Interlinkages between Marginalisation of Bedouins and Security Crisis in Sinai Peninsula

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Abstract: The Sinai Peninsula has always served as a geo-strategic pivot point in power struggles between opposing major players. Throughout the fight for domination between ancient Egypt and the Assyrians, the Ottoman and British Empires, and more recently the ongoing confrontation between Israel and Egypt, the peninsula has served as the focal point of the regional balancing forces. The study makes an effort to investigate the Sinai Peninsula's security crises as a function of power tussle between states and quasi states. It will examine the Bedouins who live in Sinai and their interactions with the state, the persistent pattern of Bedouin marginalisation in Sinai, together with their opposition to or difficulty participating in official Egyptian decision making. It will test the premise that both Egypt and Israel have failed to adequately address the needs of the local Bedouin population in Sinai and have instead chosen to ignore them. Thus, the formation of militant groups and their function as third parties will be examined in the same framework.

Keywords: Autochthonous, Geo-Strategy, Marginalisation, Militants, Security

I. INTRODUCTION

With Gaza, Israel, and the Gulf of Aqaba to its east, the Mediterranean Sea to its north, and the Suez Canal to its west, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula is situated in an important strategic triangle. One of the busiest and most important economic routes in the world, the Suez illustrates the strategic significance of the Middle East and Africa region in general, and Egypt and its Sinai Peninsula in particular. Around 12% of global trade and 30% of container traffic pass through the Suez, moving more than USD $1 trillion worth of goods each year. [1] With an average of 50 ships passing through the canal each day, carrying goods worth $3 to $9 billion USD, the canal is both strategically and economically significant. Here are five of Egypt's twenty-seven governorates. Sinai is the only part of the country that is in Asia. Sinai, which makes up 6% of Egyptian territory, has a population of more than 600,000 and a physical area of around 61,000 km2. [2] The majority of the administrative divisions on the Sinai Peninsula are the South Sinai Governorate and the North Sinai Governorate. Three more governorates that cross the Suez Canal into African Egypt are the governorates of Suez at the southern end of the canal, Ismailia in the middle, and Port Said in the north. The bulk of people in the North are concentrated around the coast, despite the fact that a sizable section of the nomadic population lives in the hilly interior. Three smaller governorates with denser populations cross the Suez Canal.

In the classical era, the territory was known as Arabia Petraea. The peninsula became known as Sinai in contemporary times as a result of the common misconception that a mountain close to Saint Catherine's Monastery is the Biblical Mount Sinai.[3] Like the rest of Egypt, the Sinai was colonised and ruled by foreign empires when it was under foreign dominion. These empires included the Ottoman Empire (1517–1867) and the United Kingdom in more recent times (1882–1956). Israel attacked and occupied Sinai during the 1956 Suez Crisis, also known as the Tripartite Aggression in Egypt due to the simultaneous coordinated attack by the United Kingdom, France, and Israel, and the 1967 Six-Day War. On October 6, 1973, Egypt attempted to retake the peninsula but failed. The Camp David peace agreement between Egypt and Israel resulted in Israel leaving the entire Sinai Peninsula in 1982, with the exception of the disputed territory of Taba, which was returned after a decision by an arbitration commission in 1989.[4]

The upheaval in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula is one of West Asia's most concerning and anticipated issues. Even before the 2011 Arab Uprising, the security vacuum in the Sinai allowed extremists and criminals to expand their operations. In the chaos that followed the upheaval, these problems grew worse. The Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of 1979 established the Sinai Peninsula as a buffer zone to promote trust and maintain peace, but it has since evolved into a haven for transnational crime and conflict.[5] Political instability, together with poverty and political alienation among the local Bedouins of the region, have encouraged the emergence of nonstate armed groups since the overthrow of the administration of former president Hosni Mubarak in 2011 and even before that. According to the governments, this poses new risks to global trade while preserving safety along the Israeli-Egyptian border. After the Egyptian military reasserted its authority in July 2013 after toppling the democratically elected President Mohammed Morsi and waging a campaign of repression against insurgents, militant groups increased their attacks on security personnel in the peninsula and expanded their influence to cities along the Suez Canal and even Cairo.[6]

1.1 Objectives of the Study:

1) To study the nature of demographics and state policy towards the Bedouins within Sinai as the potential reason for security upheaval.
2) To study the geo-strategic significance of Sinai Peninsula as the source of contestation between States.
3) To explore the propensity of peace between states due to situation in Sinai and vice versa.

4) To study the situation and its causes in and around Sinai Peninsula after the Arab Uprising.

1.2 Research Methodology:

The goal of this research is to achieve what Katzenstein and Rudra Sil claim: that pragmatism enables the focus to shift from fighting for theory to fighting to solve the problem. [7] The study will employ pragmatism and analytic eclecticism in order to understand the issue rather than relying on a particular theory or school of thinking. This would allow for enough freedom to use several theories to assess and comprehend the security challenges, which are complicated and cannot be seen and examined via a single lens or method. Secondary data sources for the study will include books, journal articles, published interviews with influential leaders and experts, as well as significant news pieces. Reports on the actual war situation, humanitarian crises, the involvement of non-state actors, human rights violations, and—most importantly—any violations or failures with adherence to the agreed-upon principles of the Camp David I Accords between Israel and Egypt

II. THE BEDOUINS OF SINAI AND THEIR MARGINALISATION

As a result of Egyptian government policies and quick socioeconomic change, the demographic divide in Sinai has gotten worse over time. [8] Despite falling far short of announced goals, Egypt's policy of mass settlement from the Nile Valley encouraged by official subsidies and privileges threatens the position of the native population. The majority of Bedouin tribes received Egyptian citizenship once the border between the Ottoman Porte and the British Protectorate of Egypt was marked in 1906, which led to the handover of Sinai to the Egyptian government.[9] The indigenous population asserts that the government continues to see them as a threat and a border region susceptible to outside influence.[10] In terms of both ethnicity and history, the Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula are different from the rest of Egypt's population. In contrast to regional neighbours Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the Egyptian government has never recognised desert-dwelling tribes as citizens or accorded them the same privileges as their compatriots west of the Suez. The Bedouin migrated from the east, whereas the Nile inhabitants came from the west, according to Teague.[11] The Nile culture is agrarian, deferential toward cultivation and tranquilly, and apprehensive of nomadic travelling, despite the fact that traditionally the Bedouin travelled over a wide area. The "hostile" Peninsula was only annexed by Egypt's British rulers in the twentieth century as a line of defence against the Ottoman Empire because the Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula were not absorbed into the Egyptian state as a result of these cultural obstacles. The majority of Egyptians viewed the Bedouin as foreigners despite the fact that they only make up a small fraction of the population because of their unique way of life. At worst, most Egyptians see them as a national security threat who refuse to honour their civic duties and rights while harbouring relationships and interests that transcend national bounds.[12]

Over the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the latter half of the 20th century, control over the Sinai Peninsula changed regularly, with the Bedouin being a completely influenced but largely powerless participant. Israel governed the Bedouin of Sinai for fifteen years from the Six Day War in 1967, notwithstanding the brief conflicts of the Yom Kippur War in 1973. There was no security-related confrontation between the Bedouin and their Israeli occupiers during this time. US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger engaged in "shuttle diplomacy" throughout the Middle East in 1974 and 1975 to address the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War.[13] The Sinai Interim Agreement, which was finalised in 1975, started the Israeli military withdrawal from the eastern portion of the Peninsula and laid the groundwork for a more extensive peace process. As a result of the agreement, the Bedouin of Sinai once more moved back into the Egyptian camp and prepared for a change in governance. These preparations had a more commercial than a politically organised feel to them.[14]

The Bedouin were viewed by the Anwar Sadat government (1970–1981) as an Israeli-aligned population living on Egyptian soil. The Bedouin had a brief period of slightly relative wealth while living under Israeli control, which contributed to this impression. In the anticipation of developing Jewish settlements in Sinai, Israel built several medical facilities in Sinai, provided formal vocational training in Dahab and Sharm El Sheikh, employed half of the Bedouin population in the oil fields, engaged in military and civilian construction, and built schools in South Sinai as it believed it could permanently occupy the peninsula.[15] The completion of the Eilat-Sharm El Sheikh road after 1972, together with the accompanying tourism boom, was especially advantageous to the Bedouin. The Bedouin attempted to capitalise on the rise in tourism in the Peninsula by using their capital that had been accumulated via wage labour under the Israelis.[16]

The mainland Egyptian response was to charge the Bedouin with collaborating with Israel and establishing new enterprises under Israeli control.[17] The accusation appeared to be accurate on the surface, but it hid the fact that the Bedouin had no loyalty to any nation. The tribal organisation of the Bedouin tribe, which pays little attention to state borders, further contributed to the impression that they were working together. Historically, the Bedouin who live in the Negev desert across the Israeli border have had deeper ties to the residents of Sinai than to the rest of Egypt.[18] For instance, the Bedouin freely crossed the fictitious border, with tribal territory covering Egypt, Gaza, and the Israeli Negev, because a border fence between Egypt and Israel wasn't constructed until after the Arab Uprising. As a result, the Bedouin deal with Israeli citizens with no difficulty.[19] As their entire manner of life threatens the state's sense of national identity, the fundamental bone of contention in Egypt's ties with the Bedouin is that they are beyond the national affiliations of traditional Bedouin community. The Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula are not a single homogeneous society, but rather a collection of fifteen to twenty separate tribes, depending on how one defines them.

The tribes are distinct from one another in terms of their origins, traditions, economic activities, access to valuable resources, and on occasion even language dialects.[20] The Bedouin of Sinai have been unable to conduct coordinated negotiations with the Egyptian government due to their diversity, a history of intra-tribal conflict, and a lack of pan-tribal leadership. Tribal loyalty, which defends the coherence that has historically been required for survival, lies at the heart of Bedouin society. Because of their collective nature, the Bedouin are viewed by mainland Egyptians in terms of collectivism rather than individualism.[21] The Bedouin are different from the rest of the Egyptian population in addition to speaking a unique dialect of Arabic and possessing a variety of physical traits. According to Yasin Khalaf, the politics of the Bedouin are dominated by talks among a select group of male elites, and authority is frequently both inherited and elective.[22] They have their own unique system of customary law, and primarily status can be passed down through the generations. However, in order to maintain one's position of power, one must have the support of other tribal elders.[23]

To summarise the Egyptian government's issue with the Bedouin, Shenker makes a strong case that they are "at once too localised - with allegiance to clans and tribes before anything else - and too transnational, sharing family members with fellow tribespeople across the Egyptian border with Israel and the rest of the Arab world."[24] This contradictory synthesis of insularity and internationalism challenges the idea of the Egyptian nation state in Bedouin community.

The Egyptian government's desire to control and integrate them into the nation-state system, in Mai Serhan's opinion, has damaged the Bedouin people's core social structure.[25] This disturbance has had an effect on the Bedouins' nomadic manner of life, lack of social stratification, application of customary law, sense of tribal loyalty, and sense of collective identity. For instance, the basic contradiction between a nation state and a tribal system has existed since the establishment of the modern Egyptian state, dispelling the myth that the Egyptian government is an oppressive dictatorship that targets a subjugated indigenous population. While Egypt's treatment of the Bedouin in Sinai has been harsh and arguable unjust both before and after the Arab Spring, its motivations should be understood in the context of the inherent demands of the nation state and the challenges that both the Egyptian government and the Bedouin face in fulfilling them.

Despite the fact that nomadic lifestyles still exist, especially in South Sinai, sedentarization and urbanisation have had a substantial negative influence on the Bedouin throughout the Peninsula since the city of El Arish has a sizable population of urbanised Bedouins.[26] The creation of such stereotypes might be interpreted as a tactic to "reduce context to its core and hence permit restructuring" of the Bedouin within the Egyptian state. [27] As was already said, many misconceptions connect the Bedouin to Israel as its accomplices. The majority of Egyptians have always thought of Sinai as a hinterland populated by savage nomads, despite the fact that authorities have long promoted these stereotypes.[28] The prevailing

prejudice now refers to Bedouins as "outlaws." Egyptians living on the mainland have long associated the Bedouin with the cultivation and smuggling of illegal drugs.[29] This myth is still prevalent today because of the terrorism committed in Sinai in the middle of the 2000s.

The term "outlaw" is despised by the Bedouin. Additionally, Bedouin community leaders claim that they are the victims of systemic discrimination, including land seizure and denial of ownership rights.[30] They bemoan their lack of participation in government-sponsored development programmes, consultation, and engagement in government offices. The "Red Sea Riviera" expanded quickly in the 1990s and 2000s, which led to a lot of unhappiness. To control the unchecked expansion that has pushed Bedouin tribes inward from the southern beach, a military barrier has been established. In less than ten years, a modest Bedouin fishing community called Sharm al-Sheikh was transformed into the summer capital of President Mubarak, demonstrating the state's priority for the needs of the Nile Valley over those of the local population.[31]

Government neglect made the discontent worse, and the scorn only exacerbated it. Mega-projects on the mainland of Egypt took priority over proposals to pump water from the Nile to the Gaza Strip's border to support agriculture. The governmental benefits and job opportunities that came with military service were not available to Bedouin, despite the fact that they were exempt from Egypt's military conscription. The bulk of security services and the military did not accept Bedouin. The government and the school system gave internal migrants sinecures. Thus, the main formal source of income for Sinai was tourism, which was mostly a Nile Valley problem. The idea that Sinai was far away from the city core was heightened by the fact that many government officials left their families in the Nile Valley and commuted every two weeks. Such actions have weakened centralising forces while escalating identity politics. Instead of identifying with Egypt, many Bedouin call the newcomers to the Nile Valley "Egyptians," as though they are settlers jeopardising native existence. As a result, the animosity is clear.

2.1 Rise of Militancy and Illicit Economy:

The Arab Uprising's impact on Egypt and the rest of the region, which led to the overthrow of governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, has made the slaughter in Sinai worse. It's critical to comprehend why Islamic radicalism has risen in Sinai in the wake of the Arab upheaval. Even though Egypt has a lengthy history of this type of violence, both its frequency and its brutality have considerably changed from the past. The origins of this gap will be underlined by taking a look at prior waves of militancy in Egypt in order to comprehend the current security environment.

On the other hand, urban expansion exacerbated the fragmentation. The breakdown of tribal networks has been slowed down, nevertheless, by the growth of the black market. Being shut out of crucial mainstream economic sectors like tourism or authorised land cultivation caused the indigenous people to gravitate toward illegal tourism services, cannabis

and opium cultivation, arms running, and smuggling, both into Israel and to Gaza. Each tribe jealously protected the resources of its own territory from encroachment by other tribes or the state, fostering patronage networks and non-state allegiances. The trafficking of illegal cigarettes, heroin, and migrants further south, near the Israeli Red Sea resort of Eilat and into Israel takes place frequently. As a result, indigenous and non-indigenous populations developed distinct economic systems. Conflict between the two factions led to violent outbursts. This de facto trade also includes not just with Gaza but Israel as well, although, Gaza is depicted as the sole reason for the development of the illicit economy. [32] Moreover, the overland contraband not just Egypt's Sinai to Israel and Gaza but its outreach is stretched to Sudan and Libya also.[33]

If Egypt's government had kept its promise to develop Sinai in 2006, the integration of the Bedouin people into Egypt's social fabric may have advanced greatly over the ensuing years. The best commercial opportunities, as things stood, came elsewhere, increasing the centrifugal force. Since Israel and Egypt imposed a siege on Gaza in 2007, supply lines via tunnels between Gaza and Sinai have grown, encouraging competition among Bedouin traders, transporters, and tunnel owners as well as Gaza's consumers. Smuggling to Gaza had become the economic lifeblood of Sinai by 2009, connecting the peninsula to land-based trafficking networks that reached as far as Sudan and Libya.[34]

In recognition of Gaza's economic clout, an 18-person team from the North Sinai Chamber of Commerce visited Gaza in February 2012. This was the first official Egyptian commercial trip to visit Gaza in the five years of the siege.[35] By utilising clan networks abutting the Egyptian-Israeli border, Bedouin traders supplied Israel with pharmaceuticals cultivated in Sinai and migrant labour, originally from Eastern Europe and more recently from the Horn of Africa. Israel's ties to a territory it had ruled from 1967 to 1981 were strengthened by its residents continued travel to the south Sinai shore. They favoured staying in inexpensive, illegal Bedouin camps than the opulent hotels controlled by the Nile Valley.

The growth of the organised informal economy occurred at the same time as the emergence of illegal armed groups. Tunnel operators utilised Bedouin clan defence committees who were familiar with the topography of Sinai as a result of years of travelling the region to protect their sources of income from rivals and Egyptian police. Many of them were well-armed as a result of the secret weaponry they carried down the tunnels. Instances of direct conflict between Bedouin irregulars and Egyptian security personnel have occurred as the latter work to stop tunnel trade. According to some, Bedouins are the forerunners of the underworld that is active in the Peninsula. However, the oppressive nature of the Egyptian government, along with Israel's soft border policies and Gaza's utter reliance on the tunnel trade as a result of the worst kind of blockade imposed by both Israel and Egypt, are more to blame for the shady economy and the peculiar situation that persists in Sinai.[36]

The three groups Ansar Bait al-Maqdis (ABM), Al-Qaida (AQ) and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have presence in the Peninsula. The attacks of these groups grew after Mubarak's fall.[37] Egypt has experienced noteworthy religious militancy since the 1970s, which may be loosely divided into two different eras. The first wave was caused by disillusionment with President Anwar al-Sadat, the self-described "pious President." When he came to power in 1970, Al-Sadat wanted to use this image as a counterpoint to his Nasserist and Marxist opponents on the left. Due to his 'failures,' in the eyes of groups like al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group, IG) and the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Peace with Israel, Al-Sadat was assassinated by Lieutenant Khalid Islambouli in 1981.[38] The two violent organisations that emerged during the al-Sadat era were the top security concern for the Egyptian government up until the end of the 1990s. Islambouli belonged to Al-Jihad al-Islami (Egyptian Islamic Jihad, EIJ), while IG was the second. The ranks of both organisations were swelled by former Muslim Brotherhood members who had become disenchanted with the MB's perceived overly moderate approach.[39]

These attacks aimed to overthrow the Egyptian government by conducting high-profile attacks to deter foreign investment and destabilise the economy. Beginning in 1992, militants from both groups frequently targeted police targets as well as Egyptian Copts, foreign visitors, and tourist spots. For instance, the peak of these assaults was the 1997 Luxor Massacre. Gunmen from IG assaulted Luxor, a renowned tourist attraction, and killed four Egyptians and more than fifty-eight international tourists.[40] Along with automatic weapons, the massacre also employed machetes, which were more horrific to wield and claimed children as young as five. The act was meant to hurt Egypt's standing abroad, but the people were appalled by the extreme savagery and harm it caused to the country.[41] The president of Egypt's top Sunni university, al-Azhar, echoed the general sentiment when he called the murderers "traitors and cowards who sold their souls to the devil."[42]

After realising they had overplayed their hand, EIJ and IG abandoned their offensive. Actually, the massacre was IG's final assault before they began their deradicalization process.[43] As a result of these assaults, Egypt's initial wave of religious militancy came to an end and alienated the populace.[44] Egyptians' strong response to such attacks and denial of safe haven and bases of operations for the terrorists were indications of this estrangement.[45] The apparent link between acts of severe violence and the end of Egypt's first wave of militancy raised questions about whether such a tendency would continue.

According to Chris Heffelfinger, a second wave of religious militancy was supposed to have started with the 2004 bombings of the popular tourist spots in Taba and Ras Shaitan in the Sinai.[46] According to Chris Heffelfinger, it's regarded as the second wave of religious militancy. Following this, attacks on similar targets had place in Dahab in 2006 and Sharm El Sheikh in 2005.[47] This second wave of militancy had a different tactic and motivation than the first. The small arms attacks of

the EIJ and IG were abandoned in favour of the employment of explosives and, in some cases, suicide bombers.[48] Given that they were more diverse than their predecessors and smaller, less well-known, and less hierarchically organised, these militant groups in Sinai marked a diversity trend. The desire to pursue "the far enemy" along with the immediate enemies has been a trend among their global contemporaries.[49]

It is essential to distinguish between Sinai militants and the restrained Bedouin use of force to achieve their objectives, such as the release of captive tribesmen. As a result of a decrease in police and intelligence presence on the Peninsula, Bedouins have been granted more freedom to use force in the post-Arab Uprising environment. There are many examples to back up the aforementioned claim: Between February and July 2012, when they abducted three pairs of Americans, three South Koreans, two Brazilians, and a Singaporean, Bedouin tribesmen kidnapped a record amount of foreigners.[50] The tourists who were taken reported that during their brief detentions, their captors gave them hospitality in the typical Bedouin fashion rather than using violence, despite the fact that abduction is by definition a violent crime.[51] Similar to this, in North Sinai, Bedouin demonstrators attacked the MFO in March 2012, enclosing the El Gorah peacekeeper base and preventing logistical supplies for eight days.[52] Then, in March 2013, after similar blockades on smaller MFO locations, an MFO peacekeeper was abducted off a bus and later released.[53]

Although prohibited, it is evident that these actions are not similar to the militants' tactics. Kidnappings and blockades have been utilised by the Bedouin as generally non-violent ways to draw the Egyptian government's attention to local issues, usually those involving the detention of fellow tribesmen. Nicholas Pelham claims that, in contrast to the militantly imbued North, kidnappers in South Sinai adhere to tribal customs of preserving the lives of hostages and employing dialogue.[54] However, the Bedouin attempts to exercise influence in North Sinai also fit this pattern of avoiding pointless violence and being open to compromise. The Bedouin's primarily nonviolent efforts to communicate with the authorities about local issues contrast sharply with the terrorists' increasing slaughter in Sinai following the Arab Spring. Despite the fact that attacks have been more frequent and severe during the 2011 uprising, this development has been propelled by a rise in Bedouin extremism from the mid-2000s. This radicalization is a result of the Egyptian government's social exclusion and intimidation of the Bedouin.

III. ACTORS AND SECURITY CRISIS: STATES, NON-STATE AND QUASI STATE

Following the Arab Uprising, the Egyptian government has readily leveraged this narrative to lay the blame for the deteriorating security situation on the Sinai Peninsula on its eastern neighbour, Gaza.[55] On October 24, 2014, in Sheikh Zuweid, a concerted attack involving a car bomb, rocket-propelled grenades, and roadside bombs targeted at first responders resulted in at least 31 persons being killed.[56] The president, Al-Sisi, claimed that "foreign hands" wanted to

"break the back of Egypt."[57] Without officially naming Hamas, the Egyptian government has suggested that Hamas is to blame for the border closure with Rafah and the designation of Hamas as a terrorist group in February 2015.[58] A large buffer zone was also established by Egypt as part of its increased anti-tunnelling efforts, displacing thousands of residents of Rafah from their homes along the Gaza border.

The rise of extremism from outside the Peninsula aggravated the marginalisation of the Bedouin by the Egyptian state, as discussed in the previous section. The illegal tunnel system discussed in the previous section has allowed Gaza to serve as the primary source of radical influence.[59] A major militant presence has been in Gaza since the late 1970s, with Khan Younis and the border city of Rafah acting as their main support centres.[60] Leila Stockmarr claims that after Israel left Gaza in 2005, militant organisations in Gaza kept expanding.[61] Between these organisations in Gaza and the Peninsula, there has been a great deal of movement of people and ideas: simply in the first few months of 2011, it is estimated that 1,500 Palestinians travelled from Gaza to Sinai to train at camps established around El Arish.[62]

Israel and the US consider Hamas to be a terrorist group. Hamas has attempted to hold onto power ever since winning the 2007 legislative elections, meanwhile, in order to maintain control over the bloodbath in Gaza and avoid Israeli punishment. This is contrasted with its desire to be acknowledged as the leading organisation resisting Israeli occupation. As an illustration of its efforts to control more radical organisations, the Hamas administration used its security forces to halt rocket launching toward Israel.[63] For instance, Hamas sought to dismantle other radical organisations by detaining numerous Jund Ansar Allah members and killing the group's leader, Abdel-Latif Mousa.[64] In addition to criticising the cease-fire between Israel and Hamas, the group also expressed displeasure with Hamas 'moderate' stance.

Israel has frequently asserted that the pressure Hamas put on Palestinian extremist groups in Gaza led to many of them moving their operations to Sinai, where they enjoy greater mobility and can collaborate with Bedouin and outside friends.[65] Despite its public statements and actions targeting Gaza, it is unclear to know whether the Egyptian government believes Hamas is to blame for the unrest on the Peninsula. This is due to the possibility that these activities are merely a continuation of the movement's campaign to delegitimize the Muslim Brotherhood. On the other hand, it is important to recognise that Sinai-based militias have used violence even before the Arab Uprising. But in some way, the militia organisations who supported Morsi or MB are blamed for the violence that occurred after the Arab Uprising. As a result, it is difficult to confirm the veracity of such claims of affiliation because they frequently come from militia internet forums. How many organizations, if any, actually have a connection to AQ as opposed to just supporting its ideology is still a mystery.

Following the Arab Uprising, a number of radicalising elements came together, preparing the ground for a sharp

increase in militant activity. The protests caused the Egyptian security forces in certain cities to vanish after they were summoned from the Sinai Peninsula to maintain order in Egypt's major cities. This brief retreat led to massive prisoner breakouts, much like mainland Egypt. According to Egyptian Interior Minister Ahmed Gamal El Din, 23,000 prisoners fled after the overthrow of the Mubarak regime, albeit this figure includes both militants and a large number of everyday criminals.[66] Commentators like Byman and Holt-Ivry claim that the presence of ex-prisoners in Sinai has heightened militancy.[67] While the Arab Uprising was seen as a victory for democracy and secularism by many Western observers, militant organisations saw the militants' escape during the revolution as beneficial to their own activities.[68] Along with escapees, a sizable number of prisoners were also freed from Egyptian prisons after the Arab Spring.[69] The Muslim Brotherhood has allegedly been linked to the rise in militant bloodshed in Sinai after Morsi's overthrow, according to Egyptian officials.

Authorities alleged that Morsi was establishing linkages between his government and militant organisations and investigated into the nine decrees he signed while president that led to the release of roughly 2,000 inmates.[70] But the majority of those released from prison were protesters who had been arrested in connection with the 2011 Uprising Against Mubarak.[71] As a result, the Egyptian government's attempts to establish a link in this case between the Muslim Brotherhood and radicalism were unsuccessful. Instead, during the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF's) time in power immediately following Mubarak's fall, the majority of militants were released. For instance, Hossam Bahgat claims that while in charge, Morsi only freed twenty-seven extremists, compared to the SCAF's approximately eight hundred.[72]

Whether they were released under the SCAF or Morsi's leadership or escaped after the revolt in January 2011, former prisoners have contributed to the rise in violence in the Peninsula. As a result of the Arab Uprising's unrest, there were more weapons available on the Peninsula and more seasoned militants willing to fight in Sinai. [73] The Sinai Peninsula has long been a route utilised by smugglers to go between Africa and the Middle East. The majority of smuggled weapons previously ended up in Gaza. For instance, as a result of the nation's civil war and Muammar Gaddafi's ouster, the quality and quantity of weapons available for this illegal trade rose. This was due to the theft of Libyan military and paramilitary arsenals.[74] The United Nations Panel of Experts on Libya published a report in February 2014 that claimed terrorist organisations in nations like Egypt are the main beneficiaries of the proliferation of weapons from Libyan arsenals as the nation has grown to be a significant international supplier of illicit weapons.[75] Following the revolution in January 2011 and also Morsi's ouster, [76] there was a confluence in Sinai of increased weapon availability, presence of foreign and homegrown militant Islamists, and reduced presence of Egyptian security forces. The Peninsula experienced increased violence as a result of these causes, which were made possible by the permissive climate fostered by some segments of the marginalised Bedouin people.

The threat model developed by Little and Rogova can be used to comprehend the violence in Sinai since it sees it as the outcome of the interaction between opportunity, capability, and intent.[76] After Mubarak was overthrown, the Egyptian security forces temporarily withdrew from Sinai, creating more space for jihadist activities. An improvement in capabilities was made possible by the aforementioned increasing accessibility of militants and weapons. The removal of Morsi and the subsequent reinforcement of the militants' narrative against the western-backed military coup therefore gave the final element of intent, winning over residents who had previously been split on whether to support militant or government forces. According to Holt-Ivry, militants have recruited Bedouin by using the police and army's frequently erroneous and excessive use of force while couching their ideology in the language of local complaints.[77] While radicalization has clearly taken place in North Sinai, it is unlikely that all Bedouin supporting or taking part in the region's rising violence are fanatical religious militants. A sizeable percentage of their involvement is a marriage of convenience that benefits both terrorists and the Bedouin, who are resentful of how the Egyptian government has treated them.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, the Arab Uprising, a wave of public upheavals that rocked the Middle East in 2011, marked a significant turning point in the history of the area. Protesters in Egypt packed the streets and public spaces in Cairo and other cities, demonstrating against economic hardship and political marginalization and calling for the overthrow of the current government. Following this, President Hosni Mubarak was overthrown in January 2011, which appeared to signal the end of authoritarian rule in the most populous Arab country and revealed Egyptians' yearning for political and social reforms. Mohammed Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, was elected president of Egypt in a democratic election in June 2012. But the 2013 coup that overthrew him showed how improbable such reforms were. Such hollow reforms were certainly inadequate to meet the demands of Egyptians belonging to Nile valley let alone addressing the long-standing grievance of the Sinai Bedouins or the combatants so as to curtail the militancy.

The Arab uprising and the interplay of civil military relations and the sheer difference between the military's outlook towards the protestors in Sinai versus the protestors elsewhere in Egypt during that period further entrenched the political exclusion of Sinai's Bedouins. However, mistreatment by the SSIS, police, and military was not the only issue the Bedouin had with the post-Arab Spring government. Despite the protesters' efforts and vision, Egypt has not become a democracy, and the residents of Sinai continue to have little influence over who is chosen to lead them at the governorate level. The Bedouin of Sinai lack an inter-tribal leadership. Due to this fact and measures from the Mubarak era that dispersed tribal power, the

Bedouin today lack the political capability to put out a candidate if this were permitted. However, such a representation is only theoretical because the pattern of governor nominations after Mubarak's overthrow adhered to the model of centralized power. Most governors in the SCAF are members of the armed forces, police, or intelligence.

The Sinai Peninsula is particularly essential from a geostrategic standpoint not only because of its crucial role in connecting Africa and Asia but also because it is situated beside one of the most important maritime routes in the world, the Suez Canal. Furthermore, it is essential for the security of West Asia. The Sinai Peninsula will undoubtedly continue to be of utmost importance from a geostrategic perspective. As a result, Egypt, Israel, and other countries in the region have more reasons to worry about their security. The stability of this key area determines the peace and security of neighbouring nations in both Africa and Asia. Given its importance, all parties concerned must work together to not only combat militancy but also to get some sympathetic adjustments in the lives of Sinai Bedouins in order to prevent further unrest in this crucial geographical area. Given this, every effort should be made to preserve tranquilly and stability in this critical region.

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