The second anniversary of the January 25 revolution in Egypt was overshadowed by the widespread perception that the political situation there was locked in polarisation (istiqṭāb). The word was used to convey frustration about a state of affairs where progress towards building a functioning democratic system appeared blocked by insurmountable distrust between two ‘polarised’ fields: ‘Islamists’ and ‘secularists’ or ‘liberals’. ‘Polarisation’ had become a catchword of the Egyptian political scene in the second half of 2012, after the election of Muḥammad Mursī to the presidency. Its use became more prominent after the temporary constitutional declaration of 22 November 2012, in which Mursī placed his presidential decrees above the jurisdiction of the constitutional court, and protected the upper house of parliament from being dissolved. In practice, Egypt got divided into two camps and only two: the ruling Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and its opponents. And it did not take long for this polarisation violently to explode. Two decisive moments in the escalation of violence and mutual hatred are generally being named: (1) the clashes at al-Ittiḥādiyya presidential palace on 5 December 2012, where Muslim Brotherhood youth attacked and reportedly tortured anti-Mursī demonstrators, and where at least ten people were killed on both sides; and (2) the clashes on 22 March 2013 at the headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood on al-Muqaṭṭam, where both sides accused each other of torture, and where one Brotherhood member was shot dead. In the lead-up to the demonstrations against president Mursī on the occasion of his first anniversary in power, polarisation became ever more dominant; and in the wake of Mursī’s ouster, in what some have described as a ‘couvolution’, it turned even more extreme, paving the way for the bloody crackdown on the pro-Mursī demonstrators on al-Nahḍa and Rābi’a al-ʿAdawiyya squares in Cairo and across Egypt following the end of Ramaḍān, in mid-August 2013.

On the internet, this polarisation has a pre-history going back to the early 2000s when – after Saudi Arabia joined the online world in 1999/2000 – some then wildly popular discussion forums (muntadayāt) became the scene of ‘internet wars’ (ḥurūb al-internet) between sunnī salafīs on the one hand and a coalition of liberals and shīʿīs on the other. The latter were struggling against what they perceived to be a flood of often militant salafī propaganda dominating the net. Islamic activists had been early adopters of internet technology since the 1990s, and they were often outshining their liberal and secularist counterparts. This situation changed, however, with the emergence of blogs and social media in the mid-2000s. There, Islamists have been relatively less prominent compared to their ‘liberal’ compatriots. Some have attributed this to the fact that social media put much more emphasis on users making public their ‘real’ identities and networks, which could be problematic for users with a militant agenda. Based on my own research, however, I would argue that another factor was at least as important: the growing social diffusion of the internet,
the growing user numbers, led to the fact that internet users became somewhat more illustrative of the population at large; certain categories of people that had been over-proportionately represented among net users in the early days – such as IT specialists, professionals, or Islamist activists – now faded back into the general crowd.\textsuperscript{5} This does not mean, however, that internet users now are easily representative of the whole population – even though in Egypt, 44\% of the population were reported to be online by 2012, up from 0.6\% in 2000.\textsuperscript{6} Urban and younger users (including those of non-voting age) are still overrepresented on the net. This needs to be taken into account when drawing conclusions based on internet data – and here, when noting that in many Arab countries, ‘secularist’ voices are more perceptible on the social web than elsewhere in the public sphere.

In a survey of the Facebook-popularity of the major Egyptian political parties that I undertook just before the parliamentary elections began in November 2011, Brotherhood-affiliated parties scored 38\%; in the actual elections, the Freedom and Justice Party received 37\% of the popular vote. The Facebook-popularity of liberal (23\%) and leftist (20\%) parties, however, was not matched by a corresponding electoral success.\textsuperscript{7} In other words, there are indications that the social web has been relatively more critical of political Islam than the general electorate.

So when on 7 February 2012, the official Muslim Brotherhood Twitter account @ikhwanweb asked: “Why do you hate us?”,\textsuperscript{8} this reflected both the growing polarisation of the political scene and the perception that the Egyptian Twittersphere was dominated by anti-Islamist voices. Answers were quickly syndicated under the hashtag #WhyIHateIkhwan that lived on for over two months, together with its antipode, #WhyEgyptiansLikeIkhwan. Eventually, anti-Brotherhood sentiment was rebound into the older hashtags #FuckIkhwan and the more sober #Ikhwan that nevertheless has long been marked by a majority of anti-Brotherhood voices.

Taking the Muslim Brotherhood’s question “Why do you hate us?” as my point of departure, my aim in this report has been to analyse the image the Brotherhood had among its foes on Twitter in early 2012, and to chart changes, if any, in this image in the period leading up to and following the military crackdown in summer 2013. My sample consists of tweets harvested via above hashtags in 2012, supplemented by incidental material collected in 2013. After sketching dominant anti-Brotherhood stereotypes, I shall ask to what extent these are based in actual Brotherhood positions, and what purposes this stereotyping may have served. I conclude with a note on social media users who distance themselves from such polarising discourse.

#WhyIHateIkhwan

Between February 7 and September 2, 2012, I collected 113,390 tweets related to the Brotherhood into a database.\textsuperscript{9} Originally, I had hoped to be able to subject these to large-scale computer-aided analysis. As this turned out to be unfeasible for a single researcher,\textsuperscript{10} I perused the tweets ‘manually’ and then decided to focus on the original subsets, #WhyIHateIkhwan (8 Feb. - 21 Apr., 152 tweets) and #WhyEgyptiansLikeIkhwan (9-12 Feb. 2012, 40 tweets), as well as to follow links from these.

Analysis of #WhyIHateIkhwan yielded the following clusters of reasons for “why I hate the Brothers” (apart from a few [4] ‘fun’ tweets\textsuperscript{11} as well as 5 implicitly deploring the polarisation):

The Brothers are

(50\%) Hypocrites: lust after power, lie, betrayed the revolution:

(19\%) Lie, deceive, betray their own principles
(11\%) Betrayed the revolution
(9\%) Make deals with SCAF\textsuperscript{12}
(5\%) Formerly oppressed, they now turned into a new NDP\textsuperscript{13}
(3\%) Promised to share power but didn’t
(2\%) Strike breakers
(1\%) I tried them and they deceived me.
(18\%) Scum – I just hate them!
In other words, the most prominent reason for hating the Brothers was the feeling that they had betrayed the revolution and the people who had given them the benefit of doubt; they had reneged on their promises to work towards a broad-based revolutionary coalition and instead made deals with the military to monopolise power. Thus, they showed themselves to be liars who cannot be trusted. Whether the Brothers were an integral part of the revolution from the beginning or only came in at a later stage (“riding the revolution”) was less important than the overwhelming perception that their power-games were responsible for derailing it.

Other elements did appear, but played a much smaller role in this picture: the exploitation of religion and of the credulity of the masses for political purposes; the internally undemocratic structure of the Brotherhood; and the use of violence for political ends (note that the word ‘terrorism’ was not used at all at this point).

15% of the tweets in my sample linked to a detailed analysis of the reasons for the anti-Ikhwān attitude, published on the blog of The last Egyptian Libertarian. This blog may in fact have been started in response to the Twitter question, as the first-ever post on it is this very entry. Its author, Hany Farouk Ghoraba, a freelance journalist and writer, went on to publish a book, Egypt’s Arab Spring: The Long and Winding Road to Democracy. The blog entry serves well to sum up many of the accusations commonly raised against the Brotherhood at the time, without degenerating into foul language. It is therefore worthy of being paraphrased in greater detail. Ghoraba states that he hates the Brothers for the following reasons:

- **Because of the Brotherhood’s acts** (i.e., it is nothing personal).
- **Because of their opportunism** and their dealings with whoever happens to wield power. They always fall over themselves to negotiate with the rulers, always ready to betray their principles and comrades. They did so with Faruq, Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak (as late as 2010!), and SCAF. They have thereby divided the nation.
- **Because they put their partisan interests above those of the nation** (they put al-ǧamāʿa above al-waṭan). If it helps the Brotherhood and hurts the nation, they choose in favour of the Brotherhood. Examples are their handling of the 2011 poll on the constitutional amendments, and the manipulations occurring during the 2011/12 parliamentary elections (religious propaganda; campaigning inside polling stations etc.).
- **Because they have turned against their co-revolutionaries and betrayed human rights activists and others who had defended them** under Mubarak.
- **Because they represent political issues as religious ones.** They call their opponents infidels (kāfir), freemasons, etc. while presenting themselves as the only true Muslims and raising themselves above/oppressing (jāwr) everyone who does not agree with them, even if they have fought alongside them and defended their rights. This is despite al-Katātīni calling to order the salafi deputy Mamdūḥ Ismāʿīl when he called to prayer inside parliament: “You are not more Muslim than we are!” – they should heed this themselves, and not accuse everybody who disagrees with them of being against Islam, as they commonly do.
• Because they – and especially the Brotherhood youth – should critically face their own past, distance themselves clearly from their violent and opportunistic history, and demand the leadership to do so instead of blindly following their orders (mabda’ al-sam’ wa’l-tā’a).1

• Because they still have militias, despite their assertions to the contrary. We have seen them in action, both during karate displays at the university during Mubarak’s days, and later when they were cordoning off Brotherhood events and intimidated their opponents.20

• Because of their secrecy, not least regarding the sources of their financing – while at the same time they run crazy campaigns against human rights groups and civil society organisations for their ‘foreign financing’.

• Because of their claim to have protected the revolution and thus helped it to win, or even led it and have been the source of it – while in fact, they only joined after it became clear that it was going to be victorious. Proof: none of the martyrs of the “18 days” [25 Jan – 11 Feb 2011] was from the Brotherhood.21

Having summed up the major reasons why he hates the Brotherhood, Ghoraba concludes (and I paraphrase):

‘Such deliberate misleading (taḍlīl) of the people is really something we hate in them. Are they perhaps inspired by Ḥamās who regard democracy only as a means to come to power – once? Well, we will not tolerate this, and keep a watchful eye on every attempt to unsettle (al-ingilāb ‘alā) the frail democracy for the sake of which the Egyptian people have risen. We all know that religion and war don’t mix. But mixing religion and politics may be even worse, as it destroys a society from within. And again: don’t you come and say these are assertions by someone who hates Islam! That’s a cheap argument, and you shouldn’t underestimate our intellectual abilities (ʿuqūl). You need to listen if you want a real answer to your question, and you need to find better counterarguments if you want us to take you serious and listen to you.’

Yet, while many ‘rational’ explanations for disliking the Brothers were presented, it is noteworthy that a significant part (almost 20%) of responses gave expression to a predominantly emotional rejection of the Brotherhood: ‘They are the scum of society – I just hate them!’22 Out of this hatred, they were likened to both the Nazis and the Jews, and the solution proposed was their extermination: “Hitler should be back to life to deal with these Mother Fuckers!!”23 This violently emotional rejection must not be underestimated if we want to understand subsequent public approval of or acquiescence in the violent crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013. No wonder that tweets like these (“Had Hitler finished off the Jews and Nasser the Brotherhood, we’d gotten rid of the two dirtiest lots in the world”24) were seeing a spike in popularity in the context of the bloody dispersal of the pro-Mursi demonstrations on 14 August 2013 during which between 595 and 3000 civilians were killed and thousands injured by security forces in what Human Rights Watch called the “worst mass unlawful killings in the country’s modern history”.25 Where the Brotherhood’s opponents after their election defeat in summer 2012 tried to denounce the Ikhwān’s “Renaissance Project” (Mashrūʿ al-Nahḍa) as a project to “exterminate a [whole] people”,26 calls for the “extermination of the Brothers – the Jews of Egypt” now appeared in Egypt’s streets and on Facebook.27

Such extreme and extremist statements may not represent the majority even of those 20% who professed an openly emotional dislike of the Brotherhood.28 They did, however, grow on the fertile ground of much more widespread anti-Brotherhood sentiments. Perhaps the most catchy of these was the idea that the “Brothers are traitors”: al-Ikhwān khawana – a play on words in Arabic that sound alike even though they have different roots, and that insinuates that not only have the Brothers betrayed their allies throughout their history, not least after the 2011 revolution, but that it is their root nature to betray, as betrayed by their very name: khān – yakhīn – ikhwān (“Betrayed – Betray – Brothers”), a slogan drawing on the rules of Arabic grammar that was popularised by Bāsim Yūsuf (the ‘Egyptian Jon Stewart’) who performed it at the culmination of an anti-Brotherhood poem during his satirical TV show on 14 Dec. 2012, on the eve of the constitutional referendum.29 Like much else on his show, Bāsim Yūsuf did not invent this slogan,30 but was so
decisive to popularise it that he was actually credited with it by singer Muḥammad ʿAbdal-ʿĀl Mādō who published a song with the same title on 21 Dec. 2012.31 A rap version by Ahmad Ibrāhīm was published on 11 Jan. 2013.32 A year later, Google showed over 1.3 million hits for the phrase.33

Google’s predictive search (“Autocomplete”) has been used satirically to ‘expose’ the truth about the Brothers. Various screenshots showing Google’s search suggestions for “al-Ikhwān kh[...]” made the rounds on social media in 2013, demonstrating that “even Google knows everything” about the Brothers: that they are traitors (khawāna), have destroyed Egypt (kharrabū Miṣr), are deviants from Islam (khawāriǧ), sheep (khīfān), a danger to Egypt (khaṭar ʿalā Miṣr), etc.34 Of course, the letter kh lends itself particularly well to such completions, but we must remember that the algorithm used here reflects the actual search activity of users and thereby a certain zeitgeist.

#WhyEgyptiansLikeIkhwan

Two days after the hashtag #WhyIHateIkhwan went wild, Ikwanweb tried to counter it with #WhyEgyptiansLikeIkhwan: “Faculty members, engineers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, teachers, peasants, workers, middle class, why do they not hate us? Because we are from among them and they are from among us.”35 This new hashtag, however, was immediately hijacked and made fun of by the opposition.36 The first reply came in English: “Egyptians don’t like ikhwan, Egyptians –or at least the educated ones– are not retarded =)”37.

These two tweets lay out one of the prominent points of contention between the Brotherhood and its opponents: The opponents claim that the Brotherhood is only supported by the uneducated (“stupid”, backward, etc.) part of the population whose credulity the Brotherhood exploits. The Brotherhood, for its part, claims that its opponents are an elitist (’nukhba’) urban minority dreaming pipe dreams in trendy Cairo cafés, isolated from the ‘real Egypt’ of the working people with whom the Brothers are in daily contact and whose real concerns they know first hand.

If we discard tweets of the type “Who said that Egyptians like Ikhwan :| ?”;38 half of the remaining answers in my sample collection still are sarcastic, while the other half came up with positive reasons:

(53%) Sarcastic:

(30%) People are stupid; MB tricks them

(23%) MB = hypocrites cleverly riding the revolution

(47%) Positive:

(23%) MB does something concrete for the people, while others only talk and tweet

(10%) MB has a principled platform and stands by it

(10%) MB has credibility due to its long history of resistance, tested in trials

(3%) God is with MB against all odds

In other words, the Brotherhood’s commitment and their long history of opposition to the ruling régime were acknowledged by some as positive reasons for their success, as was their effective practical work. The latter, however, was not regarded in unequivocally positive terms, as the Brotherhood was accused of ‘buying’ supporters with oil and sugar.39 For its detractors, the most prominent cause of its success was that the well-organised Brotherhood was able to exploit the backwardness of the Egyptian masses, buying them with band-aid, and promising them heaven on earth.

This idea crystallised into the image that the followers of the Muslim Brotherhood are a flock of dumb ‘sheep’ (khīfān) blindly obeying every command and willingly walking to their own destruction. To refer to Islamists as ‘sheep’ can be traced back a few years before the Egyptian revolution.40 It slowly became more pronounced after the the Muslim Brotherhood became a serious contender for power in 2011,41 but was not yet very prominent in our Twitter debate. The use of this image increased after the Brotherhood’s election victories, especially after Muḥammad Mursi won the presidency; from autumn 2012, it really took off as a meme.42 This strikes the observer as an effective means to explain away the Brotherhood’s success at the ballot boxes (“ballotocracy”43) while maintaining a position or attitude of superiority. Here are two visual examples:44
Somewhat pointedly, our two hashtags may be summed up thus: We hate the Brothers because they are traitors (al-Ikhwān khawāna), while those who like and follow them do so because they are dumb sheep (al-Ikhwān khirfān).

Brothers aim to present themselves as constructive force

Portraying Brotherhood supporters as ‘sheep’ implicitly excludes them from the community of ‘reasonable’ members of the political community that are able to participate in shaping the way the polity is run. How about the other, the opposite side? The anti-Brotherhood camp often claims that the Brothers are guilty of a much more extreme exclusionary discourse: that of casting their opponents as infidels (kafara), thereby implicitly calling for their extermination since apostasy is punishable by death according to Islamic Law. This has led many to describe the polarisation in Egypt as a balance of exclusionary discourses where both sides attempt to deny legitimate agency to their opponents.47 Looking at the web, however, the scales of this balance tip: one finds many more sheep than infidels, so to speak. During my research in 2012-13, most instances of the infamous accusations of kufr (unbelief) came from secularists alleging, bemoaning, or satirising that Islamists ‘regard us as infidels’. A Twitter search for “al-ʿalmāniyya kafara” (“secularists [are] infidels”), for example, yielded only tweets by secular people who complain that they are being dismissed as unbelievers by the Islamists, but no links to actual examples of such takfīr (declaring someone an infidel).48 Twitter may be a bad tool for documenting if and to what extent takfīr happens in mosques and squares in Egypt, yet it is striking to see that Twitter users – otherwise known for digging up a lot of ills – did not come up with links to actual, ‘positive’ examples of this practice by the Muslim Brotherhood. Facebook is notoriously harder to search systematically than Twitter, but a survey of major Brotherhood pages there did not yield much hate material either. The timeline of the Freedom and Justice Party’s page, for example, was dominated by campaigning for the parliamentary elections, promoting their presidential candidates al-Shāṭir and Mursī, calling for “building the country”, emphasising the electoral “legality” (sharʿiyya) of their power, and then resisting the military coup of 3 July 2013.49 On social media, the scales of the balance were thus not equally filled with sheep and infidels. Rather, there was a flood of material heavily polemical against the Muslim Brotherhood on one side, while on the other, the Brotherhood attempted to present itself as a legitimate player in the democratic process, enjoying much wider popular support and being closer to the true pulse of Egypt than their ‘élitist’ opponents, and cultivating the role of victims of violent oppression after the generals’ coup.

Islamist polarising hate discourse exists — on the fringes of the Ikhwān

While exclusionary polemics against the Brotherhood was much more easy to find on social media than comparable material by the Brotherhood against the secular/liberal camp, Islamist polarising discourse did exist — but it remained on the fringes of the Ikhwān. Most of it came from more extreme corners that for many years have been rivals and political opponents of the Brotherhood — most notably, various shades of the salafi and jihādī spectrum. There were, however, examples of extremely polarising discourse also emanating from Brotherhood figures, although they did not represent mainstream Brotherhood positions but were in fact at odds with them. A case in point is Waǧdī Ghunaym (b. 1951), an eloquent preacher who spent five years in Egyptian jails in the 1980s and later headed an Islamic mosque in California until being forced to leave in 2005; he ended up in exile in Qatar.50 In summer 2011, in the context of growing frustration with the way the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was responding to the demands of the revolutionaries, he first started experimenting with YouTube; but it was not before spring 2013
that he gained a larger following there with outspoken videos attacking the opponents of President Mursi. Thus, in the run-up to the demonstrations announced to demand Mursi’s resignation by the anniversary of his first year in office, he published a video in which he openly said, i.e., that “those who will demonstrate [against our Muslim President] on 30/6 are infidels and must be killed”. The video also contains many other arguments that were made by more radical elements during the demonstrations in support of Mursi, not least on Rabī’a Square after his removal from power, arguments that the ‘secular’ side accused the Brotherhood of making even though they more often than not came from other Islamists. Small wonder than that this particular video was shared on YouTube by an opponent of the Brotherhood with the aim of pointing out, “Look what extremist rubbish these people are producing”.

Waǧdī Ghunaym is a master of rhetoric who does not mince his words and who has said many things that proved embarrassing to the Muslim Brotherhood and its official position. That he was not representative of mainstream Brotherhood positions and at odds with their leadership is something he himself did not hide — to the contrary, he chided the Brotherhood for their softish attitudes (“kifāya baqāʾ ʾl-kalām il-habal illī kān qālū il-ʾIkhwān qabī kida da: ʾal-tawāfuq; ʾal-mushāraka” [‘enough now of this imbecile talk that the Brothers used to utter: ‘conciliation’, ‘participation’]) and harshly attacked Brotherhood leaders for what he regarded as un-Islamic views. In April 2011, while the Brotherhood was launching the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in order to participate in elections, Waǧdī Ghunaym denounced the two members of the Brotherhood’s guidance bureau who were to chair the party, Sa’d al-Katātnī and ʿĪsām al-ʾAryān, and who had come out in defence of democracy and equal citizen rights. According to Waǧdī Ghunaym, “there is no such thing [in Islam] as democracy; what there is is consultation (shūrā), since we are using our Islamic terms”; so “those who really believe in democracy are infidel apostates from Islam” (“išši yuʾmin min qalbihi [...] biʾl-dīmūqrāṭiyya kāfir murtadd ʾan al-ʾIslām”). Waǧdī went on to enumerate ten reasons why Islam and democracy are incompatible, the first one being that in Islam, God is the sovereign, not the people. In September 2012, while the country was raging with debates about the constitution and the weight Islam should be given in it, Waǧdī released videos describing the liberal Constitution Party (Ḥizb al-Dustūr) as an “infidel party” (ḥizb kāfir) and, after the Party had reported him to the authorities for this, affirming even more strongly that any “secularist, modernist, or liberal is an infidel, an apostate from Islam whose case has to be brought to court, and [if he does not repent,] he must be punished for apostasy [i.e., executed].” Outrageous as these statements were, they were directed in the first instance at the home front, at the leadership of the Brotherhood and its rank and file who were, in Waǧdī Ghunaym’s view, on a dangerous path embracing values of democracy and equal citizen rights that were leading them away from the only true principles of Islam and right into the arms of the immoral, deluded, “modernist” (ḥadāthīyyīn) enemies of Islam and friends of the cross-bearers (ṣalibīyyīn). Our fundamentalist shaykh was raising his voice out of a concern that the Brotherhood, from the top down, from the members of the Guidance Bureau to the President of the Republic to the Brotherhood youth, was about to discard its very principles, those that its founder Hasan al-Bannā had died for.

Waǧdī Ghunaym thus cannot be regarded as representative for the Brotherhood; rather, he is someone who refused to accept the direction the Brotherhood was taking. Using voices like his to denounce the Brotherhood therefor is akin to the “Selective Memri” of the Israeli-founded Middle East Media Research Institute whose translations from Middle Eastern media serve to spread a very lop-sided image of Middle Eastern public opinion by consistently highlighting the most extreme positions. It is therefore all the more interesting to see that after the violent crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013, Waǧdī Ghunaym — who is a brilliant speaker and demagogue — was re-embraced by the Brotherhood. In December 2013, he was given a regular programme “Durūs Thawriyya / Lessons of revolution”) on the Brotherhood’s TV channel “Rabī’a” that started broadcasting from Istanbul earlier that month. The bloody crackdown had led to a radicalisation of the Brotherhood.

Seculars confound all ‘Islamists’ – to blame Brothers for extremism

Until back in spring 2013, however, the careful observer cannot but conclude that the mainstream Brotherhood presented itself on social media as a popular, democratic, non-violent movement with an Islamic value agenda, while their opponents deliberately tended to blur the line between the Brothers and more extreme Islamists (even though these in practice often were ideological and political opponents of the Brotherhood). Some did so quite consciously. “I hate the Broth-
ers more than the salafis,” an anti-Ikhwān journalist told me in Cairo in autumn 2011. “At least the salafis openly say what they think. The Brothers have just the same goals, but they are trying to conceal their true intentions. That’s why they are more dangerous.”

With such an attitude, it becomes easy indiscriminately to throw allegations such as that ‘the Islamists regard us all as infidels’ against the whole “Islamic trend” (al-tayyār al-islāmī), without paying attention to who actually made such takfīr statements. As we have seen above, seculars on Twitter were frequently complaining of being ostracised as infidels without, however, coming up with actual examples of takfīr by Brotherhood members. This behaviour is similar to many secularists being outraged at the ‘extremist rubbish’ broadcast on the religious TV channels – channels that they themselves, and by their own admission, did not watch (“I can’t stand them!”) but had knowledge of through clips used by Bāsim Yūsuf on his TV show al-Barānāǧi.61 Bāsim Yūsuf employed a huge staff to sift through these channels and select the most egregious examples of stupidity, backwardness, narrow-mindedness, and extremism, in order to poke fun of this on his show. By selecting and combing his material in the way he did, and lumping together different shades of Islamists without distinction, he contributed to producing a lop-sided and tendentious image of Islamists among his fans.

Of course, we must not ignore that Islamist extremist voices do exist and have been heard (not all the time, but every now and then) during the pro-Mursī demonstrations on Rābī’a Square in July and August 2013, voices that equalled secularists with infidels, Christians (using the derogatory terms naṣārā and ṣalībiyyūn), and Zionists. To the best of my knowledge, however, such statements tended to come from supporters of the National Alliance Supporting Legitimacy (al-Taḥāluf al-Waṭanī li-Daʿm al-Sharʿiyya) who were not officials or members of the Brotherhood, but rather independents (such as Ṣafwat Ḥiǧazī) or people belonging to the salafī spectrum.62

To consciously confound all these groups, however, clearly did serve a purpose: the extremist examples were needed to denigrate, delegitimise, and demonise the Brotherhood. By downplaying or ignoring ideological and political differences between the Brotherhood, various salafī movements, and other, more extreme Islamists, by regarding and portraying them as one “Islamic trend”, one could indiscriminately attribute all kinds of misdeeds to them. In our case, this discursive strategy made it possible to blame the Brotherhood for the armed attacks the frequency of which increased drastically after Mursī’s ouster, even though responsibility for them was claimed by the Palestinian-Sinai based jihādist Anṣār Bayt al-Maqdis (and in a few cases, other jihādist groups), while the Brotherhood distanced themselves from such violence.63 Even so, these attacks were used to accuse the Brotherhood of sponsoring and committing terrorism (see further below, p. 20).

The ‘secular/liberal’ side thus proved guilty of the same sin that they accused the Islamist side of: to construct an image of a political opponent that was more one-dimensional and extremist than the multifaceted reality, in order better to batter this caricature. What Bāsim Yūsuf criticised the Islamists for can be applied equally to both sides:

You (the opposing side) make nice promises – but the problem is your practice!

In practice, you say: Either we’ll rule, or the country will go to hell.65

You confound all the different trends that oppose you, even though there are plenty of differences between them.

After confounding all who oppose you, you make ridiculous claims about them, accusing them of extremism.

Ideological polarisation masked real differences of class and power and helped to justify violent crackdown.

What is the purpose of such polarising discourse? On the one hand, one may say that the overwhelming focus on the ideological gulf between the Muslim Brothers and their opponents has taken attention away from the political economy of this conflict. The focus on ideology has served to mask real differences of socio-economic and socio-cultural background,
of class, and of power. Some commentators noted that during violent clashes in Cairo, the majority of Brotherhood fighters appear to have come from the rural provinces, not the capital city. Instead of analysing the socio-economic significance of this observation, however, it was merely used derogatorily against the Brotherhood who allegedly were “exploiting the poverty of their rural followers”, bussing them to Cairo and pushing them into clashes so that the leadership could stay safely at the rear.66 This obsession with ideology was so powerful that even outside observers mostly failed to comment on the material differences of interest between the Brotherhood’s electorate and the social classes that have dominated Egyptian political and economic life for decades. Even in a case as prominent as president Mursī’s wife who in 2012 caused a storm on social media for looking “like a peasant”, reactions were revealing of upscale cultural elitism (“Is this the woman you want to represent Egypt?”).67 Beyond anecdotal reference, however, there was a real scarcity of deeper analyses uncovering the class conflict behind such snobbism.

In addition to masking differences in class interests, the increasingly harsh polarisation could also be exploited towards direct political ends: to legitimise violent resistance against the Brotherhood and to justify military intervention and the subsequent bloody crackdown. It is towards this end that the label “terrorist” was attached to the Brotherhood in 2013. Apart from a brief spike during the clashes at the Presidential Palace in December 2012, this label did not play a significant role on social media before spring 2013. Among the early prominent examples of calling the Brothers “terrorist” was none other than Air Marshal and former presidential candidate Aḥmad Shafīq, widely regarded as a representative of the ancien régime. After an incident during demonstrations on 1 Feb. 2013 where bystander Ḥammāda Sābir was stripped, beaten up and arrested by police who later failed to cover up their transgression, Shafīq said in an interview with al-ʿArabiyya: “Stripping the Egyptian citizen was an act planned by the ministry of interior [of the Brotherhood régime] to terrorise the people. [...] This is a new kind of terrorism [...] that will only lead to more violence and hatred of the régime.”68 More violence was in fact what the following month brought, and right after the ‘Battle of Muqaṭṭam’, even a voice as even-headed as secularist blogger Mahmoud Salem concluded that “violent overthrow” of president Mursī was the only way out, since the Brotherhood had blocked all options for compromise, and since it had become obvious that they did not have militias to suppress the opposition.69 In other words, while some whipped up tensions accusing the Brothers of terrorism and calling for violent resistance, others argued that violent resistance was not only desirable but in fact feasible after the belief that the Brotherhood maintained armed militias had been unravelled as a myth.

After this coalition of old régime and young revolutionaries had led to the army takeover in July 2013, demonisation of the Brotherhood was unleashed in force in both the traditional and the new media. As noticeable on Twitter, labelling the Brotherhood as “terrorist” became more frequent; it intensified over the crack-down on the Rābiʿa and Nahḍa sit-ins in mid-August,70 and then again in the wake of the car-bomb attack on the interior minister on 5 Sep. 2013 (claimed by Anṣār Bayt al-Maqdis and from which the Brotherhood distanced itself).71 There are even satirical examples of linking the Brothers to terrorism (“Terrorism files a case with the Prosecutor General against the Brothers for smearing its reputation … where oh where is the terrorism of old!”72). Following the media build-up, and various campaigns to declare the Brotherhood a terrorist organisation (visible on social media long before the crack-down on the Rābiʿa demonstration73), the Brotherhood was in fact officially declared a terrorist organisation in December 2013.74

Many have commented on the intense anti-Brotherhood campaign in the media after the coup. ‘Terrorism’ was a key constituent of this campaign; other elements were: The Brothers have only their own interests in mind (maṣlaḥat al-ǧamāʿa), not those of the nation (maṣlaḥat al-waṭan); their loyalty is to an international, secretive organisation, not to the Egyptian nation;75 they are freemasons76 conspiring with America, Ḥamās, the Zionists, and other terrorists to betray Egypt.77 The Brotherhood has been a terrorist organisation since it was established by Ḥasan al-Bannā (v.s. p. 6);78 thus, it is not surprising that it continues in this
path, financing Sinai terrorists and smuggling weapons into what they call “peaceful” demonstrations. What they call for is not real Islam, not the moderate Islam (al-Islām al-wasaṭī) that has been practiced by Egyptians throughout history, but a foreign and primitive Islam, an Islam of the seventh century, an Islam not of the civilized world but of the Arabian bedouins. In short, they are pseudo-Muslims (mutaʾaslimīn), not real Muslims. The biggest lie in history is that the Brotherhood is Muslim. Everyone who is following this international organization (al-tanzīm al-duwalī) is a traitor against the nation and a traitor against God and His Prophet (huwa khāʾin līl-waṭan wa-khāʾin līl-lāh wa-rasūlih).

While most of these anti-Brotherhood stereotypes can be traced back, at least in isolated cases, to before the 2011 revolution, they were massively pushed in public after the Brotherhood gained power in 2012, and turned up a few notches during the campaign to “rebel” (tamarrud) against Mursī in spring 2013. After the coup, the tone was further escalated, to the point where the supporters of the Brotherhood were declared un-Egyptian, not a part of ‘our’ people. In a music video that the ageing Egyptian pop star ʿAlī al-Ḥaʾǧār released just two days after the coup, he contrasted ‘us’ – the cultured, truth-loving, enlightened, hardworking and pious people who look up to Ibn Sinā, Ibn Rushd, and al-Ḥusayn – to ‘you’ – who deal in religion to gain worldly power and whose role model is Bin Lāden in his dark cave. And because pious Egypt, from pre-historic times, runs in our veins, we will never be like you, and you never like us. So pack your [bedouin stuff and your bedouin Islam] and leave our country, for we are one people and you are another people! And even though there is only one God, [you have another one]!” Repeatedly, the video, which also contains images praising the glorious, pious, and popular Egyptian army and their humble soldiers, pushes the placard slogan “Get out!” (irḥal), which in 2011 had been raised against Mubārak, against this ‘foreign’ other. The Brothers were thus depicted as having no right to live in Egypt.

With the Brothers discursively stripped of their Muslimness and their Egyptianness, and being collectively branded as terrorists instead, the path was opened for their physical elimination as well: the bloody but necessary “tooth extraction” of mid-August 2013, when police and army, answering to the call of the nation, moved in to clean the streets and put an end to the chaos in a historic and “heroic battle” in which they proved their readiness to “sacrifice and efface themselves to defend the will of the nation.”

A Third Square?

In this heavily polarised climate, intermediate, moderate voices had little chance to succeed in the short term. A “Third Square” (il-mīdān il-tālit) was established on 8 July 2013, first on Facebook, to claim space for those who really stood for the ideals of the January 25 Revolution against both the supporters of the army and the old régime (who were dominating Taḥrīr Square) and the supporters of Mursī (whose demonstrations focused on Rābiʿa Square). Attempts since the end of July 2013 to establish a physical “Third Square” on Sphinx Square in the Cairene neighbourhood of al-Muhandisin met with limited success. After the crackdown on supporters of Mursī’s presidency, the military-backed régime also began arresting those who raised the slogan “Yaṣṣūṭ kull man khān – ‘askar, fulūl, Ikhwān” (“Down with all traitors – military, old régime, Brothers!”). Even the few prominent liberal, secularist intellectuals who dared to speak up against the coup (like ʿĀlāʾ ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, Bāsim Yūsuf, ʿAmr Ḥamzāwī, Bilāl Faḍl, ʿĀlam Wāṣif) were subjected to harassment, judicial charges, or jail. On 25 January 2014, the third anniversary of the revolution, most representatives of this “Third Trend” decided to stay at home instead of risking their lives in meaningless confrontation with the security forces. Where on previous occasions, they had had chanted il-thawra lissa fī ’l-mīdān (“The revolution is still [alive] on the Square”), they now tried to assure themselves that il-thawra ǧuwwānā “The revolution [lives on] in ourselves”). Those wielding a polarising and dehumanising discourse had won back the Egyptian street, and were openly celebrating 25 January as “Police Day” again – “don’t you ever forget that, you sheep!”
Endnotes

1 The labels ‘Islamist’ (іслāмī) and ‘secularist’ (ʿalmānī) are not necessarily emic terms but were originally largely used to label political opponents. They have, however, increasingly been adopted as self-descriptions. In Egypt, ‘liberal’ and ‘secular’ are often used interchangeably and rather imprecisely. Since I describe perceptions and stereotypes in this report, I have followed the same practice here.


4 “Bassem Youssef resigns in wake of couvolution: ‘The thought of having to work to create comedy is just too daunting.’” (First Thoughts on Bassem Youssef <http://first-thoughts.org/on/Bassem+Youssef/>, 3 July 2013).

5 This argument is based on analysing data (drawn chiefly from Alexa.com) on the popularity of internet sites among Arabic-language users and users from the Arab world, over the period 2000-2013.


8 Ikhwanweb: “Li-mādhā takrahūnanā؟”, 7 Feb. 2012, between 3:20 and 3:36 AM EET <http://twitter.com/ikhwanweb/status/166696056044793857>; all Twitter timestamps are given in Egypt East Time in this paper. Interestingly, the original tweet is no longer retrievable; it must have been deleted by @ikhwanweb. As of 8 Jan. 2014, however, it can still be found on Topsy.com, with c. 1300-1400 trackbacks <http://topsy.com/trackback?url=http%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2Fikhwanweb%2Fstatus%2F166696056044793857&infonly=0>. @ikhwanweb posed the question following a lengthy exchange on Twitter between her and secular Mohamed Fouad (@MohammadFouadT) in which many typical elements of common stereotypes were touched upon <http://bit.ly/1lWAQgR>. The earliest reply was given by Mohamed Ezzit (“Yāh ʿalashān ḥāǧāt kitīr qawī… law ʿandak waqt aqūllak!!!”, 7 Feb. 2012 3:36 AM <http://twitter.com/3azzit/status/166696773811834880>. Forty minutes later, Ayman Usāma (ʿAyn Shams University automotive engineering student and tech blogger active on Brotherhood dissident ʿAbd al-Munʿim Abū ’l-Futūḥ’s presidential campaign) proposed the hashtag #WhyIHateIkhwan to mark replies to the question (7 Feb. 2012, 4:27 AM <http://twitter.com/AymansUSU/status/16669773811834880>). The collection of tweets and the basic research for this paper was completed before Topsy opened its archive to the public in August 2013; my paper is therefore based on my own much more limited archive as explained above. Spot checks into Topsy’s archive do not suggest, however, that my sample is completely off the mark.

At the time, @ikhwanweb was operated by the pseudonymous ‘Miriam’, a 24-year-old AUC media studies student who in autumn 2011, in tandem with 36-year old Hazem Malky (a medical doctor based in New York), had transformed @ikhwanweb (established 2009) from a robot feed to a lively human-operated account, on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood’s official English web site, Ikhwanweb.com (established 2005) (see Lauren E. Bonn, “The Muslim Brotherhood takes Twitter”, Foreign Policy, 22 [sic] Nov 2011 <http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/18/the_muslim_brotherhood_takes_twitter>). In addition to @ikhwanweb, the Arabic website of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, ikhwanonline.com, on 9 August 2011 established its own twitter account, @ikhwan.

9 Tweets were collected automatically using RSS-syndication in the application DEVONTThink Pro Office, run on the hashtags #WhyHatelkhwan (152 tweets), #WhyEgyptiansLikeIkhwan (40 tweets), #FuckIkhwan (2924 tweets), #Ikhwan (98,862 tweets) as well as the Twitter account @ikhwanweb (11,412 tweets). – Interestingly, of the 2924 #fuckikhwan tweets in my database, 1636 also are hashtagged #fuckscaf (i.e., 56%).
10 Meaningful computer-aided analysis requires tagging; this can only partly be automated and needs to be controlled ‘by hand’.


13 I.e. into a mirror image of the former ruling National Democratic Party: a corrupt institution to monopolise power and reward those supporting this scheme with offices and other favours.


16 Published 17 July 2013 by Delizon (Pau). Ghoraba obtained a BA in Mass Communication from the American University in Cairo in 1997.

17 Many of the reasons commonly given for hating the Brothers appear in this one tweet: “Munāfiqīn, maṣlaḥǧiyya, al-samʿ wa'l-ṭāʿa, mā-l-humsh mabda’, bāʾū al-thawra, khānū dam al-shuhadā’, intihāziyin, tuǧǧār dīn wa-asbāb ukhrā” (“Hypocrites, only see to their interests, slavishly obey their leaders, unprincipled, sold the revolution, betrayed the martyrs’ blood, opportunists, deal in religion and other reasons”), 10 Feb. 2012 3:18 AM <http://twitter.com/___ayman__/status/167779544214945793>.


19 NB: One commentator to the blog pointed out that the Brothers actually have distanced themselves from the takfīrī thought of Sayyid Quṭb, something that Ghoraba does not acknowledge <http://egylibertarian.blogspot.no/2012/02/blog-post.html?showComment=1328944964556#c4872431779239648974>.

20 The widespread accusation that the Brotherhood had organised militias stood on much shakier ground after they were nowhere to be seen during the clashes at the Brotherhood headquarters on al-Muqaṭṭam in March 2013 and during the crackdown on the brotherhood later that year. See Mahmoud Salem (@Sandmonkey), “Myths”, Daily News Egypt, 26 March 2013 <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/03/26/myths/>.

21 The accusation that the Muslim Brotherhood joined the revolution only when they saw it would be victorious – that they “rode the revolution” – is another salient element of anti-Brotherhood rhetoric in Egypt. In fact, prominent Brotherhood member Muḥammad al-Baltāǧī and Brotherhood spokesman ʿIṣām al-ʿAryān announced on 22 and 23 January 2011 that the Brotherhood would join the protests, acknowledging that they had been organised by others, and urging participants to remain peaceful. This support appears to have been one of the reasons behind the arrest of al-ʿAryān and other Brotherhood leaders on 28 January, hours before the “Friday of Anger” demonstrations began [Mostafa Shehata: “al-Ikhwān yuʿlinūn al-mushāraka fī thawrat 25 yanāyir”, voice interview with al-Baltāǧī by Idhāʿat Šawt al-Aqṣā [Gaza], YouTube, 22

That none of the more than 800 killed during the ‘18 days’ came from the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood seems unlikely and is not only disputed by the Brotherhood but by some of their opponents as well (cf. Ameer King, comment on YouTube <http://youtu.be/phKSp95ZITw>). Several Facebook pages are devoted to Brotherhood ‘martyrs’ of the January revolution. See i.a. Shuhadāʾ al-Ikhwān fī Thawrat Miṣr, Facebook page established 26 Feb. 2011 <http://fb.com/SHOhDA.25 ynayer>; Fahd Abū Marzūqa: “Dawr al-Ikhwān qabla wa-athnāʾ wa-baʿd al-thawra (unshurūhā raddan ʿalā al-muddāʿīn)” , Facebook, 4 June 2011 <http://on.fb.me/1la6s5Q>.


The images reproduced here are sardonic variations spread on Facebook of the “new, modernized Muslim Brotherhood (MB) logo, you can find it on their newly refurbished official facebook page” (Ramy Yaacoub, 3 Oct. 2012, 1:48 PM <http://twitter.com/RamyYaacoub/status/25358241949037772/>)


28 See the comments section on the “extermination is a duty” picture from al-Manṣūra.
30 In this case, it is difficult to find evidence of its use dating from before his show. The only unquestionable example I could find is the entry “Khan...yakhun...fa-huwa bi'l-ta’kid Ikhwān” on Hany Hamed’s blog Nuṭṭ fi ‘l-Kōz, 18 Nov. 2012 <http://ntfielkoz.blogspot.com/2012/11/blog-post_18.html>. The Facebook page Khan yakhun ikhwān <http://fb.com/Khan.betray.Brothers> allegedly was created on 19 Feb. 2012 but has been active only since 20 Dec. 2012; on 27 Dec. 2012, it changed its profile picture to one of street battles featuring this slogan followed by the words “qarīban...waṭan bi-lā ikhwānī” (“Soon...a fatherland without a [single] Muslim Brother”; same picture as already published by Hany Hamed on his blog 18 Nov. 2012), <http://fb.com/photo.php?fbid=262578720535415>. Another Facebook page with the same name was created on 24 Dec. 2012 <http://fb.com/5aN.Y5oN>; on 28 Dec., it changed its profile picture to this slogan in front of a portrait of Bāsim Yūsuf <http://fb.com/photo.php?fbid=548744685153567>. This last Facebook group is linked to a Twitter account with the same name, created as early as 21 Oct. 2011 <http://twitter.com/5aN_Y5oN> but whose first retrievable tweets date from 28 Feb. 2013 <http://topsy.com/s?q=%405aN_Y5oN>window=a&sort=date>.


36 Cf Dalia Ezzat: “[T]he only positive tweets so far under #WhyEgyptiansLikeIkhwan are by @Ikhwanweb #supercute”, 9 Feb. 2012 8:30 AM <http://twitter.com/DaliaEzzat/status/167495601783709697>; Aber Allam: “It looks likez Muslim Bros feel so unloved that they started #WhyEgyptiansLikeIkhwan in response to #whyIhateikhwan #giveikhwanahug”, 9 Feb. 2012 10:26 AM <http://twitter.com/abeerallam/status/167524812120522752>. In practice, the hashtag #WhyEgyptiansLikeIkhwan died the day it was born, after only 350 tweets (http://topsy.com/s?q=%23whyegyptianslikeikhwan&window=a&sort=date&offset=350).


43 ‘Ballotocracy’ is a term coined by Richard N. Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, in 2007 to criticise an overwhelming focus on elections while ignoring other elements necessary for a functioning democracy. The term was occasionally used in international politics during the following years, but only gained wide traction since March 2013 in the context of the anti-Mursī campaign (http://www.google.com/search?q=ballotocracy).

tions of our Community Guidelines”). Another channel, Qanāt al-Shaykh Waǧdī Ghunaym al-Rasmiyya <http://youtube.com/user/wagdytube>, was established 13 July 2011 but is not officially endorsed by him; it contains some of his audio messages.


53 Ibid., minute 23:40 ss.


56 Waǧdī Ghunaym uses the term ‘ṣalībiyyīn’ not so much in the meaning of foreign ‘crusaders’ but interchangeably with naṣārā and masīḥiyyīn to designate all Christians, including the Copts in Egypt.


Interview with a well-connected, anonymised Egyptian journalist, Cairo, autumn 2011.

This assessment is based on following live broadcasts by al-Jazīra Mubāshir Miṣr from the demonstrations in summer 2013.


In a debate between Bāsim Yūsuf and Nāǧiḥ Ibrāhīm (founder and former leader of al-Ǧamāʿa al-Islāmiyya who renounced violence in 1997), held at the American University in Cairo (Best-OfBassem: “Munāẓara rāʾiʿa Bāsim Yūsuf wa-Nāǧiḥ Ibrāhīm – kāmila 7/2/2013”, YouTube, 7 Feb. 2013 <http://youtu.be/-X7ZomZqmQ8>). Bāsim Yūsuf accused the Islamists of saying, “secularists are infidels, advocates of the civil state are secularists ... (al-ʿalmāniyya kafara, al-madaniyya maʾnahā ‘almāniyya)”, thus confounding liberals, secularists, democrats, advocates of the civil state, and accusing them of being hypocrites, atheists, homosexuals, prostitutes, etc. — On the other hand, opponents of the Brotherhood “sheep” confound the Ikhwān with salafīs, jihādīs, terrorists, al-Qāʿida, etc.


To justify the crackdown, the Brotherhood after 3 July 2013 was routinely blamed for all violence both by the media and by members of the administration and the security apparatus, even though it distanced itself from violence and was not officially charged in court for terrorist acts before January 2014. For example, on 7 Oct. 2013 a grenade was shot at a satellite-transmission dish in Maʿādī; the jihādī “Furqān Brigades” claimed responsibility. Nevertheless, “two senior government officials blamed the Brotherhood despite its repeated public disavowals of such tactics. ‘Blackmail by terrorism,’ said one of the officials, a senior military officer. Suggesting the Brotherhood was almost predisposed to violence, he argued that the violence might have been worse if not for the crackdown, in which security forces have killed more than 1,000 protesters and jailed hundreds of Islamist leaders. If the violence was this severe with the leaders behind bars, the officer asked, how much worse might it be if leaders were released?” (David D. Kirkpat


73 Already two days after the coup, on 5 June 2013, members of the liberal Democratic Front Party launched a campaign on Facebook to have the Muslim Brotherhood listed as a terrorist organisation (Hamlat Misr bi-lā ḡamāʿat ērḥābiyya, http://on.fb.me/0tx30). News of this began to be spread to the larger public since the end of July 2013 (e.g. Muḥammad ‘Allām: “Tadshīn ḥamlat ‘Miṣr bi-lā ḡamāʿat ērḥābiyya’ li-ḥall ḡamāʿat al-Īkhwān”, Muḥīṭ, 21 July 2013 <http://bit.ly/1eajlXH>.


78 Internal developments within the Muslim Brotherhood movement were thus not recognised or consciously downplayed, in particular the dissolution of the militias and the disavowal of Quṭbist takfīrī thought and espousal of violence.


87 “Al-Maydān al-Thālith”, Facebook <http://fb.com/ElMidan.ElTalet>. A Twitter account (@elmidaneltalet) was opened on 26 July 2013. The “Third Square” or “Third Movement” (al-Tayyār al-Thālith) was supported by members of the independent Islamic student movement Ḥarakat Aḥrār, youth of the centrist Islamic Miṣr al-Qawiyya and al-Tayyār al-Miṣrī parties, members of the Costa Salafis (Salafiyyū Čōstā), the Revolutionary Socialists (al-Ishtirākiyyīn al-Thawriyyīn) and al-Taǧdīd al-Ishtirākī (http://bit.ly/1e1jQiR), several student movements including l’ilāf Ėl-Tullāb Ėl-Gami‘at ‘Ayn Shams, members of the 6 April movement, and several prominent intellectuals such as novelist Ahdāf Suweyf, singer Sāmiya Jāhīn of the band Eskenderella, and filmmaker ‘Ālam Wāṣif. – There are other movements outside the “Third Square” that could be mentioned here, such as the media collective Muṣirrīn (http://mosireen.org) that gave birth both to the Kādhibūn campaign (http://fb.com/3askar.Kazeboon, est. 18 Dec. 2011) and the “People’s Manifesto” (http://manifestomasr.com; http://fb.com/manifestomasr, est. 15 July 2013). Like the “Third Square”, they have struggled to make their voice heard in the polarised climate in Egypt.