Two Sides of the Same Coin?

How “Islamists” and the “civic camp” view each other:

Two opposing forms of otherness

By Sara Khorshid
How polarization emerged:

“Islamists”

vs.

the “civic camp” (madaniyoun)

Article 2: Islam is the Religion of the State ... and the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia).
ON TERMS, DEFINITIONS

The so-called “Islamists” and “civic Egyptians” use these labels to identify themselves.
ON TERMS, DEFINITIONS

Who identify themselves as Islamists?
Who identify themselves as Islamists?

- The Muslim Brotherhood;
- Salafis (broadly speaking, with exceptions);
- and others
- Those who support Islamic sharia being the main source of legislation (Article 2)
- They speak about “Islamic governance” and an “Islamic state”
ON TERMS, DEFINITIONS

Who identify themselves as the secularist-liberals and/or the civic camp?
A segment of the old regime’s remnants (e.g. from Mubarak’s National Democratic Party and well-known pro-Mubarak figures such as editor/columnist Abdelmoneim Said);

A number of post-2011 political parties, notably the Free Egyptians Party.
Some of them are advocates of classical liberalism (market economy and personal freedoms).

Some are basically anti-Islamist even if they are not advocates of personal freedoms.

”The civic camp“ (al tayyar al madany) is broader than secularists/liberals in terms of self-identification.
OTHERING ON EACH SIDE

1. ISLAMISTS

Othering on Islamists’ side:

Many Islamists oppose the regime/President Sisi on ideological grounds and accuse the regime of being anti-Islam.

Non-Islamist opponents of the regime oppose it on the grounds that it is not democratic, cracks down on dissidence, violates human rights.
OTHERING ON EACH SIDE
1. ISLAMISTS

Examples on how othering is manifested in the discourse of a segment of Islamists (rhetoric used by many Islamists but not EVERY Islamist):

- Non-Islamists, anti-Islamists want to take Egypt to a path that does not match “our culture” and “our religion” as Egyptians, a “Westernized path”

- Conspiracy to secularize Egypt

- Participants in June 30 protests are mostly Christians or police and army personnel

- During the build-up to June 30: Praying that God destroys opponents
Examples on how othering is manifested in the discourse of a segment of Islamists *(rhetoric used by many Islamists but not EVERY Islamist)*:

Ahmed Mansour’s famous Facebook post

- Mansour does not identify himself as an Islamist but this Facebook post that he wrote was shared by many Islamists about the faith of the wives of Egyptian presidents Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak (all except for Naguib and Morsi).

- Tahiya Nasser ➔ Bahaei
- Gihane Sadat ➔ Born to a Christian mother. Birth control program and “anti-Islam family laws”
- Susan Mubarak ➔ Christian; her two sons were “welcomed by Pope Shenouda”. “Her being Christian was demonstrated in the women-related laws she supported.”
Examples on how othering is manifested in the discourse of a segment of Islamists (rhetoric used by many Islamists but not EVERY Islamist):

- The claim that Sisi’s mother is Jewish.
- Amr Mousa drinks alcohol
OTHERING ON EACH SIDE
2. THE CIVIC CAMP

Examples:

- Criticism of Morsi’s wife over how she dresses.
- **2015 parliamentary elections:** Vote so Salafis and MB won’t win
- Islamists are traitors, Zionists/ Jews/ Israelis, part of a grand conspiracy to divide and break up Egypt
- International MB organization

➤ Note: A similar discourse is used by Islamists on a grand conspiracy against the “Islamic project”
Examples:
Nostalgic photos that other veiled girls and imply that they are Islamist
Examples:

- Labeling the Brotherhood members/followers “sheep” (BTW, a segment of MB supporters also have labels for anti-Morsi Egyptians.)

- “I am not Ikhwan, I am a basket with ears” ➔ popular facebook page with 500,000 likes

- Many openly supported the way Rabaa was dispersed as if it were okay for Islamists to die because they are “the other”
While Islamists other non-Islamists on religion-related grounds, and while the so-called civic camp others Islamists on the grounds that they are not “Egyptian” enough, not “civil”...

the reality is ...

this dichotomy is not accurate. The regime that Islamists oppose (and segments of the “civic camp” support) is not clearly secularist, let alone anti-Islam.

the two camps largely overlap and this otherness is not even well-placed.
REPORT BY THE EGYPTIAN INITIATIVE FOR PERSONAL RIGHTS (EIPR):
“Nationalism and Homogeneity in Contemporary Curricula”

- Combating Brotherhoodization after Morsi’s ouster, July 3, 2013
- Binary discourse, pre- vs. post-1952
- Nationalism and silencing of diversity