in Sinai described above outlines disillusionment among some of the rank-in-file concerning ongoing cooperation with Hamas, an ideological rival. Egyptian propaganda efforts could highlight this relationship effectively in an attempt to sow dissent and emphasize Islamic State hypocrisy. As Egypt’s main benefactor, the United States can play an important role in pressuring the regime to adopt new counterinsurgency practices in return for ongoing military and economic assistance.¹¹⁸

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Theories of civil war, insurgency, and counterinsurgency help illustrate why Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (rebranded under the Islamic State as Wilayat Sinai) became an unparalleled and growing challenge to the Egyptian regime. While these theories and concepts help us understand

116 Gold, “Wilayat Sinai,” 2016.

117 Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, “Egypt’s Rising Security Threat,” 2015.

118 Sharp, “Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,” 2016: 16.



the structural conditions leading from discontent with a state to violent internal conflict, it is important to also understand the inter-group dynamics among these non-state actors. There is still little known about how or why IS selects local insurgents abroad for sponsorship as allied groups, why some groups simply pledge allegiance while others become formal “provinces,” or even who approaches whom—do these groups actively solicit the IS label for propaganda purposes or are they approached by IS themselves? Another innovation for future research would be to examine the growing influence and capabilities of non-state actors as external sponsors of insurgencies. These questions are in part answerable with better empirical information about the evolution of insurgencies and local militant recruitment, but better theory could only help to inform the work of reporters, researchers, and analysts as they piece this puzzle together.

The main task of this paper is not to build new theory nor test existing theories against each other in the conventional sense of a social scientific research design. Rather, theoretical insights from predominant schools of thought were applied to a particular time and place, Egypt in 2011 and beyond, to explain a particular outcome: the onset of insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula and the rise to prominence of Wilayat Sinai, as the most unprecedented challenge to Egyptian sovereignty in generations. Therefore, implications for theory simply reinforce the explanatory power of grievances and weak states as permissive conditions for civil war and suggest greater attention be paid to proximate conditions, like jihadist ideology and instability engendered by chaotic regime transitions, that could fuel insurgencies abroad. Future research on why some affiliates become provinces, for example, could contribute to building and testing other theories while resolving this policy-relevant problem.

CONCLUSION

Over the last two years, the Islamic State’s affiliate in the Sinai Peninsula—Wilayat Sinai—has evolved into an insurgent organization that poses an extraordinary threat to the Egyptian regime. The sheer scale and number of successful attacks this militant movement has inflicted on Egyptian security forces remains puzzling to observers of counterinsurgency warfare given the facts on the ground. Egypt’s military resources are far greater, including weaponry, technol-



ogy, manpower, and intelligence by far superior to that of their adversaries, yet the insurgency escalates in Egypt's backyard. This paper derives an explanation for why insurgency broke out in 2011 and why Wilayat Sinai, in particular, has been so successful in its campaign against the Egyptian state. To summarize, the permissive conditions of unaddressed Bedouin grievances and Egypt as a weak state facilitated the insurgency while the proximate conditions of mishandled regime change and the influx of radical jihadist ideology serve as its necessary triggers. Then, the rise of IS was most clearly enabled by three factors: safe havens in the Sinai Peninsula, indiscriminate Egyptian counterinsurgency, and external support from non-state actors like Hamas in Gaza and the Islamic State core in Syria and Iraq. Taken together, these conditions tell the story of Egypt's descent into counterinsurgency chaos and Wilayat Sinai's rise to prominence as a perpetual challenge to Egypt's sovereignty in the Sinai Peninsula.



WORKS CITED

- Ali, Firas Abi, "Egypt's Stability Threatened by Militants in Three-to-Seven Year Outlook with Energy, Infrastructure, and State Assets Key Targets," IHS Jane's 360, May 31, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/51899/egypt-s-stability-threatened-by-militants-in-three-to-seven-year-outlook-with-energy-infrastructure-and-state-assets-key-targets> (accessed on May 10, 2016)
- Arreguin-Toft, Ivan. *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Asal, Victor, and R. Karl Rethemeyer. "The Nature of the Beast: Organizational Structures and the Lethality of Terrorist Attacks." *Journal of Politics* 70, no. 2 (2008): 437-449.
- Ashour, Omar. "Enduring Repression and Insurgency in Egypt's Sinai." Chatham House, August 14, 2015, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/enduring-repression-and-insurgency-egypts-sinai> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- — —. "Sinai's Stubborn Insurgency: Why Egypt Can't Win." *Foreign Affairs*, November 8, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/egypt/2015-11-08/sinai-s-stubborn-insurgency> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- — —. "Sinai's Tragedy: Between Brutal Repression and Armed Insurgency." *Middle East Eye*, March 7, 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/sinai-s-tragedy-between-brutal-repression-and-armed-insurgency-1552693351> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Avalon Project. "Peace Treaty Between Israel and Egypt." March 26, 1979. Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/isregypt.asp (accessed May 10, 2016).
- Beblawi, Hazem. "The Rentier State in the Arab World." In *The Arab State*, edited by Giacomo Luciani. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990.
- Bhojani, Fatima. "How ISIS Makes IEDS: The Supply Chain of Terrorism." *Foreign Affairs*, March 2, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-03-02/how-isis-makes-ieds> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



- Binnie, Jeremy. "Sinai Militants Attack Egyptian Patrol Boat." IHS Jane's 360, July 19, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/53070/sinai-militants-attack-egyptian-patrol-boat> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Brown, Michael E., ed. *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 1996.
- Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. "U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide." U.S. Department of State, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Byman, Daniel. *Understanding Proto-Insurgencies*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007.
- — —. "ISIS Goes Global: Fight the Islamic State by Targeting Its Affiliates." Brookings, February 17, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2016/02/17-islamic-state-affiliates-byman> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Byman, Daniel and Stephen Van Evera. "Why They Fight: Hypotheses on the Causes of Contemporary Deadly Conflict." *Security Studies* 7, no. 3 (1998): 1-50.
- Byman, Daniel, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001.
- Calle, Luis de la, and Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenza. "Rebels Without a Territory: An Analysis of Non-territorial Conflicts in the World." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 4 (2012): 580-603.
- Carment, David, and Patrick James. "Internal Constraints and Interstate Ethnic Conflict: Toward a Crisis-based Assessment of Irredentism." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39, no. 1 (1995): 82-109.
- Central Intelligence Agency. *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*. U.S. Government, Washington, DC, n.d. (1980s), released January 5, 2009, <https://fas.org/irp/cia/product/insurgency.pdf> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563-595.



- — —. "On Economic Causes of Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 50, no. 4 (1998): 563-573.
- Collier, Paul, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner. "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 61 (2009): 1-27.
- Condra, Luke N., and Jacob N. Shapiro. "Who Takes the Blame? The Strategic Effects of Collateral Damage." *American Journal of Political Science*, 56 no. 1 (2012): 167-187.
- Conflict Armament Research. Tracing the Supply of Components Used in Islamic State IEDs. London, UK: Conflict Armament Research, 2016, http://www.conflictarm.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Tracing_The_Supply_of_Components_Used_in_Islamic_State_IEDs.pdf (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Connable, Ben, and Martin C. Libicki. *How Insurgencies End*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010.
- Costello, Matthew J. "Rentierism and Political Insurgency: A Cross-National Analysis of Transnational Rent Dependency of Terrorism and Guerrilla Welfare." PhD Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2012.
- Dershowitz, Toby. "Political Instability in Egypt." Foundation for Defence of Democracies, April 2013, <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/political-instability-in-egypt/> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- DeVore, Marc R. "Exploring the Iran-Hezbollah Relationship: A Case Study of How State Sponsorship Affects Group Decision-Making." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 4 (2012): 85-107.
- Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75-90.
- Gambhir, Harleen. "ISIS's Campaign in Libya: January 4 – February 19, 2016." Institute for the Study of War, February 19, 2016, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/isis%E2%80%99s-campaign-libya-january-4-february-19-2016> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Ghafar, Adel Abdel. "Egypt's New Gas Discovery: Opportunities and Challenges." Brookings, September 10, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2015/09/10-egypt-gas-discovery-abdelghafar> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



- Gold, Zack. "One Year of the Islamic State in the Sinai Peninsula." Tel Aviv, Israel: Institute for National Security Studies, October 25, 2015, <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=10852> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- — —. "Sinai Security: Opportunities for Unlikely Cooperation Among Egypt, Israel, and Hamas," Brookings, October 22, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2013/10/22-sinai-hamas-egypt-israel-gold> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- — —. "Wilayat Sinai: The Islamic State's Egyptian Affiliate." In *The Islamic State: How Viable Is It?* Edited by Yoram Schweitzer and Omer Einav, 197-202. Tel Aviv, Israel: Institute for National Security Studies, 2016, <http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/Islamic-StateENG5.pdf> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Greenhill, Kelly M., and Paul Staniland. "Ten Ways to Lose at Counterinsurgency." *Civil Wars* 9, no. 4 (2007): 402-419.
- Gurr, Ted Robert. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Hegre, Havard, and Nicholas Sambanis. "Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 4 (2006): 508-535.
- Henderson, Kirsten and Rajat Ganguly. "Mubarak's Fall in Egypt: How and Why Did It Happen?" *Strategic Analysis* 39, no. 1 (2015): 44-59.
- Horowitz, Donald. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985.
- Horowitz, Michael C., and Philip B. K. Potter. "Allying to Kill: Terrorist Intergroup Cooperation and the Consequences for Lethality." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58, no. 2 (2014): 199-225.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006
- — —. "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil War." *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 475-494.



- Karl, Terry Lynn. *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997.
- Korteweg, Rem. "Black Holes: On Terrorist Sanctuaries and Governmental Weakness." *Civil War* 10, no. 1 (2008): 60-71.
- Koubi, Vally, Gabriele Spilker, Tobias Böhmelt, and Thomas Bernauer. "Do Natural Resources Matter for Interstate and Intrastate Armed Conflict?" *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 2 (2014): 227-243.
- Lai, Brian. "Draining the Swamp: An Empirical Examination of the Production of International Terrorism, 1968-1998." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 24, no. 4 (2007): 297-310.
- Lapin, Yaakov. "Sinai's Resilient Insurgency." IHS Jane's 360, July 16, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/53024/sinai-s-resilient-insurgency> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Laub, Zachary. "Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Security." Council on Foreign Relations, December 12, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/egypt/egypts-sinai-peninsula-security/p32055> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Levantine Group. "Levantine's Data Reveals: Insurgency Escalating in Egypt's Sinai." February 9, 2016, <http://www.levantinegroup.com/#!/Levantines-Data-Reveals-Insurgency-Escalating-in-Egypt's-Sinai/c21xo/56b9d40a0cf2b4e0b621e90a> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Lia, Brynjar. "Understanding Jihadi Proto-States." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 no. 4 (2015): <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/441/html> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Lyall, Jason and Isaiah Wilson III. "Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counter-insurgency Wars." *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (2009): 67-106.
- Mahdavy, Hossein. "The Pattern and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran." In *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, edited by M. A. Cook. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1970.



- Mansfield, Edward D., and Jack Snyder. "Democratization and the Danger of War." *International Security* 20, no. 5 (1995): 5-38.
- Middle East Media Research Institute. "Exclusive: Letter by ISIS Fighter to Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi Reveals ISIS-Sinai's Ties to Hamas." March 2, 2016, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/9051.htm> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Mitchell, Sara McLaughlin, and Cameron Thies. "Resource Curse in Reverse: How Civil Wars Influence Natural Resource Production." *International Interactions* 38, no. 2 (2012): 218-242.
- Moriarty, Thomas J. "The Vanguard's Dilemma: Understanding and Exploiting Insurgent Strategies." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 3 (2010): 476-497.
- Multinational Force & Observers. "Sinai Region." 2015, <http://mfo.org/en/sinai> (accessed May 10, 2016).
- New World Encyclopedia. "Sinai Peninsula". July 6, 2015, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Sinai_Peninsula (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Patrick, Stewart. "'Failed' States and Global Security: Empirical Questions and Policy Dilemmas." *International Studies Review* 9, no. 4 (2007): 644-662.
- Pelham, Nicolas. "Sinai: The Buffer Erodes." Chatham House, September 1, 2012, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/186061> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Petraeus, David H., James F. Amos, and John A. Nagl. *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Piazza, James A. "Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?" *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2008): 469-488.
- Richter, Thomas, and Christian Steiner. "Politics, Economics and Tourism Development in Egypt: Insights into the Sectoral Transformations of a Neo-Patrimonial Rentier State." *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 5 (2009): 939-959.



- Ross, Michael L. "A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War." *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006): 265-300.
- Saideman, Stephen M. *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Schenker, David. "Apaches in the Sinai." Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 16, 2014, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/apaches-in-the-sinai> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Schutte, Sebastian. "Geography, Outcome, and Casualties: A Unified Model of Insurgency." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 6 (2014): 1-28.
- Sharp, Jeremy M. "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations." Congressional Research Service, February 25, 2016. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Shelley, Louise I., and John T. Picarelli. "Methods and Motive: Exploring Links Between Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism." *Trends in Organized Crime* 9, no. 2 (2005): 52-67.
- Snyder, Richard, and Ravi Bhavnani. "Diamonds, Blood, and Taxes: A Revenue-Centered Framework for Explaining Political Order." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 4 (2005): 563-597.
- Staniland, Paul. "Organizing Insurgency: Networks, Resources, and Rebellion in South Asia." *International Security* 47, no. 1 (2012): 142-177.
- Taha, Hebatalla. "Insecurity in the Sinai Peninsula." International Institute for Strategic Studies, May 19, 2015, <https://www.iiss.org/en/iiss%20voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2015-dda3/may-d09d/insecurity-and-the-sinai-peninsula-986e> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. "Assault in Sheikh Zuweid: A Turning Point in Egypt's Fight Against Terrorism." Washington, DC, July 2, 2015, <http://timep.org/commentary/assault-in-sheikh-zuwaid-a-turning-point-in-egypts-fight-against-terrorism/> (accessed on May 10, 2016).



- — —. "Egypt's Rising Security Threat." Washington, DC, 2015, http://timep.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Tahrir_Report_FINAL_WEB.pdf (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Tilly, Charles L. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York, NY: Random House, 1978.
- Toft, Monica Duffy. *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Torvik, Ragnar. "Natural Resources, Rent Seeking, and Welfare." *Journal of Development Economics* 67, no. 2 (2002): 455-470.
- Trager, Eric. "Egypt's Durable Misery: Why Sisi's Regime is Stable." *Foreign Affairs*, July 21, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/egypt/2015-07-21/egypts-durable-misery> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Wick, Katharina, and Erwin Bulte. "Contesting Resources: Rent Seeking, Conflict, and the Natural Resource Curse." *Public Choice* 128, no. 3-4 (2006): 457-476.
- Wood, Elisabeth Jean. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Yaari, Ehud. " Hamas and the Islamic State: Growing Cooperation in the Sinai." Washington Institute for Near East Policy, December 15, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hamas-and-the-islamic-state-growing-cooperation-in-the-sinai> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- — —. "Sinai: A New Front." Washington Institute for Near East Policy. January 2012, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/sinai-a-new-front> (accessed on May 10, 2016).
- Yossef, Amr. "Securing the Sinai: More Troops Won't Keep the Peace or Save the Egyptian-Israeli Relationship." *Foreign Affairs*, September 28, 2011, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2011-09-28/securing-sinai> (accessed on May 10, 2016).